

**TEACHER- PARENT COLLABORATION IN TWO
PRIMARY SCHOOLS' SPECIAL EDUCATION
INTEGRATED PROGRAMMES: APPLICATION OF
EPSTEIN'S FRAMEWORK**

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**FACULTY OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
KUALA LUMPUR**

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**THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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ABSTRACT

Teacher- Parent Collaboration (TPC) is an important factor for the development of Children with Special Needs (CSN). Dividing the role in school and at home as different entities is not appropriate as children need close monitoring at home too. To enable parents to be actively involved in schools, teachers need to cooperate with parents and develop collaboration between them. The aims of this study were: 1) to explore to what extent TPC was practised during the planning and implementation of activities, 2) to explore factors that supported and inhibited the planning and implementation of the activities, and 3) to explore how the framework advocated by Epstein, involving elements such as parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with community was incorporated in the schools' activities. This study was a case study. Two schools with the Special Education Integrated Programme (SEIP) were selected and the participants of the study comprised two administrators, four special education teachers and four parents of CSN. The data were obtained through interviews, observations and document analysis. NVivo 10, a computer software programme was used to manage the interview transcripts, the observation notes and summaries of the document analysis. The same software was used to code data and form categories within the case analysis, to produce individual reports, before the cross case analysis was done using the constant comparative technique to identify the emerging themes from the TPC activities. The findings revealed that teachers played a major role in determining and planning the activities for the academic year. The involvement of parents in providing suggestions was noted during the frequent short interactions between the teachers and the parents. The activities planned focused on the needs of CSN, and the parents' needs were identified through feedback obtained during formal and informal interactions with parents. When

the activities were implemented, the parents followed the teachers and were involved in carrying out the activities planned although parents collaborating with the teachers were only seen in a few activities, where they took on a passive role in most cases. There were activities that were planned but which were not carried out due to some hindering factors. The study concluded that there was more involvement than collaboration between the teachers and the parents. Other than the elements advocated by Epstein, inter-cultural and inter-spiritual knowledge elements were also evident in the activities planned in the two SEIP. If active collaboration were to be carried out in the schools then there would be a shared responsibility between teachers and parents to ensure quality education for CSN, as envisioned in the Malaysian Education Blueprint.

**KOLABORASI GURU DAN IBU BAPA DALAM PROGRAM
PENDIDIKAN KHAS INTEGRASI DI DUA BUAH SEKOLAH RENDAH:
APLIKASI KERANGKA EPSTEIN**

ABSTRAK

Kolaborasi Guru dan Ibu bapa (KGIB) merupakan satu faktor penting dalam perkembangan kanak-kanak berkeperluan khas (KKPK). Pembahagian tanggung jawab di sekolah dan di rumah sebagai entiti yang berbeza adalah tidak sesuai kerana kanak-kanak memerlukan pengawasan rapi di rumah juga. Untuk membolehkan ibu bapa mengambil bahagian secara aktif di sekolah, guru perlu bekerjasama dengan ibu bapa demi memupuk kolaborasi antara mereka. Tujuan kajian ini adalah: 1) untuk menerokai setakat mana kolaborasi guru dan ibu bapa dipraktikkan semasa perancangan dan pelaksanaan aktiviti-aktiviti, 2) untuk menerokai faktor-faktor yang membantu dan menghalang pelaksanaan aktiviti, dan 3) untuk menerokai sejauh mana kerangka Epstein yang mengandungi enam elemen, iaitu keibubapaan, komunikasi, bersukarela, belajar di rumah, membuat keputusan dan kolaborasi dengan komuniti diaplikasikan dalam aktiviti di sekolah. Kajian ini adalah satu kajian kes. Dua buah sekolah yang mempunyai Program Pendidikan Khas Integrasi (PPKI) telah dipilih dan peserta kajian melibatkan dua orang pentadbir, empat orang guru pendidikan khas dan empat orang ibu bapa yang mempunyai kanak-kanak berkeperluan khas. Data diperoleh melalui temuduga, pemerhatian dan analisis dokumen. Program NVivo10, digunakan untuk mengurus transkrip temu bual, nota pemerhatian dan juga ringkasan analisis dokumen. Program ini juga digunakan untuk merekod data dan membentuk kategori semasa menganalisis setiap kes. Teknik perbandingan tetap digunakan untuk mengenal pasti tema-tema penting susulan daripada aktiviti guru dan ibu bapa di dua buah sekolah. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa guru memainkan peranan utama dalam merancang dan

menentukan aktiviti untuk tahun akademik. Penglibatan ibu bapa dalam memberi pendapat telah diambil maklum dalam perbincangan-perbincangan ringkas yang sering diadakan di antara guru dan ibu bapa. Aktiviti yang dirancang berfokus kepada keperluan KKPK dan keperluan ibu bapa telah dikenal pasti melalui maklum balas yang diterima melalui interaksi formal dan tidak formal. Semasa aktiviti dijalankan, ibu bapa turut ikuti aktiviti-aktiviti yang telah dirancang oleh guru walaupun kolaborasi guru dan ibu bapa hanya dapat dilihat dalam beberapa aktiviti. Ibu bapa lebih mengambil “watak pasif” dalam kebanyakan aktiviti. Terdapat juga aktiviti yang dirancang tetapi tidak dapat dijalankan disebabkan oleh beberapa faktor penghalang. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa terdapat lebih banyak penglibatan (turut serta) daripada kolaborasi dalam kalangan guru dan ibu bapa. Selain daripada elemen yang diutarakan dalam kerangka “Epstein”, elemen memahami kerohanian dan kebudayaan antara kaum telah dikenal pasti dalam aktiviti yang dijalankan di kedua PPKI. Sekiranya kolaborasi yang aktif dijalankan di sekolah, akan wujudnya tanggungjawab bersama antara guru dan ibu bapa untuk memastikan pendidikan berkualiti diwar-warkan selaras dengan Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia.

DEDICATION

This entire work is dedicated to my late parents, Mr K.S. Nayar @ Nair and Madam Gourikutty Amma and brother Unnikrishnan, who have been with me all along in spirit throughout this voyage to complete a remarkable task.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

TPC	Teacher-Parent Collaboration
CSN	Children with Special Needs
SEIP	Special Education Integrated Programme
DSEU	District Special Education Unit
MOE	Ministry of Education
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SEPTA	Special Education Parent Teacher Association

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.0 Background of the Study

The Malaysian education system has seen an array of developments since independence. From a system that was based on communal needs, the Malaysian education system has developed into an integrated national system that is responsive to changes in the economic and technological environment and developing national aspirations (The Millennium Development Goals, 2010).

Malaysia's move to achieve universal primary education saw the implementation of compulsory education in 2003, beginning at primary level. This move saw a great hike in school enrolment (The Millennium Development Goals, 2010). Malaysia's effort in compulsory education was recognised globally when the Education Ministry was presented with the United Nations Malaysia Award for its contribution towards Millennium Development Goal 2 which focused on achieving universal primary education (New Straits Times, October 25 2013, p.7).

The Malaysian education system saw another milestone with the launching of the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, which promises 'Three Waves of Changes'. The model focused on five system aspirations namely, "access, quality, equity, efficiency and unity" in providing education. In line with these aspirations, special needs education is also emphasized. The United Nations report had estimated that an average of 10% of a developing country's population lived with a disability however, in Malaysia only 1 percent of the population had been identified as having special needs and are enrolled in suitable special education programmes. However, this figure could be an underestimate because people with disabilities rarely come forward to register themselves (Education Blueprint 2013-2025).

In line with the existing policies, such as The Education Act 1966, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments 1997, the Education Blueprint 2013-2025 state that children with special needs (CSN) can choose from three different schooling options, namely Special Education schools, Special Education Integrated Programme (SEIP) and inclusive education programme. However, the majority of the CSN, about 89% attend integrated programmes, about 6% attend inclusive programmes and 5% attend special education schools (Education Blueprint 2013-2025). With the focus to improve the quality of special education, the Education Blueprint 2013-2025 stresses on the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994) which states that CSN must have access to mainstream schools with inclusive orientation and the Article 28 of Malaysia's Persons with Disabilities Act 2008 advocated that CSN should be given the necessary support to facilitate their "full and equal participation in education" and it advocates the need for schools to have the cooperation with parents. (Education Blueprint 2013-2025). The Salamanca Statement (1994) promotes inclusive schools and it advocates the need for schools to have the cooperation with parents. This promotes the shared task of parents and teachers. Malaysia's move to support the declarations such as "The Salamanca Statement and the Framework for Action on Special Needs Education"(1998), World's Declaration on Education for all (2008), The Dakar Framework of Action (2000) and the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action (2002) emphasised on the equality of education for all children, normal and children with special educational needs.

The role of providing educational services to CSN is managed by several ministries, such as Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (formerly known as Social Welfare Department) and the relevant state departments (Ministry of Education, 2003).

The government's current focus is to raise awareness among parents and the community of their role in their children's education by adopting a learning system in the Education Blueprint 2013-2025. The learning system acknowledges that learning happens beyond the school environment and can happen at home and even in the community. It advocates the school-parent collaboration so that there is a shared responsibility between parents and teachers to ensure quality education for children. A school - community collaboration can volunteer a range of services that can benefit children in the school.

Studies carried out previously show that the authorities' focus on school-parent collaboration was limited and parents in Malaysia left all instructional responsibilities to teachers (Che Noraini Naima, 2006). Research states that parents play an essential role and are closely linked to children's academic, social and emotional development so developing the teacher- parent collaboration is an approach that is most apt and that can promote children's universal success (Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Furthermore, Rohaty (2003) stressed that the school-parent collaboration in the education process is vital to develop the self-concept in the students.

1.1 Teacher- Parent Collaboration for Children with Special Needs

Parents play an important role in the education of their children. This role becomes more crucial for children with special needs (CSN) and in this case even the law mandates parental involvement. One of the tenets in Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), amended in 1997 (IDEA, 2006) states that parents are equal partners with teachers in the evaluation and planning team and thus should be included in meetings related to the decision-making of their children (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2000). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2011 (NLCB) creates further awareness in the

family-school links by emphasizing the roles of parents in supporting their children's learning and actively involving them in their education (Newman, 2004).

The formation of Parent - Teacher Association (PTA) under the Education Act 1996 in all schools in Malaysia shows the need to have parents involved in the education system. The purpose of implementing this association as designated in the Section 2 of the circular issued on 26 March 1998, among others is to enable the parents and teachers in schools to exchange opinions and information about education, provide opportunities for parents and teachers to discuss matters pertaining to improving the standard of education of their children, provide financial assistance and improve the infrastructure to promote teaching and learning.

The Special Education Division of MOE through its letter dated 5 July 2012 had called upon the school administrators of special education integrated programme (SEIP) to include parents of CSN in their activities. This call was made with the aim to improve the potential of CSN in academic achievement, besides instilling an understanding and collaboration. This move showed that parents play an important role in guiding their children in their education thus, the reason to be a member in PTA. Furthermore, Sharifah Zainiyah (2005) states that the achievements of children are more meaningful when their families play a role and are involved in working towards achieving success together with their children.

The effort of the Ministry of Education is further noted in the Education Blueprint (2013-2025) where it hopes to provide a tangible guideline on how schools can develop a strong working relationship with parents and the community. Furthermore, the Ministry foresees the need to make it mandatory for schools to provide necessary information to parents so that they have a sense of shared responsibility. Since the role of parents is not confined within the home environment, this study focuses upon

how professionals, namely teachers and administrators and parents with CSN collaborate in the SEIP.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

SEIP has been widely introduced in primary schools in Malaysia based on the location of the schools. There is at least one special education integrated class in the urban and rural schools. The existence of SEIP in mainstream schools ensures that CSN can learn in a least restrictive environment.

Education in Malaysia is a continuous effort towards improving the potentials of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner (National Philosophy of Education) and furthermore, being a part of The Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (2004) Malaysia is responsible to fulfill its resolution to ensure that the potentials of CSN are tapped to its fullest.

The Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025) has emphasized special education integrated programme in mainstream schools, and the MOE is the only institution that is responsible to upgrade the special education system in the country, thus, reflecting an immense awareness and social responsibility (Nora, Azlina & Yeo, 2009). Therefore, it is up to MOE to set up school boards and determine the types of educational programmes for CSN based on their abilities and needs (Nora, Azlina & Yeo, 2009). This is an uphill task as CSN are individuals with vast differences due to their varied disabilities. Therefore, the support of parents is vital so that physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual developments in CSN are developed in line with the National Education Philosophy.

IDEA grants parents the constitutional rights to be involved in the educational decisions of their children. The rationale for engaging parents in the children's learning environment is the belief that parents are the most influential people in all aspects of

growing, be it socially, emotionally or cognitively, besides fulfilling the basic human needs (IDEA, 2006). Research too has supported this belief that parental involvement in children's education has led to an improvement in the academic achievement of school going children (Harry, 2008, Epstein, 2001). Spann, Kohler and Soenksen (2003) stressed that CSN are able to show development when their parents are actively involved in educational activities. Thus, it is deemed logical to involve parents as partners in educational activities and to empower them with necessary skills to bring about developmental changes in their children. Besides, Wolfendale (1985) asserted that parents are very resourceful people as they are the main observers of their children. Furthermore, parents are the key informants and the main contributors to the general assessment of their children's development and also their problem areas, especially in the case of CSN who have problems in generalizing, applying and maintaining the learnt skills in other contexts (Ketelaar, Vermeer, Helders & Hart, 1998). Through an effective collaboration between teachers and parents, many follow-up learning and teaching activities can be well-planned for the benefits of the CSN.

The traditional perception that the school is the "teachers' territory" (Zuria, Noshidah & Zalizan, 2002) need to be eliminated so that teachers and parents can have an equal voice in the educational matters of the children. These researchers further elaborated that through this link not only parents are assisted to understand the needs of their children but it also helps to reinforce the efforts of the teachers to provide meaningful education to the children. The researcher of the study feels there is a strong need to have this link in educating the CSN. Thus, many concerned people had been looking into various areas that can help to improve the lives of CSN. Many approaches and programmes in the field of child-care and education have highlighted the importance of active parental participation (Pugh & De'Ath, 1994). Study results too showed that many of the long-term effects were because of parent-child interaction and

not teacher-child interaction as had been expected (Bronfenbrenner, 1974). Thus, this finding shows that it is vital to engage parents in the education system.

Lightfoot (1978) indicated that there are distinct differences between the school and the home, but it is vital to identify similarities such as the goals, roles and responsibilities in these situations that can help to develop CSN learning, as Epstein (1987) opined that, it is not practical for institutions to separate the goals, roles and responsibilities of teachers and parents.

Studies have been carried out to identify how parents have been involved in the various aspects of education of their CSN in schools. The aspects researched among others are on the attitudes of teachers and parents and roles of parents in school programmes such as Individualized Education Programme (IEP). However, there are limited studies to show to what extent TPC was practiced during the planning and implementation of activities in the SEIP.

The recent success stories of CSN in national examinations in the media have also encouraged the MOE, to propose especially the Special Education Division to instruct schools to involve the parents in the education of their CSN. Besides, the effort of MOE in its educational reforms and policies is much appreciated as they emphasize the role that parents play in their children's education. However, there is limited information or guidelines on how and when they can be involved and the scope of their involvement (Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, & Apostoleris, 1997).

Teachers involved in SEIP carried out all the educational matters in school as stipulated by the MOE, by planning instructional strategies, adopting and adapting existing curriculum and evaluating CSN's progress. The progress report, also known as the IEP, is a crucial document for every CSN as it is the avenue for teachers to interact with the parents and collectively develop the IEP and monitor their CSN's progress. However, the focus has been on setting up the SEIP and how teachers implemented the

programmes was not always monitored and this has been a shortcoming in the provision of special education in Malaysia as there is a lack of mechanism for measuring meaningful outcomes. This shortcoming was noted both at the level of individual cases and also at the level of programme implementation (Lee & Low, 2014). Observations during teacher and parent meetings to discuss the CSN's progress revealed that at times the IEP was determined and developed solely by the teachers. This resulted in some concerned parents disagreeing with the IEP planned for their CSN. This situation was observed by the researcher during the data collection process in the target school (S1/P1/OBS2). Generally, the teachers do discuss with the parents on the various aspects of the CSN's development before they plan the IEP. However, there are parents who had limited interactions with the school and in such cases the teachers make the decisions. Furthermore, the appointment of novice teachers too had created scenarios where they were ignorant about the CSN's development. These situations had led to the development of an IEP that does not cater to the needs of the CSN (S1/OBS1). The researcher has had discussions with state and district special education officers, teachers and parents before embarking on the study. During these baseline data gathering discussions, they provided information that there was a lack of teacher-parent collaboration (TPC) in the schools. The Malaysian education system is highly centralized, with policies advocated at the federal level (Ratnavadivel, 1999). Basically, the schools work on directives and since there were no directives from the authorities, TPC was neglected. The inconsistencies and difference in approach among the teachers suggest the need for this study, which aims to find out how TPC is carried out in SEIP and if the elements in Epstein's Framework were evident in the TPC.

Wide scale educational research in developed countries has brought forth many PPC frameworks which highlights various types and approaches on how teachers and

parents can collaborate (Epstein, 1986). In the local context, however, very little research had been carried out on how teachers practice collaboration with the parents.

Research linked to the use of various types and approaches of TPC in the local SEIP is important in identifying the problems encountered while in the collaboration. An effective TPC depended on the use of approaches that are suitable in the local context. Epstein (2001) has pointed out that researchers have recently set out to study how different types of TPC relate to specific children outcomes. In Epstein's Partnership Framework, she advocated six types of involvement or six types of caring namely, parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. The development in research on this collaboration is also important for increasing knowledge on how the different types of TPC may affect children's learning and development (Jeynes, 2003). Therefore the need to support teacher-parent collaboration in schools has been the rationale of this study

This study hopes to add to the research base, specifically in the Malaysian context, the TPC in SEIP. This qualitative case study will help to develop an understanding of how teachers and parents can collaborate in educating their CSN in accordance with the recommended practices advocated in the Epstein's framework.

1.3 Statement of Problem

The teacher and parent collaboration (TPC) is a major issue in many countries. Traditionally, it has been noted that in TPC, that parents took submissive or passive roles, where they were mere volunteers or fundraisers. As education is now focused towards the 21st century, many studies were carried out to identify the impact the parental roles had in education. Some of the previous studies conducted looked at the lack of parental involvement in schools (Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansom & Van Voorhis (2002), the role of Parent Teacher Association in schools (Sharifah & Wee,

2001), parental involvement that helped to build self-concept in children (Rohaty, 2003), and the educational level of parents (Suresh, 2010). Ramaiah, (1990) stressed that schools cannot function in isolation but need the support and cooperation from various parties, especially parents. The review of studies showed there was a gap, in the literature describing the manner in which the TPC was practised to plan and implement activities. So this study looked at how the teacher- parent collaboration was practised to plan and implement activities in the schools.

Shift 9 of the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025) states “Partner with parents, community and private sector at scale”. This has been stressed as the Blueprint has quoted that the international experience makes it clear that learning takes place beyond the school walls and can occur at home and in the community. Almost two-thirds of a child’s time is spent at home or in the community and therefore it has been stressed that children will experience “system learning” where parents and the community will play a part in the learning, rather than merely “school learning”. In preparation to face the system set in the blueprint, this study will provide guidance on how teachers and parents can collaborate to plan and implement activities in the SEIP, as Special Needs Education is also stressed in the blueprint.

A good two-way communication skill is absent without TPC in schools. The manner of communication can vary from person to person as it mainly depends on the complexity of the activities carried out. However, barriers to communication can hinder an effective relationship between teachers and parents. Generally, parents look for convenience when they send their children to school. They opt for schools near their homes to register their children. In scenarios such as these, the children are placed in schools that had culturally diversified enrolment and teachers, like vernacular schools. In such situations, the teachers need to be alert and have the knowledge of cultural and linguistic diversity of families (Colombo, 2004). But many parents keep aloof from the

schools and attend only when it is mandatory due to language barriers. This situation can be resolved if there is a teacher and parental collaboration.

Many of the past research had highlighted that the success of normal or abled children in education is closely linked to the extent of their parents' involvement (Fullan, 2007) and but the success stories of CSN are few. Most parents hope for their children's academic success (Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansom, & Van Voorhis, 2002; Mapp, 2003), but many of them are unsure of how to get engaged in their children's formal education (Epstein, 1986). Therefore, the approach of teachers to rope in parents should display some degree of friendliness and trust so that they feel wanted. It is undeniable that some parents need to be coaxed to be involved in their children's school activities as some may dread the idea of going back to the place that reminded them of their own failures (Brink & Chandler, 1993; Smith, 1991).

Epstein opined, that parents who are concern in their children education, frequently gather more information from teachers and get involved in their children's education but there are also parents who had little concern and had no interactions with the school. These parents felt that the teachers contact them only when their children pose problems at school, and such situations discouraged them from being in school (Epstein, 2008).

Through various studies carried out, Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansom, & Van Voorhis (2002) concluded that four key features account for the lack of parental involvement in schools. First, due to the lack of familiarity of the curriculum, parents tend to reduce their involvement in schools when they are needed most. Second, parents' decision to return to the workforce once the children are more independent, may keep them away from schools. Third, teachers' lack of awareness on how to involve parents of CSN especially the background of parents, a factor also supported by Wanat (1992) has led to the lack of parental commitment in schools. Finally, single parents, working

parents and those parents who live far from school often have little commitment because of the other family commitments, time factor and also the distance they need to travel.

These issues can be resolved if schools take the initiative to organise programmes. It had been said teachers viewed parents as mere recipients of their decisions (Rockwell, Andre, & Hawley, 1996) and therefore they expect parents to comply with whatever decisions they have made for the children.

The education system in Malaysia highlights the teachers as the main persons involved in the children's education and little emphasis is given to the parents (Sharifah & Wee, 2001). Parents in Malaysia are basically involved in schools through Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) and upon invitation, but they were not given opportunities to be involved in the classroom (Wee, 2001). Since the authorities' focus on parental collaboration is limited, parents in Malaysia leave all instructional responsibilities to teachers (Che Noraini Naima, 2006). It has also been noted that there is a dearth of research pertaining to issues on collaboration between teachers and parents, both in the education of CSN and mainstream students in Malaysia (Zuria, Norshidah & Zalizan, 2002). Studies carried out on collaboration viewed that teachers and parents should cooperate and collaborate in creating a conducive learning environment so that the outcome is positive. But research carried out by Nora, Azlina and Yeo (2009) in this area concluded that special education teachers' attitudes are believed to affect the collaboration process significantly. Therefore, it is crucial to identify factors that can increase teachers' keenness to build rapport with parents and attract their active participation in school programmes. The researchers too stressed that for special education programmes to be successfully implemented and catered for diverse disabilities more effort should be given to look at the possibilities in establishing a productive collaboration between teachers and parents.

Many concerns have been raised about school effectiveness and how it can be improved. Although various factors are necessary for effective school programmes, parental involvement ranks the highest. TPC involves a lot of interaction and the best way to encourage it is through effective communication. An excellent teacher is regarded as a key person to any initial action and one who can interact amicably and successfully in all situations (Excellent Teacher Concept, 2004). According to Turnbull et al. (2006), a teacher must have the patience and be able to understand parents' queries. Furthermore, Friend and Cook in (Gulson & Mohd Hanafi, 2013) opined that teachers should be alert about the culture and ethnicity of parents so that they will use language that is specifically suitable to them. However, Norshidah et al. (2001) in their study disclosed that the level of involvement is still low among parents in special education schools. This finding was similar to that stated by Caplan (2006). He stressed that when miscommunication happens between teachers and parents it naturally dampens the interest in parents and it can affect their links with schools. However, surveys carried out showed that only a small number of parents are involved in their children's school although they guided their children in learning at home and limited communication could be a factor (Epstein, 2001).

Oostdam and Hooze (2013) in their study on active parenting looked at the various form of parental involvement in schools and they noted that it was not usual to involve parents as an educational partner in the actual learning process of their children. Teachers did not adopt an open approach but they rather tend to tell parents what they should do or keep them at a distance.

The Salamanca Statement (1994) had stated that the government should take the lead in promoting parental partnership as stipulated in the policy and the legislation concerning parental rights.

Unlike the special education system in the United States and Japan, in Malaysia, it is not mandatory for the teachers and the parents of CSN to collaborate in the school programmes. Only some parents who are educated and who have the initiative have taken actions to gather more knowledge about the disability of their CSN from established sources and from experts in the field (The Malaysian Bar, 1999).

In Malaysia, MOE aided schools only invited parents to participate in activities organised by Parent-Teacher Associations for teachers are seen as key players in the education system (Sharifah & Wee, 2001). Therefore, this role that parents take does not augment strong interaction between the home and the school (Wee, 1995, 1996), hence creating a gap between home and school participation. Thus, there is a need for teachers to collaborate with parents in Malaysian schools where CSN attend.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

Special Education in Malaysia was given more attention when it was reviewed in the Education Act of 1996 (Education Act, 1996). This Act enabled families to send their CSN to government aided schools. The role of educating the children was left to the teachers. Parental roles are not stipulated in the formal education of these children thus, not much of parental involvement is seen in formal education. Parental involvement is evident when schools invite parents to participate in school activities. Thus, this role of parents is only ceremonial. The potentials of parents are not tapped; therefore the teachers are the sole decision-makers in the education of the CSN. In order to acquire awareness on how parents are involved in the schools it is prudent to study how parents are involved in the schools that their CSN attend and if they collaborate with the teachers in the school that is connecting research to practice. The researcher hopes to explore how parents collaborate with the teachers during the activities and if

the elements of Epstein's Framework were evident in the two primary schools involved in this study.

The purpose of this study was to explore to what extent TPC was practised during the planning and implementation of the activities in the SEIP in the primary schools and to explore factors that supported and inhibited the planning and implementation of the activities. The study explores how the framework advocated by Epstein, involving elements such as parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with community was incorporated in the schools' activities. The findings derived from the two schools could be a model for other SEIP primary schools. Finally, based on the findings of the study, a framework was formulated for further improvement of the TPC in the Malaysian context.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are written based on the rationale and the statement of problem. The main objective is to describe how the teacher- parent collaboration was practiced in the SEIP and the factors that supported and inhibited this collaboration and finally to what extent was Epstein's framework incorporated in the teacher-parent collaboration was practiced in the special education integrated programme in the primary schools. The goals are:

1. To explore the extent of teacher- parent collaboration is practised during the planning of activities in the special education integrated programme in the primary schools.
2. To explore the extent of teacher-parent collaboration is practised during the implementation of activities in the special education integrated programme in the primary schools.

3. To explore the factors that support the teacher- parent collaboration practice in the special education integrated programme in the primary schools.
4. To explore the factors that inhibit the teacher- parent collaboration practice in the special education integrated programme in the primary schools.
5. To explore how the framework advocated by Epstein is incorporated in the teacher-parent collaboration practice in the special education integrated programme in the primary schools.

1.6 Research Questions

This research focused on how TPC was carried out in the SEIP. The research questions that guided the study were:

1. To what extent is teacher-parent collaboration being practised during the planning of activities in the special education integrated programme in the primary schools?
2. To what extent is teacher-parent collaboration being practised during the implementation of activities in the special education integrated programme in the primary schools?
3. What are the factors that support the teacher-parent collaboration practice in the integrated special education programme in the primary schools?
4. What are the factors that inhibit the teacher-parent collaboration practice in the integrated special education programme in the primary schools?
5. How is the framework advocated by Epstein incorporated in the teacher-parent collaboration practice in the special education integrated programme in the primary schools?

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study contributed to the knowledge on the TPC practices in the Malaysian SEIP. Besides, any programme planned in the school will have the children as the focus and for this reason it is useful to know how TPC benefits CSN. In addition, any programme carried out will have factors that give encouragement or hindrance to the programme and this study looked at the factors that supported and inhibited the programme so that more effective TPC can be implemented in the future. The findings gathered from this study on how TPC is carried out can be beneficial to the MOE, professionals known as teachers in this study and parents as they plan and for more effective TPC in their schools.

The Special Education Unit in MOE has emphasised the need to include the parents of CSN in its programme, thus the findings of this study will provide input to MOE to upgrade the special education system in the country. A consistent and well-planned activity is believed to have long-term effect on special education outcomes (Conyers, Reynolds & Suh-Ruu Ou, 2003). Therefore, the findings of this study will provide an insight into the implementation of TPC in SEIP in the future so that CSN can benefit from the exercise.

As in-service training for professional development is mandatory in the local context, this study could provide an avenue for the MOE to organize in-service training for special education teachers on how to get parents involved in the TPC so that teachers, parents and CSN could collectively benefit.

Furthermore, this study can provide the administrators the opportunities to expand on the programme by implementing more practices and even training sessions that were deemed necessary for parents to be involved actively in TPC programme. The six type of involvement advocated by Epstein also provided opportunities for teachers to collaborate with other SEIP to organize projects involving the school and the community

so that more parents were alerted to be part of the collaboration programme. This link also provided opportunities for parents to interact with more fellow parents with CSN and also assist the teachers. This interaction could be an avenue for parents to gather information and knowledge which can indirectly help them in the development of their CSN.

Many studies on parental involvement have indicated that parents are important people in their child's overall development at all stages and Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influences have stressed their comprehensive role that can help to develop a strong partnership between the teachers and the parents. This study used this theoretical perspective as its premise to gain an understanding in TPC.

The case study approach used to acquire an in-depth understanding on TPC practices gave an opportunity to hear from those directly involved in the study and their perspective of the programme. This is a noteworthy contribution as this study has emphasised the need to involve parents to organise practices collectively with the teachers.

Most of the current literature on the parental involvement gives the Western view of the phenomenon and there is a lacking in the Malaysian perspective. The detailed descriptions of the practices that were carried out in the programme will provide substantial information that is necessary to develop knowledge on this collaboration in the special education system in Malaysia. The findings of the study will be useful for teachers to draw their strategic plan to suit the local context for every academic year.

In addition, the outcomes of this study too will provide necessary information for the MOE to plan and provide necessary guidelines on TPC to schools involved in special education. This move will help schools to adopt a positive attitude in implementing the collaboration and not feel rejected to teach CSN. Thus, the noble effort of MOE will be a reality if there is collaboration between teachers and parents. The researcher with the teachers and parents' cooperation will present the findings on how teacher-parent

collaboration was practiced in the two SEIP in MOE schools, and to what extent was Epstein's framework incorporated in the school activities in the local Malaysian context.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

This study presents pertinent information on teacher-parent collaboration practiced in SEIP and also its limitations. Each SEIP had varied nature of TPC practices and therefore we cannot presume or generalize that the participants, namely the teachers and parents in the study can be representative of all SEIP. The focus of this study is to present an in-depth understanding of TPC practices conducted in two SEIP and this finding can be useful in other contexts with similar characteristics as the present study.

Furthermore, this qualitative study has been undertaken to collect data by observing, interviewing and analysing documents available. The research also depended on the participants' ability to present their experiences and opinions. However, there was a possibility for the participants to be biased and provide only positive opinions and reflections to suit the context of the study they were in or they expressed what they believed the researcher wanted to hear. This can happen even though at the beginning of the study the participants had agreed to present unbiased reflections or opinions.

In addition, there were occasions when the planned programmes had to be postponed at the last minute due to some ad-hoc programmes organised by the higher authorities. The researcher was unable to observe certain practices planned, such as dental health programme and camping due to this pitfall. Scenarios such as these have forced the researcher to fall back on reports and documents of prior such programmes carried out.

The SEIP in the two mainstream schools carried out the planning of TPC practices based on the needs of the parents and CSN. These needs depended on the degree of disabilities in the CSN. The academic practices were similar in the two

schools. However, there were activities such as co-curriculum activities carried out that were not similar between the two schools as the degree of disabilities in CSN affected their participations. This has caused some variation in the planning and implementation of activities in the two schools. If comparisons were made based on the similar practices in the same type of involvement, it would have further enhanced the contrast between the cases.

1.9 Operational Definition

The terms used in this study are defined below. Some of the terms have varied definitions when compared between the local and the international context. In this study, the researcher used the following definitions for the terminologies used.

1.9.1 Epstein's Six Types of Involvement

The six types of involvement in Epstein's framework (2009) are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community. These terms will be used in this study.

Parenting: This term refers to the basic responsibilities of parents. Parenting, in this study refers to the general care parents give their CSN and the practicing of positive parenting skills such as molding the CSN's character that will prepare them for school. It also involves providing a learning environment at home that is conducive and will support school learning.

Communication: This term is used to show how parents and teachers interact with each other to gather information about their CSN. In this study, communication is established through telephone calls, messages sent by

professionals to parents and vice-versa, letters, memos written in log book, home visits by teachers and face to face meetings between professionals and parents in schools for the purpose of understanding the development and achievement of the CSN.

Volunteering: This term refers to the initiative taken by parents to be involved in their CSN's activities both at school and outside the school premises. In this study, parents take the roles of co-teachers, aides, chaperones, mentors and even as audiences to attend school programmes such as assemblies, sports, award ceremonies, celebrations and concerts.

Learning at Home: This term refers to the steps taken by parents to instill the learning habit in their CSN at home. In this study, the teachers provide information to parents on the skills and topics taught in school so that parents can do follow-up practices that are linked to class work. Parents too get support from teachers on how to teach and assist their CSN at home.

Decision-making: This term indicates an active involvement of parents as participants in school organization such as Parent-Teacher Association and school committees. In this study, through active parental involvement, parents have the potential to influence the decisions of teachers in developing the IEP and in programmes planned which can help to elevate CSN's success.

Collaborating with the Community: This phrase refers to the link that the teachers and parents make with agencies such as business communities, faith-based organisations and governmental and non-governmental agencies. In this study, besides the above links, a link is also made with other SEIP through the district level programmes. Having these links are important as these agencies conduct various programmes that support the CSN's development. This shared responsibility helps to ease the burden of parents and that of teachers in providing the best services with the belief that it could improve CSN's educational success.

1.9.2 Teachers

In this study the term teachers is used for the participants who are trained as teachers. In this study, the Special Education administrators and the Special Education teachers teaching the CSN in the SEIP are referred together as teachers.

1.9.3 Parents

The term parents, according to Henderson and Mapp (2002) has a broad scope as it includes family members, siblings, grandparents, and aunts who play a significant role in the education and general development of children in their care.

In this study, the parent can be a biological parent, caregiver or a legal guardian who is totally responsible in the upbringing of the CSN.

1.9.4 Collaboration

Collaboration is a dynamic process of linking resources such as motivation, knowledge, skills into a voluntarily formed context to make decisions collectively (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1996; Cook & Friend, 1991). However, Claiborne and Lawson

(2005) refer to collaboration as a process where two or more individuals are involved in an interaction towards achieving common goals, improving results and attaining desired benefits, which cannot be achieved by an individual alone.

In this study, collaboration involves teachers who are directly involved in teaching CSN and parents of CSN and how they interact to discuss matters pertaining to CSN and how they share the responsibilities in carrying out programmes that can help in the overall development of CSN.

1.9.5 Children with Special Needs (CSN)

Children with Special Needs (CSN), is a general term used to refer to infants, toddlers and school-going children with disabilities (Gargiulo & Kilgo, 2000). Based on the Individuals with Disabilities Act (PL 101-476), the categories of CSN include: autism, deafness, deaf-blindness, hearing impairments, intellectual impairments, multiple disabilities, orthopaedic impairment, other health impairment, emotional disturbance, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury and visual impairment.

In this study the term children with special needs (CSN) refers to children with Down syndrome, autism spectrum disorder, developmental delay, cerebral palsy, mild mental retardation, attention deficit hyperactive disorders, behavioural and emotional problems, and specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia (Ministry of Education Official Portal, 2011).

In the Malaysian perspective, Learning Disabilities is the term used to refer to CSN. Sebastian (1993) states that the Selangor and Federal Territory Association for Retarded Children used this term to refer to the children in their care when they started their intervention with the assistance from Robert Deller in 1987. The Special Education Unit in the Ministry of Education, began to use this term broadly when it

started an educational programme for children with varied cognitive disabilities in the mainstream primary schools in 1995 (Sharifah Zainiyah, 2005).

In the international perspective, the term learning disability is used to refer to cognitive disability which involves perceptual disability, brain injuries, neurological disorders, brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia (Dunlap, 1997).

According to IDEA 1997, the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) and the Interagency Committee on Learning Disabilities (ICLD), a person with learning disability has difficulties in learning, precisely in one or in all the language skills and mathematics but physical, social, sensory, cognitive, emotional and behavioural impairments are not the main cause of it (Lerner, 2003). It is crucial to note too that the statement by NJCLD and the ICLD indicates that learning disability may coexist with other disabilities provided that the individual's learning disability is not caused by the other impairments (Lerner, 2003).

1.9.6 Special Education Integrated Programme (SEIP)

The SEIP is a programme implemented in most of the mainstream schools in Malaysia. It is mainly catered for CSN. The purpose of this programme was mainly to provide CSN the maximum opportunities to interact and socialise. The existence of this programme in the mainstream schools provides avenue for CSN, who are educable to follow instructions in mainstream classes. Based on the Special Education Policy, CSN who are registered in this programme are given an extra two years of instruction in the primary education compared to the mainstream pupils.

Generally, SEIP in mainstream schools have a separate block for special education classes. This is mainly to monitor and cater for CSN who have various disabilities.

1.10 Summary

It is obvious that for an interaction to be fruitful, it needs the cooperation of all parties involved. To develop a good home-school relationship, teachers should initiate communication with parents and welcome them as part of the education process.

Parents, too have to be committed and spare a substantial amount of time and energy towards the betterment of their CSN both at home and in school. They should realize that providing their CSN with the necessary facilities is not enough but they need to develop a good collaborative partnership with the teachers of their CSN so that they have a good understanding of what goes on in SEIP, and how they can develop their parenting skills to cope with CSN. Likewise, the teachers with the help from parents are able to monitor and develop the CSN's achievement.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of literature related to teacher- parent collaboration strategies carried out in schools. Parental involvement is significantly important because many noted researchers such as Hallahan, Kauf and Lloyd (1985) have clarified that academic performance of special children depends on family support and involvement. The review is guided by the research questions that were devised to help in the study. Several aspects of teacher- parent collaboration for parents with Children with Special Needs (CSN) are discussed. The theory underlying this collaboration and context of current literature pertaining to teacher-parent collaboration and how it can be used to facilitate collaboration in special education will be discussed. The mandates on parental involvement components of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) will also be reviewed and the chapter concludes with the conceptual framework of the study.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

In order to understand how a teacher - parent collaboration programme can be carried out in the local integrated special education schools, it is important to have a strong foundation of the theories and models related to the field. Besides, one needs to be familiar with the terms and phrases that embody these theories such as Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory and Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres

of influence. These terms and phrases are not abstract concepts, as they may not be used in daily conversations (Epstein, 1995).

Furthermore, Epstein (2009) states that underlying all the policies and programmes is a theory that shows how connections are made between social communities; a framework of the basic elements of school, family and community collaboration for children's learning; the knowledge gained through positive and negative feedbacks of these connections for students, families, and schools; and also to have an insight on how to plan excellent programmes.

2.1.1 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner (1979) reveals that the ecological system theory studies the scientific aspects of human development and their adaptation to their surroundings. In his model, Bronfenbrenner viewed the environmental context of an individual as being nested and inter-linked. These nested layers are known as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. As an individual develops, there is an increasing interaction between the layers thus creating a varied degree of distance between these layers.

The microsystem forms the innermost layer and this is where an individual interacts with the immediate surroundings. The mesosystem, the second layer goes beyond the immediate environment and it involves interacting with individuals from other microsystem. The third layer or the exosystem refers situations where individuals are not directly involved but the surroundings that may have an influence on the individual. The final layer, the macrosystem consists of values and systems practiced by a society in which an individual lives.

Keyes (2000) adapted Bronfenbrenner's framework into the research on parent-teacher roles. The nested structure on the left in Figure 2.1 shows the characteristics that the teachers acquired while in the microsystem and the nested structure on the right shows the attributes that the parent acquired in the microsystem. In this stage, the teachers and the parent as individuals progress as they gain experiences in the various areas listed in Figure 2.1. In the next layer, the mesosystem, various links and interactions take place between the teachers and the parents, thus developing a relationship between them, thus, a link between the microsystems such as the home and the school exists. The next two layers in the nested structure, the exosystem and the macrosystem, which shows the link between the societies and their norms, values, beliefs and their principles. As the teachers and parents interact at these levels, they have the opportunities to build a connection between themselves and they may also face challenges as they collaborate to make a link between the home and the school. Through the adaptation of the Bronfenbrenner's model, Keyes exposed the complex influences on individuals.

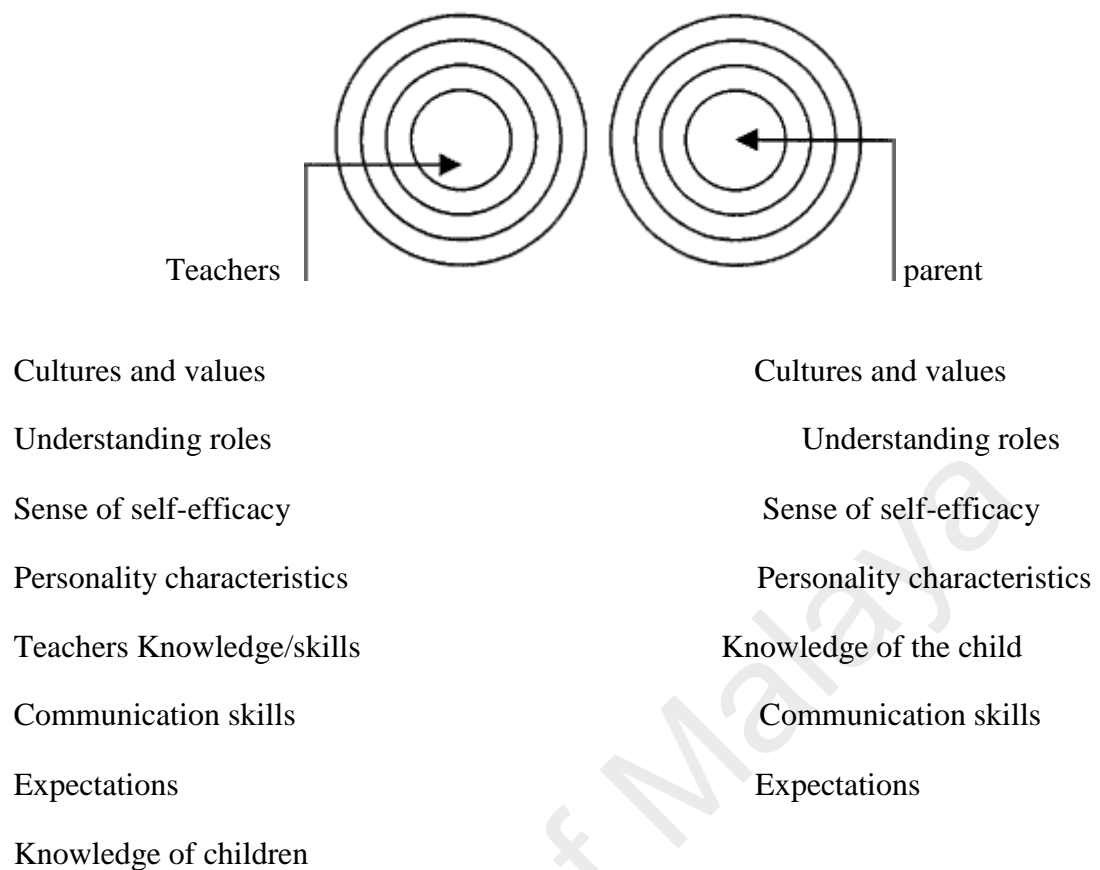


Figure 2.1. Ecology of the teacher and ecology of the parent.

(Adapted from Keyes, 2000)

Bronfenbrenner (1979) views the environment in the microsystem as changing continuously and thus this makes an impact on the children who make adjustments to suit their own environment and experience. At this level, the home and the school are the most important environment in a child's life. Through the child's assimilation between the home and the school, the child brings the values and beliefs that they experienced from each of their microsystem into the mesosystem as the child interacts between home and school frequently. The ecological model stressed the strong link that exists between the home and school. This link is seen as beneficial and having a strong positive effect on a child's development, thus collaboration between these two microsystems provides lots of benefits (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Fish, 2002).

Parental involvement is greatly enhanced in the ecological model. It emphasises a shared responsibility between the teachers and the parents for children's success both in academic and in behaviour (Christenson, 1995). This shows that families and schools need to communicate and share information they have among themselves. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological systems Theory is highlighted here as Epstein's theory was developed based on his work. Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence is vital in a child's development which helps to foster a strong relationship between the microsystems in Bronfenbrenner's theory.

2.1.2 Epstein's Model

Epstein's framework has a similarity to Bronfenbrenner's as it views a child's growth through the intersection of various contexts.

Epstein's (1987) model consists of spheres set up in a Venn diagram (Figure 2.2) signifying the school, family and community, who take the responsibilities to support, guide and nurture, inspire and finally develop a child who takes the centre stage in the model.

Epstein explains that the participants in the spheres play a vital role in the child's development as they interact. The amount of interaction determines how the spheres are brought closer or overlap or kept apart. Three forces, time (Force A), family practices (Force B) and school practices (Force C) in Figure 2.2 determined the extent of this overlapping of the spheres. Epstein (1987) further stated that the overlapping or the distance between the spheres depended on the characteristics and philosophy practiced by the family and the school.

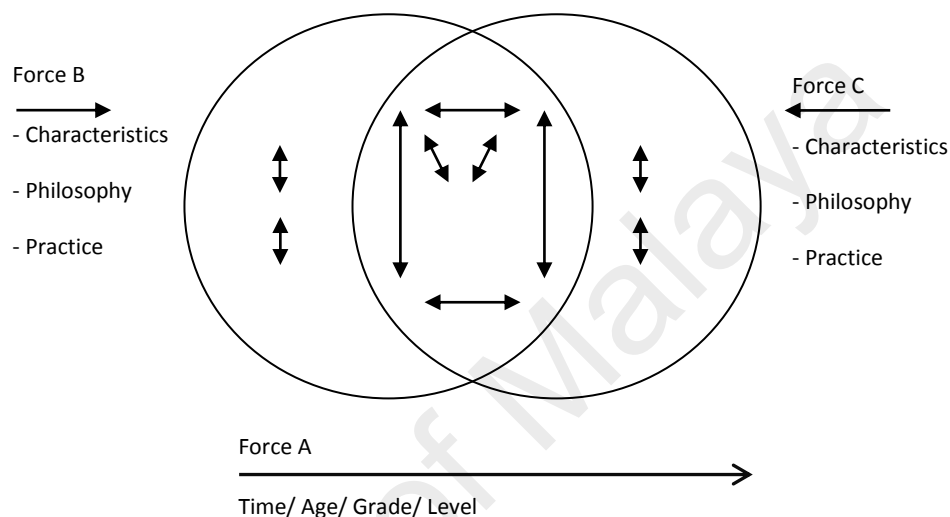
Force A, in Figure 2.2 refers to time as it plays a role to determine the extent of overlap or the distance made between the home and the school (Epstein, 1987). Time

refers to the age of the child, the grade level of the child in school and also the social situation during the phase the child was in school. Epstein opined that social norms have changed as historical developments have influenced positively on parents and professionals in schools. The three features seen in Force A determine the extent of the overlapping of the spheres between Force B and Force C. Epstein (1987) stressed that a complete overlap of the spheres was impossible as there are practices that the schools and families carry on their own. However, Epstein opined that when a strong link occurs between Force B and Force C, where these forces collaborate as genuine members and are consistently in close communication and collaboration in various programmes, then the extent of the overlap is at the greatest. These forces form the ‘external’ model in the framework (Epstein, 2009).

The ‘internal’ model in the framework shows the place and the manner of communicational and interpersonal link between the individuals in the spheres. Epstein opined that these social relationships can be examined at a broader scope, that is, at an institutional level, where schools invite all the families of their students for school programmes and also in a narrow scope, when the schools have interactions at an individual level, where personal interactions are conducted between teachers and parents during meetings or even through telephone communication (Epstein, 2009). This form of interaction is evident to discuss specific agendas, such as a child’s behaviour and ability. Epstein further advocated that the link made between the educators, parents and the community at large can be studied within the model (Epstein, 2009).

Epstein’s model advocates that the “overlapping spheres of influence” between the school and the home expects the teachers and the parents to communicate and collaborate for the development and achievement of the children. She opines that by initiating this communication between the various milieus, it helps children. It is undeniable that children are “the main actors in their education, development and in

school” (Epstein, 2009, p.10). Epstein further states that only by designing effective collaboration activities, “to engage, guide, energize and motivate children to produce their own successes” can the school, home and community produce successful children (2009, p.10).



Key: Intrainstitutional Interactions (lower case)

Interinstitutional Interactions (upper case)

f / F: Family s / S: School c/C: Child p / P: Parent
t / T: Teacher

(Adapted from: Epstein, 1987, 1992, 1996, 2001)

Figure 2.2. The Overlapping Spheres of Influence Model

2.2 Models of School-Family Partnerships

The growing interest in having effective parent involvement has produced several ideas on how parents should be engaged in the education of their children. Various types of models have been proposed by researchers in their study of school-family partnerships. A review of some of these models may provide some insights into the models of partnerships. Cunningham and Davis (1985) and Dale (1996) have listed

three models, namely the expert model, the transplant model and the consumer model that are evident in the current practices. Seeley's (1989) model is known as Delegation Model and finally Epstein's (1988) Model of Partnerships.

2.2.1 The Expert, Transplant and Consumer Models

As advocated by Cunningham and Davis (1985) and Dale (1996) the expert and transplant models of parents and professionals' collaboration, the teachers view themselves as experts and they had the power, taking total control and making all the decisions. They select and elicit the information that they think is relevant for the parents. These models do not elicit the full potential of the parents but placed them in the role of "passive observers" or helpers. Since parental views and feelings are given low priority, parents are reluctant to question professionals.

The shift from expert model to transplant model occurred with the notion to recognise the roles of parents in supporting their CSN needs (Mittler and McConachie, 1983) and remove them from the passive role they held. The teachers, having the expertise viewed the parents as potential resources, so transferring their skills and expertise to parents allowed parents to become more active in their role as supporters of their CSN.

The high degree of expertise shown by parents in supporting their CSN, Cunningham and Davis (1985) advocated the consumer model to guide the parent-professional collaboration. The parents are seen as having the rights to decide and choose suitable assistance and programmes for their child. Here, the teachers offer parents options and information, and help them to evaluate alternatives and to make realistic and effective decisions, thus representing the needs of themselves and their children.

2.2.2 Seeley's (1989) Delegation Model

In this model, parents are seen as delegators, where they delegate to the school the responsibility of educating their children and the teachers accept this responsibility. The schools are given the responsibility and burden in educating the children and the parent as advocate or decision maker is seen as an interference with the educators' jobs.

The researcher has selected Epstein's framework as the basis for this study for several reasons. Epstein's theory emphasizes the constant link between the school and home and that the main focus is on the positive development of children. The underlying factor advocated through the overlapping spheres of influence in the theory is the mutual understanding and the mutual responsibility that are crucial for professionals and parents to work together to achieve desired goals for their children. Furthermore, besides children, both teachers and parents get to develop and nurture a strong relationship between them. The researcher believes that this framework of Epstein (2009) is apt for this study as she advocates "family-like schools" (p.11) where teachers are able to identify each child's potentials and acknowledge them, besides interacting with all families of children in the school and "school-like families" (p.11) where parents see their children as students and provide necessary support and guidance in school matters. The need for "community- minded family" (p.11) is emphasized in this theory as the cooperation of all families is much needed for the general well-being of children, families and the neighbourhood.

2.2.3 Epstein's (1988) Model of Partnerships

Epstein's (1987, 1992a) model of parental involvement in children's education is an aid in the understanding of school-home collaboration, which was developed after 30 years of research and advocacy for parental involvement in elementary and middle schools.

Initially Epstein's model consisted of five basic types of school-family involvement activities. The sixth type of involvement came about after the suggestion made by the California State Board of Education (as cited in Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Epstein's six faceted typology of involvement relates to: (1) parenting; (2) home-school communications (3) volunteering; (4) learning at home; (5) decision-making; (6) collaborating with the community. To encourage the participation of parents in children's education, these six types of involvement are required in all the programmes organised in the schools in California (Epstein, 1992a).

Studies and assessments have recommended that a strategic partnership can be built through Epstein's six-type of involvement (Epstein, 1995, 1998). Many studies have used this model, because of its comprehensiveness and it defines several types of activities in which parents can be involved to augment their children's education at home or at school.

Generally, Epstein's model has been used as a home-school partnership guide where general education has been the focus (Epstein 1987, 1992a). Most of the collaboration research had focused on the benefits of this collaboration in general education and how teachers collaborate with parents (Epstein, 1992b; Epstein & Dauber, 1991). As there are very limited studies regarding collaboration with parents whose children are in special education, it is deemed necessary to have more focus in it. However, Deslandes, Royer, Potvin, and Leclerc (1999) opined that research findings

pertaining to this collaboration may not have focused on special education but the findings had been generalized to special education and have been used to support this collaboration with parents who have CSN. Furthermore, Griffith (1998) observed that parents with CSN are less involved compared to those in general education and therefore a direct collaboration with these parents is needed. However, Epstein through a personal correspondence (2003) with Barbara Perry stated that schools that cater for children with special needs too need to organise comprehensive programmes for the students and their families and thus she said that most of the organizational structure and the processes are similar to that practiced in general education. Furthermore, she believed that generally the challenges experienced were also the same.

2.3 Special Education Legislation

The introduction of Special Education back in the mid-nineteenth century saw the implementation of school laws which requires every school-going child to attend formal school (Dettmer, Thurston, & Dyck, 2005).

The main aims of IDEA are to ensure that all students are guaranteed an appropriate education; to make sure that the students and their parents' rights in acquiring education are protected; to support agencies in providing the education; and to monitor the effectiveness of the programme (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2000). Furthermore, IDEA states that parents are equal partners in the evaluation and planning team and thus should be included in meetings related to the decision-making of their children (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2000). Thus, IDEA has the capacity to transform parents from silent observers into active participants (Rock, 2000). IDEA (1997) too views parental involvement as their right that guarantees individuals to receive appropriate interventions and services which otherwise may not be achieved without external

assistance (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2000) It is further manifested under IDEA (1977) that legal safeguards, such as due process hearings are available to ensure that parents can question a child's placement in IEP. Therefore, any haphazard decision-making on the part of the teachers and jarring opinions among parents concerning issues towards appropriate education too need the intervention of the legislature (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2000).

Special Education in Modern Malaysia experienced a swift growth since 1990. The Education Act was implemented in 1996 and a chapter on special education was included into it for the first time in Malaysian law. "Special Education was defined as education that meets the special educational needs of students and "special school" was known as a school that provides special education according to the rules stated in Section 41 (Lee & Low, 2014).

2.4 Contributions of Existing Qualitative Studies

Qualitative studies have become a prominent mode of research in recent years. Although there has been statements that qualitative study is new to special education, its history can be traced back to almost two centuries (Brantlinger et al. 2005). Descriptive information from qualitative studies leads to the understanding of individuals with disabilities, their families, and those who work with them. It cannot be denied that through qualitative studies, Brantlinger et al (2005) stressed that studies can explore attitudes, opinions, and beliefs of various people involved in special education contexts and also in teaching strategies. Many early studies have shown links to observational data, such as deprived environmental factors or abandoned by family members may lead to developmental delays. Klierer and Biklen (2001) stated that personal narratives and life histories are prominent forms of qualitative work that explore the lived experiences

of people with disabilities. Dor (2013) in her study on Israeli teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement in school indicated that the teachers, both teaching primary and secondary schools, expressed positive attitude toward parental involvement and are confirmed by previous studies (Loges & Barge, 2003; Tozer et al., 2006).

In the field of special education, collaboration with parents is generally a key part of creating and implementing an effective IEP (Cook et al. 2012). Parents, teachers, and school administrators must work together to ensure the education and well-being of the student. Rattcliff and Hunt (2009) had started in their study that what was started as an occasional help elicited by teachers has evolved to parental participation in setting school policies, fundraising, participation in school events, and information exchange, all done on a voluntary basis. On the other hand, parental involvement includes discussions on educational matters, supervising the child, helping with homework, and maintaining on-going communicating with school personnel (Berthelsen & Walker, 2008). It is noted that multidisciplinary team approach has been adopted in special education to utilise the expertise of professionals from various disciplines. This working model has been advocated and adopted in Malaysia since 1981 but what was missing is an integration of these services to support students with disabilities and special educational needs. A multidisciplinary approach requires a strong, on-going collaboration across agencies, but the collaboration is still lacking in Malaysia. Thus, Lee and Low (2014) view a fragmented service provision whereby students with special needs and their families struggle to cope with the limited support services across ministries. Porter, Daniels, Feiler & Georgeson (2011) state that there are limited large scale research on child psychopathology and special educational needs.

2.5 Applying Epstein's Model to Special Education

2.5.1 Type 1: Parenting

Type 1 involvement looks into the parents' basic duties towards their children, parenting skills at every stage of child development, and ensuring a positive home environment that supports children as students (Epstein, 1995).

2.5.2 Type 2: Home-School Communications

Type 2 involvement deals with how parents get to know about school programmes and their child's progress. This information could be disseminated through notices, report cards, phone calls, memos, newsletters and any other mode of communications (Epstein, 1995). The school should notify parents on their every activity and also provide the child's progress report on a regular basis to parents. Information on positive progress of children should be shared with all parents as it is very helpful especially for parents who have been constantly receiving negative reports. Furthermore, schools should provide prior notice to parents about conferences so that parents can make necessary adjustments to attend the meeting. Besides, schools should have language translators to assist families as needed (Epstein, 1995).

2.5.3 Type 3: Volunteering

Type 3 involvement calls for parents to be active in the school programmes. When parents attend schools programmes or volunteer to participate in school programmes then they are involved in Type 3 activities (Epstein, 1987, 1992a). When parents with CSN volunteer in school programmes, they get the opportunity to meet various people informally, thus breaking barriers to developing a working relationship.

2.5.4 Type 4: Learning at Home

In this type of involvement, parents are provided information and ideas on how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities by supervising, discussing and completing tasks set by teachers. “Help” at home to mean encouraging, listening, reacting, praising, guiding, monitoring, and discussing - not “teaching” school subjects (Epstein, 1995).

2.5.5 Type 5: Decision-Making

Type 5 involvement requires parents to participate in school decision-making. Parents can participate in parent teacher associations and other parent organizations, advisory councils or committees at school, district or state level (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). In special education, parents can actively participate in making decisions regarding the individualized education programme (IEP) of their children.

2.5.6 Type 6: Collaborating with Community

Type 6 involvements refer to identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs to connect families (Epstein, 1995). In special education, this link is vital as families with CSN go through a great deal of stress (Powers, 1991). Parents with CSN benefit when the school provides them with information on support and advocacy groups in the community, community health, cultural, recreational, and other services (Epstein, 1995). By providing these services, parents are at an advantage to make the best choice of the resources available. This

strong relationship built over the years between the school teachers and parents have facilitated the move toward home-school collaboration (Fish, 2002). Furthermore, special education legislation has played a major role in shaping this collaboration.

2.6 Collaboration

It is vital to understand the concepts related to teacher-parent collaboration before we can describe and understand how teacher-parent collaboration can be carried out in our special education system. Although the link between the home and the school is universally accepted, it is not without its barriers (Epstein, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). The teacher-parent collaboration has become more complicated in recent years for communal interaction has turned out to be more complex in terms of relationships, roles and functions (Keyes, 2000). Keyes further states that misinterpretation, miscommunication, and lack of knowledge and skills can hinder relationships between teachers and parents. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the cultures and values held by teachers and parents, their sense of self-efficacy, the social background and their roles as teachers and parents, provides the foundation for teacher-parent collaboration.

2.6.1 Concepts of Collaboration

The terms parental involvement, parent participation, teachers and parental partnership or collaboration may have complicated definitions as different authors make varied distinctions for each of the terms based on the focus of their research. Epstein (1995) describes parental involvement in term of parents taking varied roles in and out of school. She classifies the different roles into typology. However, this involvement like

Pugh's (1987) description of participation, where parents participate with the guidance of teachers, does not give an explicit idea of ownership.

The terms collaboration and partnership gives a feel of equality and sharing of roles. Pugh (1987) broadens the concept of partnership by introducing three levels of interactions. Initially, partnership develops from a modest approach between a parent and a professional dealing with issues pertaining to a child, then between parents and a particular group where the parents focus on the management of services and finally between parents and stakeholders, in which parents are involved in the planning and policy making. Collaboration or partnership in education is the school and family connection where both the school and the family recognize, respect and support each other in the children's teaching (Epstein, 1992). Epstein further advocates that the main aim of establishing partnership or collaboration is to get the school to reach out to families and to encourage families to understand their role and the responsibility they have toward the children's learning process, thus developing better communication with families, which is the goal of partnership or collaboration (Epstein, 1995). For the purpose of this study the term "collaboration" will be used.

2.6.2 Teachers as Collaborators

Teachers should not only be trained in group dynamics in order to cooperate with other professionals, but they should be trained to work with administrators, parents, students and the community at large. Some researchers such as Epstein (1998) and Lambert (1998) view teachers as the leaders who ought to have a bigger role in decision-making. They are of the view that teachers should be encouraged to collaborate with administrators as they are the people in the forefront. Besides, Carpenter (1997) opined

that teachers should sustain a positive attitude during a change in the school dynamics as they are bound to encounter parents who have problems in their circle.

DuFour (2004) states that if collaboration occurs in school among teachers, administrators, parents, students, and the community, then a professional learning community is evident. They describe the professional learning community as an environment in which education is carried out in a fair and appropriate manner. Based on their description of a learning milieu, it has the potential to create a collaborative environment where the teachers cultivate cooperation, emotional support and above all personal development as they work together towards achievement, which they may not be able to realize as individuals. Teacher collaboration is crucial if a school is to be effective (Kohm, 2007). Wheatley (2001) voices the need for teacher collaboration in an effective operation of a school. Wheatley points out how a superintendent involved only a number of teachers to review and implement a curriculum. The superintendent realized that his approach was not effective as teachers were not involved in implementing the new curriculum and hence were not supportive of it. Wheatley's account shows that in order for schools to successfully implement a programme, they must have all members of the teaching force involved in the decision-making process. Thus, collaboration is a means of ensuring job satisfaction and successful educational reform, besides being a way to ensure all voices are heard (Xin & MacMillan, 1999).

2.6.3 Parents as Collaborators

Parents play a crucial role in collaborative efforts which are aimed at improving student performance. Besides, their involvement is necessary for effective restructuring in schools (Leonard & Leonard, 2001). Morrow (1993) states that studies have established that parents who carry out reading activities with their children have children

who showed marked improvement as readers compared to parents who are not involved in their children's reading activities. Therefore, parents should not solely depend on the school professionals to teach their children. All parents should be actively connected in their children's education (Wanat, 1999). Thus, it is essential for the education system to involve parents in the collaboration.

According to Crowson (1998), traditionally parental roles have been guided and passive. Crowson advocates that parental involvement programmes should include emergent types of activities besides the traditional types of activities. Unlike traditional forms of parental involvement programmes, which is more of a one-way communication, where the needs of the professionals are focused, and the emergent forms of parental involvement are responsible, participative and active as parents are used in decision making processes.

Epstein's (2002) framework of parental involvement stressed the importance of parental involvement in all aspects of the child's education, including involvement at school at different levels of involvement. Epstein recommended detailed strategies that educators can use for helping parents to become more involved in their school.

A comprehensive literature reviewed by Henderson and Berla (1994) and later by Henderson and Mapp (2005) yielded a similar conclusion, noting that one of important factors is predicting school success is parental involvement in school.

Epstein's (1995) concept of "Overlapping Spheres of Influence" supports Lontos' (1991) belief that homes or parents have a great influence on children's lives. Epstein's theory emphasizes that collaboration helps to improve children's success opportunities. She advocates that if all the influences that is school, family, and community in a student's life cooperate in motivating the student, then success is

determined. Thus, it is undeniable that collaboration is a tool for all individuals and organizations to work together to enhance educational success in children.

2.6.4 Community as Collaborators

Schools should play an active role in recruiting community members to collaborate in school projects. By having the community members participating actively in the decision making process, the efforts to make changes in school can be augmented.

Based on data collected, Sanders (2009) opined that schools can develop collaboration with many community organizations in various forms. The linkages are partnerships with businesses and corporations, universities and educational institutions, health care organizations, government and military agencies, national service and volunteer organizations, faith organizations, senior citizen organizations, cultural and recreational institutions, other community-based organizations and community volunteers (p. 32). The activities planned for partnerships can have multi-foci where they can be student, family, school or community centered (Sanders, 2005). This categorization of partnerships by Sanders is an excellent tool for professionals in schools to develop a collaborative organization. Sanders and Harvey (2002) identified four factors namely (a) high commitment to learning, (b) principal support for community involvement, (c) welcoming school climate, and (d) two-way communication with potential community partners as important to involvement.

2.7 Parental Involvement at Home

Students with disabilities receive educational support from their families in various situations such as at home, at school and in the community (Epstein, 1994,

2001). Parents can render their educational support to their children by providing a favourable learning environment and by discussing school matters with them (Simon & Epstein, 2001).

Numerous studies have found that parental involvement in the child's education at school and at home are important, for a number of outcomes, especially for academic achievement (Barnard, 2004; Christenson, 2004; Coleman, 1988; Epstein, 2001c; Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; K. Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Jeynes, 2003, 2005).

Children's academic achievement will increase when parents take the initiative to communicate with their children about their studies and other school activities carried out by them (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Parents' initiative to spend time with their children while doing their school work shows their interest in the education of their children. This involvement of the parents to encourage their children to do their homework and the frequent interaction helps the children to understand their lessons better and indirectly improve their academic achievement (Epstein, Simon, & Salinas, 1997).

Epstein's (2001a, 2001b, 2002) framework on parental involvement stressed the importance of parental involvement in all aspects of the child's education, including involvement at school at different levels of involvement. Epstein recommended detailed strategies that educators can use for helping parents to become more involved with their school.

Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) described three types of parent involvement: home-based such as helping with homework, school-based activities such as participating in school events, and parent- teacher communications such as talking with

the teacher about homework or calling the teacher on the telephone.

2.8 Parental Involvement at School

Parents of students with disabilities are involved in their children's school activities but not as involved as they are at home. Parental involvement at school provides opportunities for school staff and parents to interact thus building rapport between home and school (Hiatt-Michael, 2004). A comprehensive literature review conducted by Henderson and Mapp (2005) concluded that one of the important factors in predicting school success is parent involvement at school. Therefore, the evidence highlighted by Henderson and Berla (1994, p.1) "When schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not only in school, but throughout life" still stands. Furthermore, it can be noted that educational policies follow this drift by strongly encouraging parent involvement in school (National Educational Goals, 2000; No Child Left Behind, 2001).

With parental involvement in school activities, many positive values such as good academic performance, good attendance and good behaviour surface in the children (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Epstein, 2001).

It has been also been noted that about 60 percent of secondary school-age students with disabilities have parents who attend various activities in school (Newman, 2004). A type of parental involvement which is common for parents of children with special needs is their involvement in developing their children's Individualized Education Program (IEP) (Newman, 2004). The IEP is a document that states each individual student's overall achievement level and the necessary supports needed to achieve their goals (Bauer & Shea, 2003). Thus, parental involvement is crucial for positive school outcomes, but factors that motivate parental involvement

practices are vague.

Parents' involvement in the development of their child's IEP is valuable in determining appropriate adaptations and a meaningful curriculum that is rich with contents found in the general education curriculum (Healy, 2001). Parents of CSN advocate for educational programmes that meet their child's educational needs and provide access to high academic standard (Tiegerman-Farber & Radziewicz, 1998). Parental involvement in their child's academic success requires a consistent routine for study and in completing their homework. These constant support and encouragement from the parents are the key factors in maintaining academic progress. Studies have shown that well-planned and comprehensive involvement of parents in schools has resulted in impressive student development (George Lucas Educational Foundation [GLEF], 2000).

2.9 The Recommended Elements in Teacher- Parent Collaboration

According to Henderson and Mapp (2002), it is important to consider the recommended elements so that there are effective collaborations with parents in schools. Studies reviewed by Henderson and Mapp (2002), identified elements that schools could practice so that they could have effective collaborations with parents. The elements identified are: recognise parents, have supportive family programmes, develop families, develop teachers' capacity, develop learners, develop relationships and share power.

2.9.1 Recognise Parents

Henderson and Mapp (2002) stated that all parents irrespective of social-economic, education and cultural status want their children to excel in school. All parents are involved at home although the extent of their involvement may vary across

culture. Mapp stressed that most studies showed that children's development depended on the extent of their families' commitment.

Henderson and Mapp (2002) too viewed that teachers should not at any time blame parents for their children's low achievement but in fact they should learn from parents by asking them how parents encourage their children and also share cultural traditions.

Epstein's framework can be well-adapted into Special Education as she advocates that teachers should provide parents with grade level parenting guidance. She opined that teachers are in a position to help parents develop parenting skills that are needed at different stages of a child development (Epstein, 1995).

2.9.2 Supportive Families

Henderson and Mapp (2002) stressed that most programmes that engage families in supporting the children's learning, are from birth to preschool. Teachers need to adopt features from programmes that are linked to gains in children's learning. Henderson and Mapp (2002) further stressed that families will readily respond to outreach and practices such as home visits from parents educators with similar cultural background, lending libraries where games and learning materials can be borrowed, discussion groups with fellow parents and also classes on how to stimulate mental, physical and emotional development of their children. It was also noted that practices such as interactive homework, workshops that parents request for, calling to interact with parents on children's progress and meetings with teachers to know about the progress in school were effective methods to develop children.

2.9.3 Develop Families

The lack of social and political capital can restrict families from being involved in their children's learning. Henderson and Mapp (2000) viewed that teachers should work with families to develop their social and political connections. When parents feel that they have the ability and power to change their circumstances, then their children tend to do better in school as parents are better equipped to help their children. By developing the families' social capital, links are made between neighbours, other parents and teachers. It helps to promote families' connections, translate communication among families in a common language understood by all, provide help and also understand families' schedule. Henderson & Mapp (2002) too stressed that by developing families' political knowledge and skills, it helped to provide an understanding on how the school system works and a voice in policy making process.

2.9.4 Develop Teacher Capacity

The teachers should also be trained on how to connect with families and community members. When professionals were able to make smooth links with the families, it helped to make changes in families to come forward and work with them. Professional interventions were important for teachers to learn current special education teaching practices. This development of teacher's capacity is evident with the frequent in-service trainings carried out by the Ministry Of Education. A study conducted in China found that a large number of parents were apprehensive that teachers may not have relevant training or resources to prepare and implement the Individualized Education Plan (Yi Ding, Gerken, VanDyke and Fei Xiao (2006)).

2.9.5 Develop Relationships

It is very important for teachers to develop close relationships with parents and community members so that programmes planned can be successful and students show positive development. The teachers are expected to make attempts to learn about the families and adopt effective practices to reach families. The manner to develop this relationship is through communication. Chambers (1998) states that communication begins when the teachers show a warm gesture when they welcome parents who visit the school. However, Lai and Ishyama (2004) opined that the teacher's welcome gesture and the use of parents' first language to welcome will definitely create an inviting and friendly atmosphere. Berger (1991) stressed that communication involved one-way and two-ways exchanges. The manner of communication will help to develop an interactive relationship between parents and teachers. One-way communication occurs when teachers need to relay information to parents about events or activities planned in the school and usually in the written form. Davern (2004) advocates the use of communication book. Two-way communication occurs when teachers and parents are involved in a discussion of dialogue. Ramirez (2002) adopted a way of making short calls to parents of his students during school hours as he viewed that that gesture will allow room for more interactions. When relationships are built, it is crucial for teachers to focus on developing a trusting and respectful relationships.

2.9.6 Power Sharing

The professionals should hold to the philosophy of willing to share power with families. They need to ensure that parents understand that the responsibility of educating the children is a collaborative effort. By developing the concept of power sharing, families are made to feel welcomed into the schools to share ideas and energy.

Fiedler (2000) who researched parental participation in IEP meetings, noted that the document was pre-developed by the teacher and the IEP meetings were merely a formal meeting to inform parents what will be taught to their CSN and to get the parents' signatures as a sign of agreement. This goes to show that teachers take a dominant role and there is a need for schools to nurture empowerment (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001). In order for power sharing to be practiced, it is necessary to find workable ways to involve families and community members in planning and establishing policy and making decisions by exploring national school reform initiatives, training for school decision making group to work effectively and to avoid using parents for only rubberstamp decisions (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

2.9.7 Improvement

Studies have shown that when there is an effective school and home connections, the children showed positive academic and overall development. Children of parents who worked with the teachers showed a great improvement in schools. When parents interact with teachers and fellow parents, they gain knowledge which they could use to teach their children at home, thus, making a great improvement in their children. Studies conducted have indicated that parental involvement is linked to children's success at school and when parents show interest in their education at home, the children tend to perform better in school (Epstein, 2002; Henderson, Berla, 1994).

2.10 The Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework illustrates the key concepts to be studied and the presumed affiliation among them (Miles & Huberman, 1994). There are many

programmes carried out annually in the integrated primary schools in Malaysia, but this study is only concerned on how the teacher-parent collaboration was practiced during the planning and implementation of activities in the special education integrated programme in the schools. In addition, this study attempted to discover the extent of the Epstein's six types of involvement framework applied in the local context. The six types of parental involvement advocated by Epstein are parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community. The hindering factors in the study referred to the factors that inhibited the TPC practice during the planning of the activities in the SEIP in the schools and the factors that supported the TPC practices during the implementation of the activities in the SEIP in the schools. In addition, the study also explored how Epstein's framework was incorporated in the TPC practiced in the SEIP in the schools.

Besides, this study also intends to identify practices if any, that are not evident in Epstein's framework but were used in the local integrated primary school. This finding was included into the framework as a set of suggested practices that were incorporated into the local context.

Figure 2.3 provides the content of the conceptual framework in the study. The six types of parental involvement as advocated by Joyce Epstein are also indicated in the contextual framework.

2.10.1 Teacher-Parent Collaboration

Children with learning disabilities receive their special educational needs in the integrated special programmes offered in the normal mainstream schools. In these schools, pupils are confined to their own special education programmes in special classes but shares access to all the facilities with other normal students in the school.

Mohd.Nor Mohd.Taib of Special Education Department states that this integrated programme is a step towards inclusive education where able special education students may be placed to study in normal education classes.

Teacher-parent collaboration means engaged participation of teachers and parents in a consistent, organised and meaningful way in the consultation, planning, implementing and evaluating of programs and activities to increase students' achievement. It shows the degree of commitment (Maccoby & Martin, 1983) and the active role (Mittler, 2000) that parents play to foster optimal development.

Parents' relationship with school personals is seen through school communication. Parents volunteer to participate in all activities that have concern for their children. Active participation is noted when parents get involved in all school activities, attend parent-teacher association meetings and all informal meetings.

Rockwell, Andre and Hawley (1996) define parental collaboration as the practice of any activity that empowers parents and families to take part in the educational process either at home or in a program setting. They further stressed that parental programmes should include the connections between the children, parent and the educator as educating a child is seen as a shared responsibility.

This study will look at the different elements of teacher- parent collaboration that are practiced in the two integrated primary schools; concentrating on the elements recommended in the model. Through this study it is hoped that there will be a better understanding of ways to improve teacher- parent collaboration in CSN schooling.

2.10.2 Elements in the Teacher-Parent Collaboration

Many studies and years of work by educators and families in all levels of education have helped stakeholders to formulate a framework of six types of involvement. Based on the models that have been discussed, it is apparent that the Epstein's model is considered the most appropriate as it helps to promote an in depth relationship between parents and teachers. This is because teachers and parents have the responsibility to nurture a learning environment that is conducive for CSN. Besides, Epstein advocates shared decision-making thus reflecting that democracy is practiced.

The main elements in Epstein's model are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community.

2.10.2.1 Parenting

Parents want information and it needs to be repeated sometimes as parents are pre-occupied with issues pertaining to their CSN (Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwin, & Soodak, 2006). Parents need the skills to handle their CSN needs, thus they will be provided with knowledge to support their challenging CSN. Besides information needs to be disseminated in a language that parents can understand so that the interest to enrich them with knowledge is encouraged by the teachers in schools. Epstein (2010) advocates that through parenting, teachers can help all families to establish home environments to support CSN as school aged children.

2.10.2.2 Communicating

Teachers need to initiate communication with parents and not wait to be asked. The quality of communication need to be positive, understandable and respectful among teachers and parents at all times and it should be held frequently (Banning, Summers, Frankland & Beegle, 2004). Through these communications, teachers and parents can share their CSN progress and also address or plan future programmes (Epstein, 2010). Communication is a two-way link, thus mutual trust and respect id developed through healthy discussions.

2.10.2.3 Volunteering

Parents may want to volunteer to help their CSN's class (Darch, Miao, & Shippen, 2004). They may have ideas that they want to share and they know that their child may enjoy. Therefore teachers should cooperate and encourage parents to assist in the classroom. Parents should be exposed to what transpires in the classroom so that they have a better understanding of their CSN's abilities. Epstein (2010) encourages teachers to recruit and organize volunteering programmes to help and support parents.

2.10.2.4 Learning at home

Epstein advocates that teachers should provide information and ideas to parents about how to help CSN at home with homework and plan other learning activities. Besides, Sheehey and Sheehey (2007) opine that parents should share with the teachers their feelings towards assuming their responsibilities at home and also the type of therapies their CSN are undertaking. They also stated that teachers should guide the parents on how to carry out certain therapy or learning programmes at home.

2.10.2.5 Decision Making

Epstien strongly feels that parents should be included in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives. Geenan, Powers & lopez-Vasquez (2006) opines that teachers can easily bring parents into the school system as they had traditionally held the power. Thus, by accepting parents as equal partners; a healthy discussion can be carried out in the programmes planned. Parents may have to be reminded that their input during meetings is important as it is for the betterment of their CSN.

2.10.2.6 Collaborating with the community

Teachers should encourage parents to be involved in programmes linking the community. Teachers and parents should identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programmes, family practices, and CSN learning and development (Epstein, 2010).

2.11 Suggested Framework for Teacher - Parent Collaboration

Research that are carried out in developed countries have identified many programmes for teacher-parent collaboration in mainstream and special education schools. These programmes can be adapted and adopted to suit the climate of any individual environment. This research will observe and understand the TPC practiced in the two SEIP, how teachers involve and collaborate with parents in their activities. This study intended to link the information gained from the local context with the Epstein's Framework and to develop a model that can show how teacher-parent collaboration can be carried out in the Malaysian SEIP.

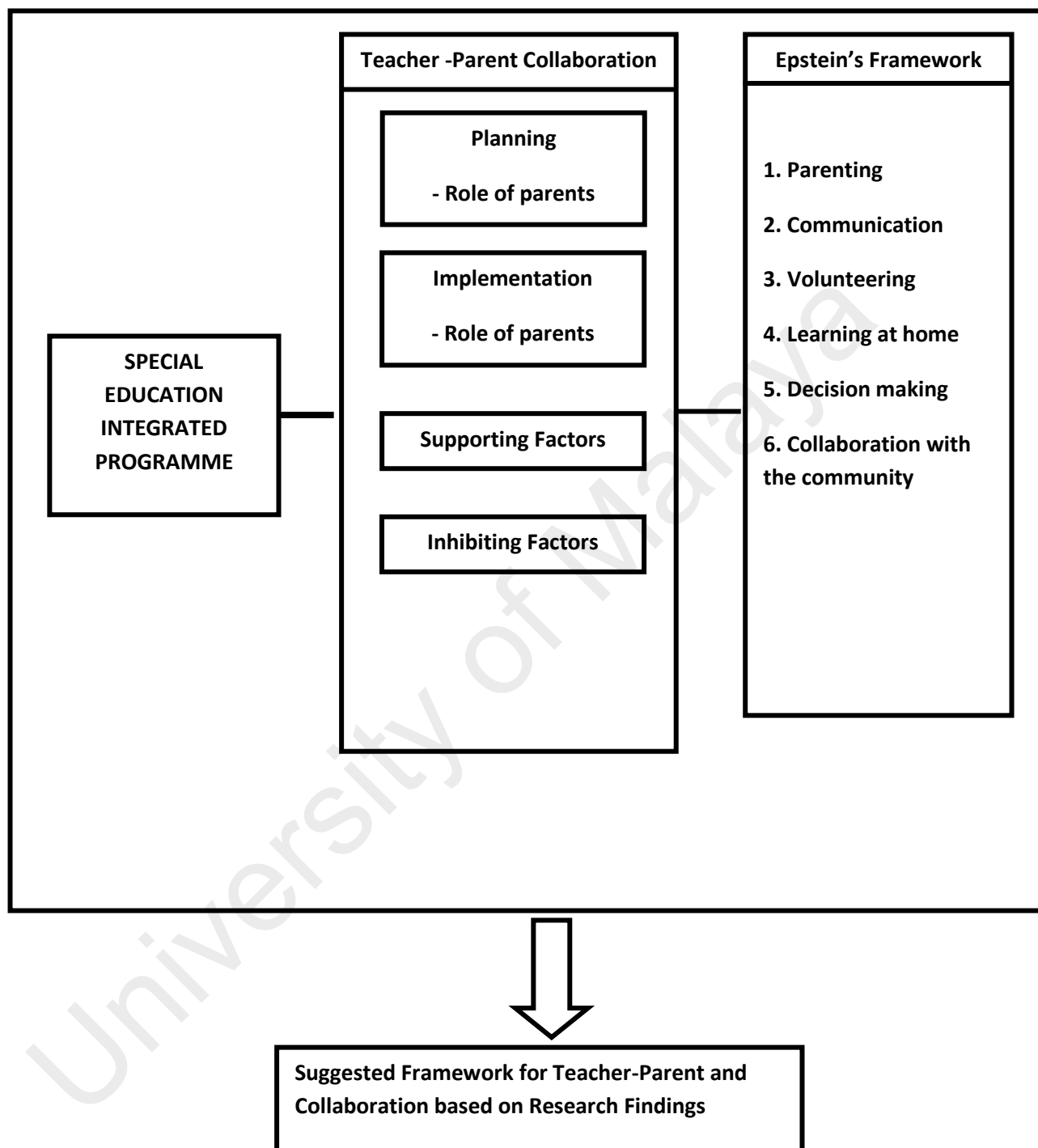


Figure 2.3. Conceptual framework of the study

2.12 Summary

This literature review has discussed the importance of teacher-parent collaboration for parents with CSN. It is hoped that it has provided some basis for studying teacher-parent collaboration in schools with CSN. The roles played by the various theories related to collaboration and the models of teacher-parent collaboration are discussed, together with research carried out in the area. This discussion concludes with the development of the conceptual framework, which provides the roles played by teachers and parents in achieving a child's total development. The conceptual framework also includes the intention of this study that is to develop a teacher-parent collaboration framework for Malaysian special education integrated programme in the primary schools.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter addresses the research methodology used in the current study. It includes the rationale for adopting the qualitative methodology, specifically a case study, and information pertaining to case selection, participant selection, approvals sought from authorities, data collection and data analysis. Issues related to trustworthiness and ethics are also addressed in this chapter.

3.1 Research Design

A research design is a strategy planned to help the researcher to integrate the research questions, data collection methods and the data analysis techniques to answer the research problem (Morse & Richards, 2002; Babbie & Mouton, 2002). Therefore, the research design presented is a blueprint of how the researcher cogently connected the research questions to the data collection methods and eventually to the findings of this study (Yin 1994).

The researcher adopted the qualitative research approach in this study which is described by Creswell (2012) as concerning “the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system that is, a setting or a context. This has become one of the rationales for choosing the case study design as the present study was conducted within the boundary of one particular setting which allowed the researcher to explore and see it from the perspective of those involved (Gillham, 2000). Since the

issue in this study was to explore to what extent teacher-parent collaboration was practised as well as to identify the factors that supported and inhibited the practice and how Epstein's Framework was incorporated, the case study research design was recommended. The inquiry focused on both the planning and the implementation of TPC practices in the schools and how these practices helped to improve interactions between teachers and parents. A qualitative approach enabled the researcher to talk to the participants and observe the actual situation in the local context. It provided a genuine insight of what was happening in the Special Education Integrated Programmes. Furthermore, the researcher was able to gauge the teachers' and parents' understanding of the TPC process and its relevance in the general development of children with special needs (CSN).

Pugach (2001) asserts that generally, research in special education was conducted using experimental designs, although qualitative enquiry is not new to research in special education as many issues have been documented pertaining to individuals with special needs. Thus, the qualitative research design, which explored deeper into the studied issues, was deemed suitable for this study as it offered the means to thoroughly explore teacher-parent collaboration practiced during the planning and implementation of activities carried out in the SEIP. This feature in qualitative study that offered a thorough exploration of a process, event or phenomenon (Creswell, 2012: Punch, 2000: Yin, 1994) is unique compared to a quantitative approach such as surveys, in which the respondents are given a specific number of options from which to select a response. The limited number of options cannot fully explain the complexities involved in the teacher-parent collaboration practised during the planning and implementation of activities in a school. The findings in the quantitative studies also showed a general predetermined feedback.

Literature shows that previous studies on special education were constructed based on findings obtained from quantitative studies (de Carvalho, 2001). A study of such nature would see the cause and effect of a phenomenon. In Malaysia, Nora Mislan et. al (2011) used the mixed-method of quantitative and qualitative design in their study in parent-teacher collaboration in developing the Individualised Education Plan. Suresh (2010) used the quantitative design in his study where he looked at the parents' education level to determine if that played a role in the extent of their involvement in their children's education.

This study used the case study approach, more specifically multiple case designs, among the various designs available within the qualitative method. Case studies involved a strategy where the researcher makes enquiries to explore in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. The cases are bound by time and activity, and the researcher collects detailed information through various data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Stake, 1995).

Merriam (2001) agrees that using the qualitative case study technique is definitely better than the survey or experiential design for examining underlying factors in real-life interactions. Thus, by using this design, the researcher was able to provide a detailed description of the various aspects of that was practiced under the Special Education Integrated Programme (SEIP) and what it meant to those who were part of it (Merriam, 2001). The naturalistic style of the research helped to scrutinise human interaction as in the real world and describe events and issues that could be found in the case setting (Gillham, 2000, Yin, 1994).

The researcher was able to explore the teacher-parent collaboration that was practised during the planning and implementation of activities under the SEIP ; the thoughts and opinions of the parents involved in the activities; their roles in the

programme; the benefits of the feedback provided during the collaboration and the usage of the findings in future teacher- parent collaboration development.

The researcher was concurrently able to get the perspectives of the teachers who were also part of the collaboration programme in the integrated primary schools. They explained how the teacher-parent collaboration was practised during the planning and implementation of activities in their respective schools and the challenges they faced. By observing the teachers and the parents, the researcher learned their different styles, their feelings during the interaction and also the underlying reasons for their diverse opinions.

Furthermore, this study hopes to add more information to the existing pattern of parental involvement and could even contribute to future changes in educational policy development and practice.

3.2 Role of Researcher

The researcher's role is extremely important in a case study, as "a primary instrument for collecting and analysing data" and being personally involved at the site to gather "meaningful information" (Merriam, 2001, p. 20). The researcher's role as the key tool in the research has its benefits and drawbacks. The benefits related to how data was collected and used to generate information, while the drawbacks proved to be connected to "human mistakes", "missed opportunities", and "interference of personal bias" (Merriam, 2001, p.20).

In this study, the researcher took the role of a non-participant observer, observing and recording notes without participating in the activities that were taking place in the school. The researcher monitored how the teachers and parents planned and executed the activities, and later interviewed them to gain information pertaining to their planning

and implementation of the various activities. Through interviews, the researcher was able to understand the teachers and parents' reactions and perceptions while being involved in the various activities.

Lengthy engagement at the site and visits to the homes helped the researcher gain the confidence of the teachers and parents so that they felt comfortable enough to discuss pertinent matters related to the study. The teachers and parents were assured that the study was carried out to help improve the planning and implementation of activities through teacher-parent collaboration in the schools, and that confidential issues discussed would remain in confidence.

According to Flick (2002), the communicative ability of a researcher is the key instrument in collecting data. Thus, the researcher, equipped with good communication skills was able to interact with the participants to obtain relevant data to answer the research questions. The researcher also kept a journal to record the daily research activities (Guba & Lincoln, 1983) and the observations made throughout the data collection and data analysis period.

3.3 Case Selection

An institution, an event, an individual, an activity, a group, a programme, a class, a community, a state or a country is referred as a case or bounded system which can make available necessary information pertaining to the phenomenon studied (Merriam, 2001; Berg, 2004; Creswell, 2012). In this study, the case or the bounded systems were the Malaysian Special Education Integrated Programme (SEIP) in two mainstream schools. The SEIP in the study was a typical programme carried out within the grounds of mainstream schools. The SEIP classes were placed in one block and the CSN were provided necessary facilities. They were given the opportunities to use

facilities such as the computer laboratory, the library and the music room of the mainstream schools according to a schedule. The CSN also joined the mainstream school children for the formal assembly, sports activities and out-door activities such as camping. The selected SEIP had a large CSN enrolment and this gave the researcher a large range of parents from which to select participants for the study. Parents who were active in the school programme and were willing to be participants were selected. In a case study involving an institution like a school, it is possible to focus on a specific programme or a system within the institution (Berg, 2004; Merriam, 2001; Stake 2000). The focal point of this study was the teacher-parent collaboration (TPC) that was practised during the planning and implementation of the activities in the SEIP. The decision to select the TPC as the focus of the study was based on the need to link the school and the homes of CSN. The TPC practice was followed to determine how much attention CSN received from the teachers and parents.

The approval to carry out the research was obtained from the State Education Department. Then a list of all SEIP in the district of Segamat was obtained from the Special Education unit in the District Education Office. Three schools, identified as 'effective' schools by the Special Education Officer, were selected. The schools were referred to as 'effective' in terms of their large student enrolment and their active participation in the district level activities. Furthermore, the teachers were experienced and committed to training their CSN. The District Special Education Unit also selected these schools as venues to host their programmes. Documents reviewed showed these schools had held activities that involved parents. The researcher visited the three schools and carried out the initial enquiry to determine if TPC were carried out in the schools. After further discussion with the Special Education Officer, the researcher narrowed the selection to two schools with SEIP to carry out observations, to collect data on TPC practices.

The schools in this study were given pseudonyms. The main criterion for selection was that the practice of the TPC was clearly evident in the schools. The researcher had also reviewed documents such as evidence.

The other criterion for the case selection was the high student enrolment and this criterion was necessary for the researcher in order to select a set of parents who were actively participating in their children's school. This provided the researcher with the opportunity to gather in-depth information and the perspectives of the parents on the TPC in the school. The school administrators granting the researcher permission to access the site and gather relevant information in their schools was the final criterion in the case selection. Moreover, the researcher selected these schools with the belief that the parents of the students had a role to play that enabled the students to excel in the activities in which they participated. Table 3.1 shows the case selection criteria.

Table 3.1
Case Selection Criteria

School	Presence of Teachers and Parental Collaboration Programme	Student Achievement	Participant Background	Unique Features of School
Megah Primary School	Yes	High	Experienced teachers and active parents	School has won Excellence awards at district, state and national levels
38 students				High enrolment
Linang Primary School	Yes	High	Experienced teachers and active parents	School has won excellence awards at district and state levels
48 students				High enrolment

3.4 Selection of Participants

In this study, the participants within the cases were selected based on the purposeful sampling method, which according to Merriam (2001) was necessary when the researcher intends to gain an in-depth insight of an event, and it is crucial that the researcher is able to learn from the sample selected. The main criterion in selecting the

participants from each school was their willingness to be part of the study and to provide the necessary information for the research question asked, based on the study (Maxwell, 2005).

The two groups of participants in the study were the teachers and the parents. The teachers comprised an administrator and two teachers from each school within the SEIP unit. The criterion for selecting the administrators was based on their role as the senior assistants in charge of the special education unit and who, therefore, collectively made all the decisions pertaining to TPC in their schools with the approval of the head of the school. They had wide knowledge in special education needs and they could provide the researcher with the necessary information on how TPC was practiced during the planning and implementation of activities in the SEIP. The senior assistants were the key informants who also provided photocopies of documents related to their TPC. Both the senior assistants were experienced, special education teachers and confident administrators.

The teachers in the selected schools in the study were qualified in special education and were class teachers in the school. They had been teaching in the school for more than five years and were familiar with the CSN and their parents. These teachers played a crucial role in training the students and they had actively participated in various academic and co-academic activities, and had received excellence awards, either at the district, state or national level.

In each school the researcher selected two parents who had children with different degree of learning disabilities. The selection of the parent participants for this study was based on their involvement in the TPC during the planning and implementation of activities and their ability to provide necessary information related to the TPC programme in the school. The parents selected were all mothers of CSN, as

feedback from the administrators stated that it was the mothers who frequented the school and had shown commitment and participated actively in the activities.

The researcher met the teachers and explained their role in the study. This was done so that they were willing to participate and provide the information necessary to answer the research questions of the study (Maxwell, 2005). The researcher clarified their doubts and they agreed to be participants in the study. The researcher earlier had informal meetings with participants, and as the researcher established rapport with them, the researcher scheduled one-to-one interviews.

Besides the criteria stated, the participants were selected based on their willingness to cooperate with the researcher to be involved in the TPC practiced during the planning and implementation of activities in the school. The researcher hoped to hear their perceptions and feelings about the activities carried out and their involvement.

There were ten participants in this study, comprising two administrators, four teachers and four parents that is, an administrator, two teachers and two parents from each school. The criteria for participant selection are listed in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

Participant Selection Criteria

Participants	Selection Criteria
Administrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. They planned the annual school programme. ii. They made administrative decisions pertaining to teacher and parent collaboration. iii. They were knowledgeable in special education programme.
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Teachers teaching Special Education classes. ii. Class teachers. iii. Involved in planning the teacher and parent collaboration programme. iv. Teachers who had knowledge of the special education programme.
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Parents who have children with special needs. ii. Parents who showed commitment in their children's development. iii. Parents who were active in school activities.

3.5 The Settings

3.5.1 Megah Primary School

The Special Education Integrated Programme (SEIP), which is a unit in Megah Primary School (MPS), is situated in a housing area, 10 kilometers away from the Segamat Township. MPS is a single session school with over 700 pupils and 63 teachers. This school was established in 2006.

The SEIP unit in MPS is situated on the ground floor of a block, which is close to the assembly ground, canteen and the school field. It has 38 pupils of different special needs, 9 teachers and 3 teacher assistants. The CSN were divided into five classes, namely, PK1a, PK1b, PK2, PK3 and PK4. The classes are placed next to each

other in a row. The classes have CSN with mixed abilities. In each class, there are CSN of different age groups and they are placed according to their academic abilities.

The SEIP unit in MPS is popular because the CSN had always participated in all academic and co-academic activities organised by the District Special Education Unit (DSEU). The CSN had excelled in various activities and had also represented the district at state level competitions and had won various accolades.

The SEIP unit in MPS was awarded the Certificate of Excellence in Co-curriculum and was also the winner in the Best Management of Programme in Special Education Competition organised by the District Education Office. The highlight of the unit's achievement was winning the National Level Award for Excellent Management of Co-curriculum activities in Special Education, for two consecutive years. The DSEU had benchmarked this school for its high achievement and the teachers were frequently roped in to organise district and state level programmes. It was also noted that Special Education teachers from other SEIP visited this school for bench marking purposes.

The senior assistant in charge of student affairs was responsible for all matters pertaining to the attendance of CSN in school, health issues, camping activities, excursions, interactions with parents and student discipline, both in the SEIP and in the mainstream school. The senior assistant in charge of extra-curriculum activity was responsible for monitoring activities such as sports, society and clubs, uniform bodies, games and co-academic competitions of CSN in SEIP.

The senior assistant in charge of Special Education in MPS, Risha was an English Language teacher before she joined the SEIP. She took up an in-service course in special education, and was placed in the special education unit after completing it. She was transferred to the present school to start the special education unit in 2006. She is currently undergoing a distance learning programme to obtain a degree in Special

Education. She had strong leadership qualities, was a vocal person with the ‘gift of the gab’ as stated by her colleagues. She mooted the idea to involve teachers and parents actively in a collaboration programme in the school. The researcher’s observations at the school showed that Risha has a passion for CSN. She showed lots of patience with the CSN’s tantrums and at the same time, would be stern with some of the CSN. Risha’s approachable personality was evident as the researcher noted many parents stopped to have a word with her during the various TPC practices in the school.

Risha administered and implemented the management decisions agreed upon by the headmaster and the higher authorities. She also played key roles in the process of planning and implementing activities.

The SEIP unit in MPS had 9 teachers inclusive of the senior assistant. A teacher’s core duty was to carry out the teaching and learning in the classroom. Along with this core function, the teachers were assigned other duties in the school. Every teacher’s duty was listed in the yearly management booklet prepared by the administrators. Every teacher was assigned duties according to the portfolios of the administrators. The teachers were assigned duties in academic, student affairs, co-curriculum and special needs portfolios. In the SEIP, the administrator together with the coordinator of SEIP, planned the yearly work schedule assigning every teacher to the portfolios, as well as assigning them as coordinators in charge of specific activities. The coordinators of each activity committee prepared the working papers to seek approval from the administrators of MPS and higher authorities, where necessary, before an activity is carried out.

The selected teachers in MPS were Rashim and Misha. Rashim was the only male participant in this study. Rashim, graduated with an engineering degree, and had

worked as an engineer in a private company. His interest in education and commitment to family made him change his career.

When Rashim was made an offer to teach in Special Education, he had no idea what it encompassed. He surfed through the internet to gather information but he was shocked with his first-hand experience in the school. He accepted the challenge and since then it has been a learning experience. Rashim started as a temporary teacher for six months in a secondary school in 2008, and was then transferred to MPS in the same year. He worked in MPS until he was selected to do a diploma course in Special Education. On completion, Rashim was awarded a teaching certificate and was posted to an integrated secondary school. In 2011 he was transferred back to MPS.

Misha started teaching in a school for the blind upon completing her teacher's training, majoring in Bahasa Melayu for primary schools. While at this school, she picked up the skills she needed to manage and teach CSN who are visually impaired. After three years of teaching, she pursued a one-year specialist course in special education. Upon completing the course, she was posted to an integrated secondary school where she was involved in the inclusive programme for CSN with visual impairment, in the school.

After two years of teaching in this school, she had to take a transfer to follow her husband. This move was an eye-opener as it was the first time she was involved with CSN with learning disabilities, after six years of teaching children who were visually impaired. In 2007, Misha made another move to follow her family and she was transferred to MPS to teach CSN with learning disabilities. In the process, she pursued a degree in special education and she now enjoys teaching CSN.

The parents selected in MPS are Miha and Mimi. Miha was a trained staff nurse and she worked in the gynaecology and obstetrics ward. She has four children and her

youngest child was a CSN. She sensed an abnormality in her son when he was four. Miha noticed that her nephews, who were her son's peers, were able to call for their parents and were vocal unlike her son, who was quiet and preferred to be on his own. It was then she took him to a doctor, and after a series of tests her son was diagnosed as having Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

Mimi, a kindergarten teacher and a mother of two children, had her eldest child attending the mainstream classes till Year 2. However, after a few months in Year 2, he refused to go to school and when he was in school, he refused to be in the class. Mimi's son underwent a medical test and was later identified that her son had William Syndrome. It was then her son was transferred into the SIEP in MPS. Then there were no further hassle, as he was willing to go to school. Mimi's son was also being treated for his thyroid problems

3.5.2 Linang Primary School

The SEIP, a unit in Linang Primary School (LPS) is situated in an urban area in Segamat. It is surrounded by eateries, shopping centres and residential areas. The building is situated on land which belonged to the school's board of governors. When the school was established in 1966, it had had one wooden block of classrooms. Later, the board of governors decided to build new concrete blocks on their land adjacent to the old block to accommodate the high enrolment of students. The school also received financial allocations from the government for the building fund. Many other individuals and organisations had also made contributions towards the building fund. LPS is a single session, vernacular school, with an enrolment of 750 students and 55 teachers. It is also one of the high performing vernacular schools in the district.

The SEIP unit in LPS was established in 1999. It was the first vernacular school in the district to have a SEIP unit. Initially, a store was converted into a classroom to begin a special education class with seven students and two teachers. As the number of CSN increased, the main school block was unable to accommodate the special education classes. In 2011 the administration decided to move the classes to a block behind the main building, beside the preschool classes. This block is situated on the premises of a building of the school's board of governors. Although, the special education classes in LPS was separated from the mainstream block, the administrators frequented the block every day. The SEIP teachers had to punch in their attendance card at the administrative block before moving to the SEIP block.

The school had an enrolment of 48 students and 9 teachers. The student population consists of boys and girls. The majority of the students were from one ethnic background except for one or two. They were divided into 5 classes namely PK1, PK2, PK3, PK4 and PK5. Some of the classes were only divided by partitions in the classroom. . Some of the CSN lived in homes managed by church communities or individuals. PK1 had CSN between the age group of 7 and 8 years. The teacher assistants helped the teachers manage the CSN on self-management, behavior management and during therapy sessions when the teachers conducted them. .

The CSN followed the national special needs curriculum and were taught Bahasa Melayu, English Language, Science, Mathematics, Moral Studies, Living Skills, Music, Kajian Tempatan, and Physical Education. The medium of instruction was Mandarin. The topics in the textbooks were simplified to cater to the needs of the CSN. Shasha, the class teacher of PK4 said that the teachers in SEIP had had to further simplify the content in the textbook to cater to the level of the CSN during classroom instructions. The teachers had to start with the very basics, and the progression

depended on the individual ability of the CSN. The teachers always gave individual attention to the CSN.

The SEIP unit in LPS was one of the most active among the vernacular schools. The teachers always participated in activities that the DSEU had planned. The teachers identified the CSN and trained them to participate in various curriculum, co-curriculum and sports activities organised for them. The CSN from LPS had excelled in many activities at the district level.

This school was popular among parents as it was situated in town and was convenient for them to send their children to school before heading to their work place. The parents expressed satisfaction that the teachers frequently interacted with them, and they felt secure and welcome. One parent, Rita said that her son, who had disliked going to preschool, enjoyed school now despite his mood swings.

The LPS's administrative organisation, was similar to MPS. It had a headmistress, four senior assistants and clerical staff. The headmistress made many decisions together with the senior assistants but she had the final say as the main decision maker in all administrative matters. In her absence, the senior assistant in charge of education took charge of administrative matters. The administrative duties of the four senior assistants were the same as in MPS. The only difference being that the medium of instruction and communication was Mandarin. The headmistress and the three senior assistants, in charge of curriculum, student affairs and co-curriculum took turns to visit the SEIP unit which was placed away from the main administrative block.

The senior assistant in charge of special education, Tanya, had many years of experience teaching the mainstream students before she was assigned to teach Special Education classes. She had been a special education teacher for many years before the present appointment as the senior assistant. Thus, she had been managing the special

education unit in LPS for six years . Tanya, petite and demure, had a very vibrant personality. She was approachable and was willing to share her experience, and show how the TPC was carried out in her school. Based on the documents reviewed by the researcher, the school had actively participated in various activities organised by the District Special Education Unit.

The SEIP unit in LPS had 9 teachers inclusive of the senior assistant. A teacher's core duty was to carry out the teaching and learning instructions in the classroom. Along with this core duty, the teachers were assigned other duties in the school. The duties and the committee were listed in the management booklet prepared by the administrators at the start of a new term. . Every teacher was assigned duties according to the portfolios of the administrators. The teachers were assigned duties in academic, student affairs, co-curriculum and special needs portfolios. In the SEIP, the administrator together with the coordinator of the SEIP, planned the yearly work schedule assigning every teacher to every portfolio, besides appointing the teachers as coordinators in charge of specific activities. The coordinators in charge of major school programmes had to prepare the working papers to seek approval from the administrators of LPS. If the activity planned required the CSN and teachers to leave the school, then the approval of higher authorities was necessary.

The teachers in LPS are Shasha and Shoba. Shasha is a graduate with a Food Technology and Biotechnology degree. While waiting for a job, she was offered a temporary teaching job in the present school. She was assigned to teach in the special education unit and was teaching for almost six months, when she was offered the chance to take up a course in special education. She took up the offer and completed the 18 months diploma course. She was then posted back to the same school.

Shoba has been a special education teacher for the past ten years in LPS. Prior to that, she had been a teacher in the mainstream classes in the same school. When the number of CSN in the school increased, the headmistress offered her a move to special education as she had done courses in special education. She is presently pursuing a degree course on a part- time basis.

In LPS, Reha and Rita are the two parents involved in this study. Reha has two sons, aged twelve and nine. Reha and her husband noted a difference in their second child. Their son was rather passive, moody and had a tendency to throw tantrums at times. They took their son for a medical test which diagnosed autism. Reha elaborated that she used to send her son to a kindergarten near her house in the morning, and to an Autistic centre in the afternoon, where she paid RM150 per month. His condition had been bad but after attending school at LPS, Reha felt that there were changes in her son.

Rita was initially a kindergarten teacher who left the job when she had to take care of her CSN. Her daughter was tested and confirmed a slow-learner with attention deficit hyperactive disorder. Her daughter was then twelve years old and was able to manage her personal needs. However, Rita felt her daughter was weak academically. A summary of the information about the professionals and parents in each integrated primary school is provided in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.3

Information about the participants in the Two Integrated Primary School

Demographic Data	Case One	Case Two
	MPS	LPS
Administrator	Risha	Tanya
Sex	Female	Female
Age	Mid 40's	Mid 40's
Qualification	Certificate in Teaching for Primary Schools (Option:English Language) Short term course in Special Education (SEd)	Certificate in Teaching for Primary Schools (Option:ChineseLanguage) Short term course in Special Education (SEd)
Teacher 1	Misha	Shasha
Sex	Female	Female
Age	Mid 30's	Mid 20's
Qualification	Degree in Special Education	Degree in Food Technology One year course in SED
Teacher 2	Rashim	Shoba
Sex	Male	Female
Age	Early 30's	Mid 30's
Qualification	Degree in Mechanical Engineering Short term course in SEd	Certificate in Teaching for Primary School Short term course in SEd
Parent 1	Miha	Rita
Sex	Female	Female
Age	Mid 40's	Mid 30's
Qualification	Certificate in Nursing	Primary 6 education
Parent 2	Mimi	Reha
Sex	Female	Female
Age	Mid 30's	Mid 40's
Qualification	Degree in Social Science	Secondary education

Table 3.4

Characteristics of Teacher Participants

Participants	Roles	Years of Experience	Education	Age
Administrator in MPS RISHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Made administrative decisions together with the Headmaster *Decides on the school activities *Attends state and district level meetings 	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Certificate in Teaching for Primary Schools *Short term course in Special Education (SEd) 	Mid 40's
Administrator in LPS TANYA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Made administrative decisions together with the Headmistress *Decides on the school activities *Attends district level meetings 	22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Certificate in Teaching for Primary Schools *Short term course in Special Education (SEd) 	Mid 40's
Teacher 1:MPS MISHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Special Education Class teacher *Trained Special Education Teacher *Coordinator of SEPTA , IEP session Co-academic and Health activities 	16	*Degree in Special Education	Mid 30's
Teacher 2:MPS RASHIM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Special Education Class teacher *Trained Special Education Teacher *Coordinator of Excursion , religious family day and sports activities 	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Degree in Mechanical Engineering * Short term course in Special Education (SEd) 	Mid 30's
Teacher 1: LPS SHASHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Special Education Class teacher *Trained Special Education Teacher *Coordinator of IEP meetings,competitions, NGO activities 	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Degree in Food Technology *One year course in Special Education 	Mid 20's
Teacher 2: LPS SHOBA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Special Education Class teacher *Trained Special Education Teacher *Coordinator of Excursion , family day, field trips , health activities 	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Certificate in Teaching for Primary School *Short term course in Special Education 	Mid 30's

Table 3.5

Characteristics of Parent Participants

Parent participant	Roles taken at school / home	Age of child with special needs	Years child at school	Education level of mother	Employment of mother (title, hours/week)	Family size
PARENT 1: MPS MIHA	*Attends meetings *Participates in all school activities *Monitors child's education at home with other family members *Instils religious obligations	10 years	4 years	Certificate in Nursing	*Staff Nurse *Shift duties -one week night shift in a month followed by 4 off days -weekly shift- either morning or evening shift with one day off	4 children CSN is youngest child
PARENT 2: MPS MIMI	*Attends meetings *Participates in all school activities *Monitors child's education at home *Instils religious obligations	12	2 years in mainstream school and 4 years in special education class	Degree in Social Science	*Pre-school teacher -teaches 5 days in a week	2 children CSN is eldest child
PARENT 1: LPS RITA	*Attends meetings *Participates in all school activities *Monitors child's education at home *Disciplines child if necessary	10	4 years	Completed Primary 6 education	*Housewife	2 children CSN is the second child
PARENT 2: LPS REHA	*Attends meetings *Participates in some school activities- IEP meetings, family day activity, sports activity *Monitors child's education at home	12	6 years	Completed Secondary education	*Housewife *Helps out in the parish church occasionally	4 children CSN is the youngest child

3.6 Data Collection Method

Three research instruments were used in conducting the study. The instruments used were interview protocol, observation protocol, and document checklist.

3.6.1 Interview Protocol

Yin (1994), states that interviews are one of the main methods of collecting data in case studies. Interviews allow the researcher to gather the participants' interpretation and their perceptions of the activities in which they are involved (Merriam, 2001). Furthermore, as stated by Guba and Lincoln (1983) interviews allowed the researcher to rephrase the research questions if they are not understood. Interviews, also, are more personal and are able to approximate real life situations.

The interview protocol is a form prepared by the researcher that states the interview procedure, the questions to be asked and leaves space to take notes during the interview process as advocated by Creswell (2012). It is crucial to have a document with a pre-determined, organised set of questions for conducting the interviews. It was also very useful for taking notes during the process and noting gestures of the participants. All the interviews were audio recorded as a backup. The researcher needed to take the notes on the participants' responses to the interview questions and had prepared the interview questions to be asked. The interview protocol served as a reminder and guide to the researcher.

The researcher designed two sets of interview protocol, that is the parent interview protocol (Appendix A) and the teacher interview protocol (Appendix B) was used during the semi-structured interviews.

The initial questions asked were for basic information, as an icebreaker and to put the participants at ease while building rapport.

3.6.2 Observation Protocol

The observation protocol (Appendix E) was a guide to the researcher as it was an important checklist for the TPC observations. The protocol also proved handy for the researcher to make field notes when TPC practices were carried out. The researcher was able to jot down the details of settings, implementation, reactions and the feedback of the participants as field notes.

The researcher also kept a journal to record any necessary information about the observations, and on all informal and formal meetings held with the teachers and the parents. These journal entries were necessary as it helped the researcher reflect on the practices observed during data analysis, and also served as an avenue for the researcher to note common features or differences seen during the TPC activities in the two schools. This process enabled the researcher to glean information that was not obtained from the interview process.

The researcher also made reflective field notes on the observations so that the researcher was able to recall episodes during the observations and compare them with the information obtained during the participants' interviews.

3.6.3 Document Summary

Document Summary form consists of scrutinizing programme records that are found in the setting of the study (Merriam, 2001; Patton, 2002). Documents that could be collected in a qualitative research were policy circulars, letters, instructions, guidelines, strategic plans, working papers, memorandums, agendas, minutes of meetings, reports,

administrative documents, internal documents and even media reports (Gillham. 2000; Yin, 1994).

The document summary form (Appendix F) recorded the name of the document, dates used, summary of content, programme to which it was related, significance and researcher reflection. The document summary form relevant for this study consisted of policy circulars on special education, letters from the Ministry of Education, State Education Department and the District Education office, guidelines on TPC collaboration, strategic plans, working papers, letters, minutes of meetings, media reports, reports from teachers, parents and all other documents pertaining to special education. Documents related to parents' visits on personal matters were also reviewed.

Other necessary records, such as information on the number of times parents were involved in school activities were also collected.

3.7 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a term that refers to a set of criteria used to evaluate the quality of a qualitative research (Marshall & Rossamn, 2006; Schwandt, 2001). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explained that in qualitative research, words such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability were used instead of internal, external validity and reliability. Naturalist researchers defined credibility as a parallel term for internal validity, transferability for external validity, dependability for reliability, and conformability for objectivity (Schwandt, 2001; Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

The study looked into how TPC was practiced in the two SEIP. The study focused on how TPC was practiced during the planning and implementation of activities

in the schools, the factors that supported or inhibited the activities, and to what extent Epstein's framework was incorporated in the implementation of the activities.

The wealth of information gathered (Patton, 1990), and how true the findings were to the real context that was being studied (Merriam, 2001) determine the validity or credibility of the study. The soundness of this study was based on the exact description of the TPC practices in the SEIP schools. The credibility strategies of this study were determined through triangulation, member checks, peer reviews, and an audit trail kept of the study (Creswell, 2012; Maxwell, 2005; Yin, 1994).

The reliability or dependability of the study referred to how well the findings of the study could be reproduced or replicated (Merriam, 2001). Therefore, the study needed to have a detailed description of the methodology undertaken so that the consistency of the study could be maintained. Case studies are particularized and often not widely generalizable.

It is equally necessary that the research procedure be reported in detail so that a future researcher, besides being able to replicate the work, should also be able to assess the extent to which the research procedures had been followed (Shenton, 2004). To be able to replicate a research work, the researcher needed to ensure that the research design was well planned and its implementation was strategically executed. Its' reliability was also determined through the triangulation process, member checks, and peer review and audit trail procedures. Finally, coding, as stated by Morse (1994), was a very crucial process that needed to be observed in the study. This helped the researcher to sort through the data collected via the various sources. The researcher had to list the categories of themes collected from the participants. Then, the researcher had to code them as major and minor themes, depending on the frequency of the categories obtained.

3.7.1 Triangulation

Triangulation is a strategy for enhancing the quality of research (Babbie & Mouton, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This strategy required a researcher to study a phenomenon from different perspectives rather than from just one angle (Neuman, 2006) so that the validity and the reliability of the study could be intensified (Merriam, 2001).

Triangulating collected data was a method undertaken in this study to review information collected through multiple methods, namely interviews, observations and document reviews. This enabled the researcher to collect data from different perspectives of the teachers and parents in a particular case, and between different cases.. The researcher could also determine the similarities and differences from the data collected from the other case to establish validity.

The researcher studied several documents available at the sites, such as strategic plans, working papers, letters, minutes of meetings, media reports, IEP meetings, communication logs, parents' visit records, student evaluation reports and documents pertaining to special education. These documents were used to confirm the information or data collected from the participants. Triangulating the collected data collected was the key as it was a process to verify evidence from different individuals (Creswell, 2012).

3.7.2 Member Checks

Member check was a way to get the participants in a study to check the accuracy of the recorded accounts (Creswell, 2012). The researcher carried out member checks by getting the participants to check the interview transcriptions and confirm the accuracy of the content. The researcher also discussed the findings of the interview with the participants by presenting it in the form of maps. In this way, the researcher was able to

clarify further, for accuracy thus avoiding misinterpretations of the data. The participants accepted the verbatim transcription made by the researcher based on the recording. The participants agreed with the transcription and did pose questions if they had doubts. The researcher made frequent trips to the schools and homes to meet the participants to ensure that the derived conclusions were what actually took place in the two schools.

3.7.3 Peer Debriefing

The researcher also validated the methods used to collect data in the study, and the interpretations made, after analysing the data together with peers. The researcher also sought the help from peers, researchers and graduate students to check the accuracy of the findings of this study. The researcher constantly carried out discussions with practitioners, parents and colleagues involved in special education to share the observations and to classify the findings obtained from the interviews, observations and document reviews. In this way, the researcher was able to corroborate the data and thus maintained the credibility of the study.

3.7.4 Audit trail

Keeping an audit trail was a process of explaining and describing every stage of a research process, so that it could be repeated by others who intended to study the same phenomenon (Merriam, 2001). The audit trail was a crucial document that listed all the happenings that the researcher had documented in the course of the research events and the conclusions made related to the research (Morse & Richards, 2002).

The researcher kept a detailed record of raw data, fieldnotes, notes of procedures taken and the instruments used to collect data.

3.8 Data Collection Techniques

To gain an in-depth understanding of the two cases in the study, as advocated by Creswell (2012) and Merriam (2001), the researcher used different qualitative research methods such as interviews, observations and document review. Besides, interviewing the teachers and parents, the researcher also observed the activities conducted, and reviewed school documents to gather information about the teachers and parental collaboration programme practiced in the schools. The multiple methods used by the researcher to collect data enabled the researcher to triangulate the evidence gathered pertaining to the teachers and parental collaboration, thus increasing the validity of the study. Table 3.6 shows the methods used to collect the significant data for the study.

Table 3.6

Summary of Data Collection Phases

Method	Instruments	Data collected
Interview -10 participants - 35 interviews - Each session lasted 30-45 minutes	Teachers Interview Protocol Parents Interview Protocol	Audio tapings Interview transcripts Field notes
Observation - Activity observation - Informal observation of school environment	Observation Protocol	Field notes- IEP sessions Meeting with parents Family Day
Document Review	Document Summary	School Programme schedule Activity tentative planner Activity reports Organisation Chart School reports

3.8.1 Interview

One of the main methods of collecting data for the case studies was through interviews which help to reveal knowledge related to the phenomena under study, and to interpret meanings that may be hidden in them (Yin, 1994; Fontana & Frey, 2000). The interviews allowed the researcher to elicit the participants' expectations, perceptions and interpretations of their involvement in the TPC. Furthermore, interviews being personal were able to approximate real-life situations. Questions could be rephrased if they were not understood for the first time (Guba & Lincoln, 1983). The interviews also enabled the researcher to gather and probe further on the information collected through direct observation and document review so that possible misunderstandings and researcher bias was avoided (Berg, 2001; Merriam, 2001; Yin, 1994). The researcher conducted 35 interviews with the teachers and the parents of the selected cases. These interviews were necessary for the researcher to gather information that cannot be found through document reviews. Each participant was interviewed a minimum three times, to gather more information on the activities carried out in the school, and also to understand each and every participant's role and involvement in the activities. Interviews were carried out either at the home or at the school (Berg, 2001; Darlington & Scott, 2002), depending on the availability of the participants. The teachers preferred to have their interviews at the site after school hours, whereas parents were interviewed at their homes according to the time they set, which was usually in the evenings or late afternoons. At these times, the parents were free from their daily duties such as fetching their children from tuition or religious school. The participants were cooperative and made sure they kept to the time schedule. The parents also made sure that their CSN's needs were adhered to before the interview so that they were not a hindrance while the interview was in progress.

During the interview sessions, which normally lasted for thirty to forty-five minutes, parents were given opportunities to express their views about the activity in which they had participated, their feelings about being involved in the activity, their opinions on how the activity was carried out and what changes they had observed in their CSN. The teachers disclosed their perspectives of the collaboration activities, the challenges they faced in planning and executing the activities in their respective schools and shared their opinions on the parental involvement. They provided information on how the parents collaborated in the various activities organised in the school.

Semi-structured interviews were used by the researcher to gather more information from the participants about their experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1983), which helped elicit information on their opinions, feelings and the knowledge they gained through the activities. Based on the administrators' recommendation, the researcher had an opportunity to meet a few parents who had been briefed individually about the purpose of the study. After the first meeting, some parents showed willingness to be participants while the others declined due to work commitments. Finally, two parents were selected from each school based on the criteria stated in Table 3.2.

The teachers and the parents were interviewed based on a schedule drawn up after consulting with them. Through the initial meetings, the researcher gathered basic information about the participants' background and their duties or roles in the school. These informal sessions enabled the researcher to build rapport with the participants. Through interviews the teachers helped to clarify how parents of CSN were involved in school matters. This was followed by questions related to TPC. The participants were asked to describe the activities that were planned and how it was implemented and their role in it.

The researcher sought the permission of the participants to audio record the entire interview conversations. After the interview sessions, the researcher listened and transcribed herself the audio recordings to prepare verbatim transcriptions to be used for data analysis. Transcriptions were done for all interviews, with the researcher re-reading through the notes, thereby improving the researcher's questioning skills. There were times when the scheduled interviews were cancelled by the participants or a request was made for an earlier schedule on short notice. In situations such as these, the researcher was unable to record the interview sessions, but instead took shorthand notes at the site and later rewrote the interview transcripts.

The interviews carried out at the venues were coded as S1/GPK/INT/1 (Appendix G). S1 referred to MPS and S2 referred to LPS. T1 referred to teacher one and T2 to teacher two in SEIP, while P1 referred to parent one and P2 referred to parent 2 in the SEIP.

3.8.2 Observation

Observation is an invaluable technique for it provides opportunity to gather information as it occurs in a real setting. It also provides an opportunity to make a detailed description of first-hand encounters with the phenomenon (Merriam, 2001; Creswell, 2012). In this study, observing the teachers and parents in the collaboration process, permitted the researcher to obtain direct and immediate information of how the collaboration was planned and executed, as well as how the teachers and the parents reacted and collaborated in the activities. The observations were able to provide the researcher with a better understanding of the participants' behaviour (Morse & Richards, 2002) as the researcher was able to directly witness and record the interaction between the teachers and the parents during the collaboration activities. In addition, observation

also allowed the researcher to compare and confirm the data collected from the interviews and the document reviews carried out. These procedures helped the researcher to closely examine what took place in the site and what the participants had said.

Observation comprised the processes of an activity that was observable (Merriam, 2001; Patton, 2001). Thus, observation consists of three main features: watching, listening, and asking questions for clarification (Gillham, 2000). The notes taken during the observation provided information on how the planned activity was executed and the strategies taken by the teachers and the parents while involved in the activity. The researcher was also able to pose questions to the participants after their involvement in the activity, to immediately clarify any questions.

The researcher, as a non-participant observer was at the site to observe and take notes on how the TPC practice was executed and at no time was part of the activities. The researcher conducted the observations when the schools carried out the activities. The observations were limited as the activities were carried out based on the needs of the school and there were some activities that were carried out at different venues far from the school. MPS and LPS carried out observable activities as they were held in the school grounds or at venues within the town. When the activities, such as excursion, camping and field trips carried out were unobservable, the researcher depended on the reports of the activities. Sometimes scheduled activities had to be postponed as state and district programmes disrupted the school activity plan. Most times the school activities were based on the district and state department programme calendar, but ad-hoc events directed from higher levels, such as teachers required to attend meetings, courses or even participate in activities involving CSN, had forced the schools to sometimes defer their activities to later dates. This issue has caused the researcher to reschedule the observations based on the new dates that the schools had set. The schools had been at a disadvantage when the activity planned involved the community, such as the health

department, banks or other non-governmental organisations. Rescheduling the programme did not always suit the schedule of the other departments involved. In such situations, the schools have had to put off the activities.

The researcher made it a point to observe all activities planned by the school in its venue. The researcher observed all the preparations made by the TPC committee, in terms of meetings, appointments of committee members and portfolios, stages of planning especially when the venue of the activities was away from the town.

After the observation of an activity, the researcher made appointments with the teachers and parents to seek explanation on the observed practices or to clear any doubts. This was not done immediately as the parents needed first to settle their CSN who were restless, and the teachers had to entertain invited guests and parents. So the researcher recorded a detailed account of the practices conducted, and made short memos if further clarifications were needed.

The observation protocol was a guide to the researcher as it was a pertinent checklist for the TPC observations. The protocol was also useful for the researcher to make field notes when TPC practices were carried out. The researcher was able to jot down the details of settings, implementation, reactions and the feedback of the participants in the field notes.

Observations carried out at the venues were coded as S1/T1/P1/OBS/1 (Appendix H). S1 referred to MPS and S2 referred to LPS. T1 referred to the first teacher one and T2 to teacher two in the SEIP, while P1 referred to parent one and P2 referred to parent 2 in the SEIP. OBS referred to the mode used for collecting data which is observation and 1 referred to the first observation done in the school. GPK referred to the administrator in the specific SEIP.

3.8.3 Document Review

Document review is an approach that involved examining records related to the study found at the site (Merriam, 2001; Patton, 2002). The documents consist of official circulars and school based reports which were valid sources of information for the study. The circulars were documents issued by the Ministry of Education (MOE) related to various issues in Special Education. The school based reports were documents that the school had prepared for each academic year. These documents were strategic plans, letters from the education department, working papers, minutes of meetings, reports of activities, information about the CSN and their background, communication logs and information on the progress of the school. Past reports were also reviewed to note the type of activities carried out related to teachers and parental collaboration.

The researcher employed a systematic approach to review the documents obtained from the school which were used to triangulate the data gathered from participant interviews and observations of the activities the participants were involved in. Document reviews were carried out periodically throughout the study so that no current information was left out.

3.9 Data Collection Procedures

The procedures in data collection involved the process of acquiring permission from the authorities, seeking access to the sites and gathering data through different modes such as interviews, observations which included audio-taping, photographing and document analysis (Merriam, 2001; Patton, 2002). A detailed description of how data was recorded during data collection is stated here.

The initial step was to seek and obtain permission from the Ministry of Education to carry out this study in the selected schools. The research proposal together with the interview protocols and the observation checklist were submitted to the Educational Planning and Research Division of the Ministry of Education for their scrutiny and comment. Then the researcher obtained permission from the Johor State Education Department to visit the selected schools to carry out the case studies.

Permission was sought from the school administrators for the researcher to gain access to the research site, and to seek permission from the teachers involved in special education and also to gather information about the parents with CSN. The researcher was later introduced to the parents. The intention of the study and the process of collecting data was explained to the school administrators before the process of gathering data began. A schedule was drawn up based on the schools' programme calendar. However, amendments were made to this schedule when the schools could not carry out the planned activities due to clashes with ad hoc programmes or courses conducted by the State Education Department or the District Education Office. The researcher also planned appropriate times to meet the participants to carry out interviews, observations and to collect documents for review. The data collection process in the two schools lasted over an academic year. The final visit to the schools was to conduct exit interviews and to express appreciation to the participants for their cooperation in providing the essential data for this study.

The various methods of collecting data were used, whenever the activities were implemented throughout the academic year. If and when the researcher felt data collected had reached a saturation point. For example when the participants had no new information to give, or when similar ideas were repeated, the researcher stopped the data collection. However, if the need arose, the researcher made contact with the participants through school visits or telephone calls.

3.10 Data Analysis

Data analysis in a qualitative study involved a technical process of analysing and interpretation (Patton, 1980) thus making sense of the data collected (Creswell, 2012). The data collected in this study was analysed using the constant comparative method, because the study involved two cases and the findings needed to show what was happening in the two cases. The various forms of data collected from the two cases were scrutinised and interpreted to understand the TPC practice.

Merriam (2001), states that during the data collection stage, it is important to carry out on going data analysis so that redundant and irrelevant data collection can be prevented. In this study, the data analysis were conducted in two stages - the first stage was when data was continuously analysed throughout the data collection period and the second stage was after the data was collected. The data in the form of documents, transcripts and field notes, were analysed to understand emerging patterns and categories which gave a clarification to the TPC being practiced in the selected cases.

The first stage of data analysis was done concurrently with the data collection at the two SEIP. This data analysis started the very instant the researcher conducted the first interview and observation and also when the documents were reviewed. During the data collection period, the researcher made sure copies were made of all the raw data collected as a safety measure against losing the data. Photographs and audio data were saved onto compact disks. After each interview session, the researcher undertook the task to transcribe the verbatim interview and to expand on the daily field notes although there were occasions when this attempt took a longer period of time. The researcher ensured that the transcript of each interview was ready before the next interview. Interview transcripts, typewritten observations, documents, and photographs

were printed, coded and filed according to the cases. The researcher read through the transcripts carefully to understand the information gathered, to determine if it was sufficient to answer the research questions. The researcher created new questions when gaps were evident or further information was necessary. The interview transcripts were given to the participants for member checks before the next interview.

The process of managing the data collected through interviews, observations and document review was carried out using the NVivo 10 data analysis computer programme. The data was systematically categorised as interview transcripts, field notes, document reviews were stored for easy retrieval. Individual files were generated to store the data and these files were labeled according to cases and participants. Once the data has been organised systematically using NVivo 10, the researcher was able to code, categorize and create data matrixes for comparisons using the software. The different levels of data analysis such as coding, construction of themes or categories and conceptualizing were undertaken to facilitate the process of abstraction of data (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Morse & Richards, 2002).

3.10.1 Coding Data

The coding of data involves the process of “segmenting and labeling” the text to form descriptions and broad themes to the data collected (Creswell, 2012). The verbatim sentences and words expressed by the participants were used to create codes. The ‘bucket’ coding system advocated by (Bazeley, 2007) was used by the researcher to group the verbatim transcripts into broad topic areas to see what was taking place in the context. The codes were later regrouped and recoded to highlight specific information that explained the main concepts of the study. First, the researcher’s list of codes

consisted of a priori codes, that are codes derived from the literature and open codes drawn from the data (Bazeley, 2007).

The interview data was explored in topic areas such as school settings, participants, interviews, observations, feedback, planned activities, implementing activities, supporting and inhibiting factors. The interviews were compiled and read, and codes that emerged were categorised according to characteristics as expressed by the participants. The codes are further regrouped based on the similarities evident in the coded data. The codes were then re-examined to remove any overlaps and these codes were then formed into broad categories, and then placed under conceptual groupings such as planning of activities, implementation of activities, supporting and inhibiting factors and elements in Epstein's framework namely parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, collaborating with the community, and inter-cultural and inter-spiritual knowledge were given to the categories. The Table 3.7 states the type of codes and their descriptions.

Table 3.7
Types of codes

Type of codes	Description
Open codes	Words that participants use
Axial codes	Coded data from open codes Created by the researcher Academic terms
Themes	Coding done based on related core variables

Table 3.8

Abstract of Interview

Sample Interview Text

Interviewer: How do the CSN get training in co-curricular activities?

Teacher: In school, we prepare CSN for **competitions**. We have **training** for them and if they are **good** in the field, we ask parents to send them for **extra coaching** outside of school. To reduce their **finance difficulties**, we ask parents to withdraw from their children's allowance to pay the trainers. We are happy to get **support** from parents to send their child for extra coaching in swimming and bowling. We give the early training and if the children can perform then we asked parents to send their children for further training in the bowling centre and also for swimming at the club. The parents are **willing** to send their children for extra coaching when they see their children's **abilities**.

Coding

As the researcher continued to code the data, similar concepts were classified into common concepts (training, coaching). The researcher grouped them as **instruction**. Similarly, (support, willing) were grouped as **cooperation**. These words, **instruction and cooperation** are the axial codes drawn from the data which were further categorised as a theme, **formal interaction**.

3.10.2 Forming Themes

The researcher is determined and grouped themes by identifying the common codes that emerged from the data collected (Morse & Richards, 2000). A number of codes were identified such as text messages, phone calls, notes through log books, interaction and were grouped to form themes. Those codes were grouped under the theme, communication. The data obtained from the participants were matched and contrasted to scrutinise for similarities and differences in the way the TPC was practiced during the planning and implementation of activities in the two schools (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The detailed case analysis provided an insight into how the teacher-parent collaboration was practiced during the planning and implementation of activities in the two schools. It also explored factors that supported and inhibited the planning and

implementing of the activities and how the framework advocated by Epstein, involving as a priori codes such as parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community could be identified in the schools' activities.

The cross case analysis enabled the researcher to compare the common categories and the themes that emerged from the two cases. The emerging patterns from the two schools were organised into matrices based on the extent TPC was practiced during the planning and the implementation of activities, the factors that supported and inhibited the planning and the implementation of activities and the extent to which Epstein's framework was incorporated in the TPC activities in the SEIP. The flow chart, Figure 3.1 below shows a representation of the data collection process which included the observation, interview and document analysis procedure for the entire study. A final report was then prepared based on the findings gathered, from the two cases.

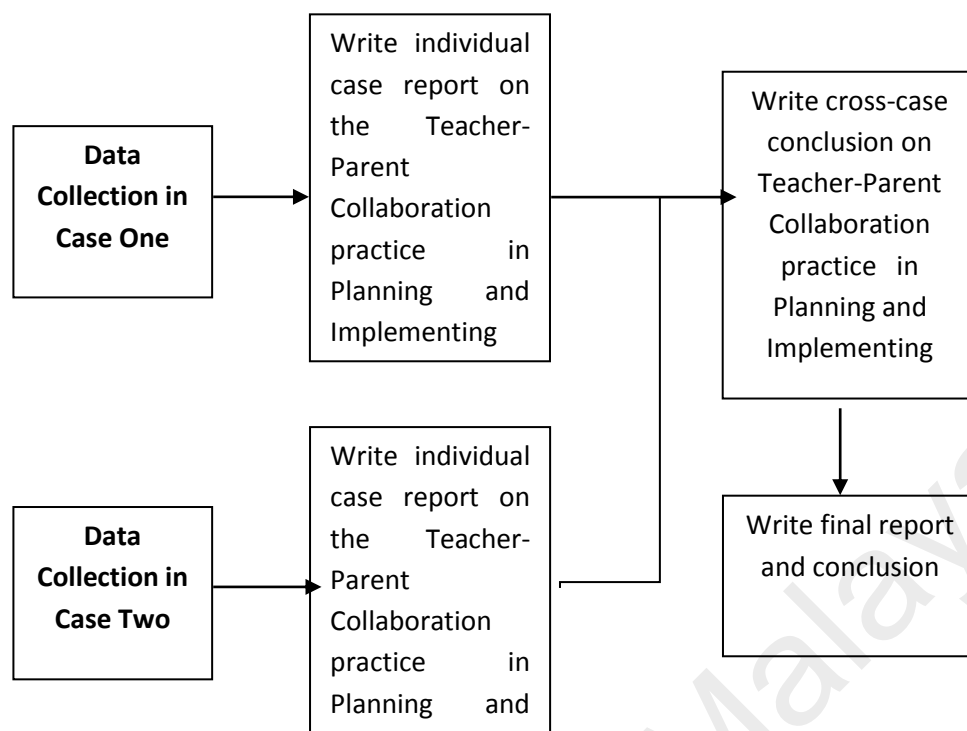


Figure 3.1: Diagrammatic representation of Data Collection and Analysis Process (Adapted from Yin (2003, p50))

3.11 Ethical Issues

Ethical issues are crucial in any research, where the researcher has a responsibility to respect the rights, needs and desires of the participants (Creswell, 2012).

Informed consent of the participants, adhering to basic ethics while collecting data and the presenting the findings and matters pertaining to confidentiality, were some of the major issues involving ethics in research. Informed consent was obtained from the Ministry of Education, specifically the Education Planning and Research Division, the relevant state and district departments, school administration, teachers and parents before the start of the study. The voluntary involvement of the participants and the

concern of all possible risks of the study to its participants (Berg, 2004) were ethical concerns. In fact, researchers are ethically bound to ensure that participants were not exposed to any kind of adverse physical or psychological impairment (Leedy & Ormrod, 1985). Ethical policies were closely adhered to in this study as there has been a close interaction between the interviewer, who is the researcher in this study, and the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Parents and teachers were informed of the researcher's intention to observe their involvement in the school. Their consent was also sought to photograph their involvement in the various types of activities.

The identities of the case selection were kept strictly confidential. Only the schools selected were known to the State and District Education Department. The participants in the study were not known by their original names but by pseudonyms, to protect their anonymity. All interviews and observations reports were confidential and the interview transcriptions were given to the participants for certification. The SEIP were also assigned pseudonyms so that their privacy was protected especially when comparative analysis was made based on the findings. Participants' consent forms for teachers and parents (Appendix C and D) were given to the participants for their written consent to be a voluntary participant and they had the right to withdraw at any point of the study.

3.12 Summary

This chapter stated the reasons for choosing the qualitative case study design for this study. This design has been found most appropriate as it had given an in depth understanding of teachers and parental collaboration in two SEIP. The researcher had presented the research methodology employed in the study in order to show how the

study was carried out. The findings pertaining to the background of the school and the participants are also set out in detail.

The researcher had also described how the data was collected and later triangulated using the various methods, namely, through interviews, observations and document reviews. The collected data were analysed to document what took place in the two SEIP. The pertinent aspects of research, such as trustworthiness, and ethical considerations were also stated to show how the researcher tackled these aspects in the study.

University of Malaysia

Chapter 4

Findings

4.0 Introduction

The chapter presents the cross-case analysis and the discussion of the findings from the two cases.

The five research questions for this study are as follows: (1) To what extent is teacher-parent collaboration being practised during the planning of activities in the special education integrated programme in the primary schools? (2) To what extent is teacher-parent collaboration being practised during the implementation of activities in the special education integrated programme in the primary schools? (3) What are the factors that supported the teacher-parent collaboration practice in the special education integrated programme in the primary schools? (4) What are the factors that inhibited the teacher-parent collaboration practice in the special education integrated programme in the primary schools? (5) How is the framework advocated by Epstein incorporated in the teacher-parent collaboration practice in the special education integrated programme in the primary schools?

This study focused on how the teacher-parent collaboration (TPC) activities were planned and implemented in the special education integrated programme in the primary schools. A comparative summary of the practices in the two schools was drawn to scrutinise the similarities and differences in the general planning and implementation of the TPC activities, the factors that supported and inhibited the TPC activities and to explore how the framework advocated by Epstein, was incorporated in the schools' activities which aided the cross-case analysis process. The initial findings of the study indicated that there were more similarities than differences between the two schools.

4.1 Planning of Activities

The planning of activities in MPS and LPS was based on the tentative schedule prepared by the District Special Education Unit (DSEU). The DSEU had identified its activities based on that planned by the State Special Education Unit. When the SEIP received the schedule, the administrators and teachers discussed and planned their school activities. How the two schools planned their activities will answer the first research question below:

Research Question 1

To what extent is teacher-parent collaboration being practised during the planning of activities in the special education integrated programme in the primary schools?

The administrators of MPS and LPS expressed that they initiated to include the parents of CSN in their school activities although there were no formal instructions by the authorities. The process to identify school based activities for the new academic year started a year before. The administrators and teachers in MPS and LPS looked into various factors so that the activities selected suited to the DSEU schedule and also catered to the specific needs of the CSN.

4.1.1 Information Provided by Parents

Risha and Tanya, the administrators of MPS and LPS respectively, expressed that the parent participants and most of the other parents with CSN frequented the school to send their children and to take them back after school. Therefore, the administrators and the teachers got to meet generally all the parents and there were informal interactions and they had some casual discussions. The teachers had expressed

that through the informal discussions these parents inform them about their CSN and also about themselves. These informal meetings were a routine in MPS and in LPS and it helped to forge a close link between the teachers and the parents in general. The information gathered enabled the teachers to identify the needs of the CSN and also those of the parents and this allowed the teachers to identify appropriate school based activities for the coming academic year. The school based activities were formulated with reference to the activities planned at the district level for the new academic year.

As stated by Risha,

“.....we have to adhere to the activities decided by the DSEU but for school activities the teachers and I planned activities with some variations every year. We focused on what our Children with Special Needs (CSN) need and also their parents’ needs. The frequent brief meetings with parents were helpful as they inform us their needs and we try to plan activities to meet the main needs of our CSN and parents for example, organise a therapy session for CSN and some general information on policy matters for parents.”

(S1/GPK/INT3)

Tanya, the senior assistant of LPS stated, “... the parents or guardians of our CSN are often telling us about their CSN, their needs and we teachers understand their requirements and tried to support them by planning suitable activities...”

(S2/GPK/INT3)

These informal talks were necessary so that teachers got to meet almost all parents at different times of the year and gather relevant information such as parents’ feedbacks, views and suggestions for possible activities. The teachers from both MPS and LPS expressed that the feedbacks from parents and especially the participants were a good form of resource for them to gauge what type of activities were needed to be included into the yearly school programme. In the process, the parents also informed on their strengths, the avenues they had and how they could contribute to the school

activities and these information also helped us to plan the committee (S1/GPK/INT1). Tanya expressed “... my CSN lived in private homes so we get to meet the caretakers and they inform us what the parents of the CSN had told them such as their intention to meet the teachers” (S2/GPK/INT1). At this point, it was more like one-way communication as most of the time the teachers were gathering information from parents.

Based on the information received over the academic year, the teachers in both schools reviewed documents or previous records of activities that the schools had carried out in the recent years and they discussed to select suitable school based activities to meet the current requirement of CSN and parents. In the planning stage, the parents’ presence was indirectly felt as the teachers discussed issues that parents had informed them and the teachers also discussed specific activities to suit the levels of the CSN and also brainstormed on their views. The teachers of both the schools felt that their frequent on-going, informal meetings with parents when they sent and took back their CSN were sufficient for them to gather information (S1/S2/GPK/INT1). A review of documents by the researcher (Appendix I) showed that the senior assistants and teachers in MPS and LPS selected school based activities that were holistic in nature and which focused on the general developmental needs of the Children with Special Needs (CSN). Risha and Tania expressed similar opinions when they selected activities as they stated “... *we always considered the parents’ suggestions in our planning and the teachers too believed in having a range of activities to avoid monotony*” (S1/S2/GPK/INT3).

4.1.2 Schools-based Activities Developed by Teachers

The administrators of the SEIP units in MPS and in LPS planned their school-based activities for the academic year based on their administrative portfolio. They stressed, “.... *the activities we plan were divided into namely, curriculum, co-curriculum, and student affairs based on the three main administrative portfolios in our schools*” (S1/S2/GPK/INT 3).

Curriculum is the main focus in the school as it stressed on the academic aspect and the emphasis was on the teaching and learning in the classroom. The curriculum set by the Ministry of Education was taught to the CSN. The instruction given was based on the curriculum specification determined for each level of the CSN (S1/T1/OBS2) and the levels were determined collectively by the teachers and the parents, when they developed the Individualised Education Plan (IEP) of each CSN (S1/S2/GPK/INT2). During the researcher’s informal interactions with the teachers, they said that the activities in the curriculum programme were routine as the same activities were repeated every year, although the manner in which they were carried out varied at times to meet the needs of every CSN. The teachers also discussed and selected specific activities to suit the level of the CSN. These activities were not carried out every year but only when needed to overcome the specific needs or problems encountered by the CSN. Self-management, behaviour management and therapies were other developmental activities in the curriculum. These activities were carried out so that the CSN were instilled with positive values for their general development. As stated by Rashim, a teacher from MPS,

“....guru bersama ibubapa tetapkan keperluan yang penting dalam seseorang kanak-kanak pendidikan khas dan RPI dibentuk mengikut keperluan itu dan kalau guru merasai masalah disiplin perlu di atasi

kerana ia menimbulkan masalah, jadi kami akan mengatasi masalah itu dulu dan kami akan menerangkan pada ibubapa”

(S1/T2/INT1)

(“... the teachers and parents determined the crucial needs of a CSN and the IEP was drawn based on it, and if we, teachers felt that the CSN’s discipline posed a problem in his or her general development, then we need to rectify that problem first and we would notify the parents”)

(S1/T2/INT1)

The co-curriculum activities were carried out in MPS and LPS. It depended on the ability of the CSN. Misha said,

“... the CSN in MPS were given the opportunities to participate in sports, competitions and cultural celebrations and community based programmes just like mainstream students and every Wednesday morning we involve the CSN in 1 Student 1 Sports programme”

(S1/T1/INT3)

These had been the routine activities with some variations in both the schools. Tanya expressed,

“... in LPS we have difficulties in involving all the students in co-curriculum because of the severity on their disability but we carried out only with selected CSN and we participated in all co-curriculum activities planned by the DSEU and even in the annual Semarak Islam programme, in creative writing”

(S2/GPK/INT3)

The type of activities selected under the student affairs portfolio were more to improve the discipline of the CSN, to develop the social skills of the CSN and also to develop a close rapport with the CSN and their family members, teachers and also among the fellow parents” (S1/T1/INT2). The selected activities were within the regulations of the special education system. Shoba stressed “... CSN need to overcome problems such as, emotional and behavioural so we, teachers need to plan activities

through therapies and instructions to overcome the issues”
(S2/T2/INT1).

The school-based activities were collectively presented in the strategic plan based on the curriculum, co-curriculum and student affairs. The activities listed in the strategic plan were carried out every year as a routine programme and some of the planned activities that varied every year were known as developmental programme.

The routine activities carried out every year were important as they provided input into developing the CSN physically and mentally which included activities related to curriculum, such as classroom instructions, assessments, developing IEP, competitions and extra-curricular activities while developmental activities catered to the current or immediate needs of the CSN. The developmental programmes included activities such as excursions, community programmes, therapies and character building (S1/S2/GPK/INT).

The CSN, who had completed their education are often placed in secondary schools to continue their studies or they go for further skill-based trainings based on the abilities of the CSN and their interests. As Shoba further explained, “... CSN need to be prepared for transition programme... we organised activities and take them for job related outings so that parents and CSN know and understand the nature of certain workforce” (S2/T2/INT1).

Risha and Tanya stressed that some activities planned incurred expenses and they were subsidised by the budget allocated to the SEIP unit from the ministry. However, the budget for major activities involving family members such as organising family day outside the town required contributions from parents, individuals who wished to sponsor, or from the CSN’s allowances (S1/S2/GPK/INT3).

Through the documents reviewed, it was noted that in MPS, the teachers planned the activities and parents' roles were highlighted in every sub-committee although at times the parents played minor roles. During the SEPTA meeting, the researcher observed that committee members were selected by the parents volunteering. In LPS, one or two parents were put in-charge of a committee and they were mostly assigned duties of monitoring their CSN.

The strategic plan displayed an overview of a tentative schedule of the activities that the teachers had planned to carry out in the school, and also at the district level.

Risha said, "...the schedule was tentative as we had to make adjustments to any ad hoc programmes that may be scheduled by the district, state and even the mainstream school as the academic year progressed" (S2/GPK/INT2).

The school based activities in MPS differed from that listed in the strategic plan prepared by the DSEU, because the teachers in MPS considered the specific needs of their CSN. However, the senior assistant in LPS stated that in their strategic plan, they only highlighted the developmental activities planned by the DSEU in which their CSN were able to participate.

Any new activities suggested by the DSEU were listed under developmental programme. The TPC activities carried out in the schools were listed as in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Teacher-Parent Collaboration Activities

Component	Focus
Curriculum	Briefing the parents Developing IEP Classroom instruction Library Scrapbook Homework Open Day Convocation
Co-curriculum	Scouts Movement 1 Student 1 Sports Sports Day Competitions Excursion Cultural Programme Outreach Programme
Student Affairs	Back to School Programme SEPTA council/Meeting Discipline Management Health Programme Community Links PTA meeting Festival Celebration Birthday Celebration

4.1.3 Information Disseminations through Various Means

The activities decided in the strategic plan are then made known to the parents by involving them in the school through meetings. The manner the information was disseminated varied in the two schools. In MPS, Rashim said:

“... Majlis Pemuaafakatan Ibubapa Pendidikan Khas 2012 adalah usaha Puan Risha, dan ia ada ibubapa sebagai ahli jawatankuasa yang di pilih secara undi. Pengerusi dan ahli jawatankuasanya adalah wakil ibubapa untuk menghadiri mesyuarat sebelum sesuatu aktiviti bersama ibubapa dianjurkan.

(S1/T1/INT1)

“...the Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA) 2012, was the brainchild of Madam Risha, and had parents as committee members who were selected through votes. The chairperson with his committee were the representatives of the parents to attend meetings before any activity involving parents was organised”)

(S1/T1/INT1)

Risha stated that she felt it was necessary to initiate the SEPTA council as parents were reluctant to bring up issues during the PTA council meeting. A formal meeting involving the parents of CSN was held and these parents were involved in selecting the new SEPTA council members. This council was also a platform for parents to volunteer their services based on their strengths. Although, the activities were determined by the teachers but the parents were involved in providing necessary input and support in the planning together with the teachers.

Based on the researcher's observation, LPS, unlike MPS did not have a committee; instead the vital information was disseminated when the teachers met the parents in the first formal meeting, held at the beginning of the school term where the headmistress of LPS and Tanya, the Senior Assistant in charge of Special Education briefed the parents (S2/ OBS3).

Rita, a participant parent expressed her satisfaction with the information given during the meeting. She was briefed personally by a teacher as the briefing was conducted in Mandarin. Reha expressed: *"... the teacher explained about the programmes in the school, and we were given a calendar so it was easy for us, parents to know the activity and when we need to get involved"* (S2/P1/INT1).

The teachers in both the schools set the date, time and venue for the meetings and communicated with the parents through letters from the school administrator, a week before the scheduled meeting. The teachers from both schools also reminded the parents, during the informal face to face communication they had with the parents when they came to school to send or take their CSN. The teachers in MPS also contacted the parents through telephone calls, text messages (S1/T1/INT2) while in LPS, they practiced sending messages through the CSN's communication (S2/GPK/INT4). The efforts taken by the teachers were worthwhile as the document reviewed by the

researcher in both the schools showed that the majority of the parents of CSN attended all the meetings.

During the SEPTA meeting, the teachers in MPS presented the strategic plan to the parents and the teachers-in-charge of each activity explained the activities to the parents as well as the nature of manpower required from the parents. The parents of CSN made suggestions in terms of the dates and venues of the activities planned and how they could contribute towards the activities (S1/OBS1).

During the researcher's observation of the first SEPTA meeting, it was noted that the information was accepted by the parents as they did not disagree with the activities planned and some parents did bring forth some suggestions. Generally, their nods signified that they were in agreement with what was planned and disseminated by the teachers.

Generally, the parents agreed with what was decided by the teachers and they felt that the activities were well selected. They also opined that the teachers knew the best. The parents were happy to work along with the teachers as Miha, the parent participant from MPS stated, "SEIP teachers are like a family, we have good rapport, and we have a sense of belonging towards the school and specifically in our CSN education" (S1/P1/INT2). Miha, further expressed that the teachers have forged a good relationship with the parents and that they participated in family activities, such as weddings. Another parent participant from MPS, Mimi said,

"... the teachers had given us a medium to express our views and I felt confident to present my views through the SEPTA platform for there was a close rapport with the teachers and fellow parents. I brought a contact to the teachers about a dental health programme that my dentist friend from the health clinic wanted to carry out. The teachers had taken the offer to discuss further at their level"

(S1/P2/INT1)

In LPS, Rita, another parent participant was noted to be very popular among the administrators of the mainstream school and the parents of other CSN (S2/OBS2). During informal meetings with the teachers, they expressed that Reha was an active parent in LPS. Reha, a bubbly character expressed “... *teachers all good and friendly. I like to come to school and help. I like the activities. My son likes this school*” (S2/P2/INT1).

The teachers motivated the parents to be part of the activities carried out in the schools and encouraged the parents to contribute in any form that they could (S1/OBS1). In MPS, Risha requested “... parents to think over what had been discussed in the meeting and to volunteer in the areas that parents could contribute or volunteer in areas that they could” (S1/GPK/OBS 1).

During the SEPTA meeting, some parents readily volunteered to be involved in the activities based on their capacities and abilities to contribute (S1/OBS1). However, in LPS the teachers did not select the parent committee nor did the parents volunteer. While talking with Tanya after her briefing, she said, “... *we decided on the parent committee when we planned for the programme based on what the parents, but sometimes the parents do come forward to volunteer*”.

The researcher observed a lot of interest, excitement and eagerness among the parents to be part of the committee and the activities planned during the meeting. The parent participants in MPS, Mimi and Miha felt that the school had prepared a very good calendar, with activities which were good for CSN’s development and also an effort to actively involve the parents. By preparing the schedule Mimi, a nurse said “... *the working parents were able to plan their leave at workplace and attend all activities in school and even volunteer wherever possible*” (S1/P1/INT1). In LPS, Rita was also

very anxious to be part of the planned activities and she was seen encouraging fellow parents to volunteer for activities. Reha too expressed:

“... I had not attended any briefing before because I cannot understand Chinese but the teacher told me about the activities and also told me personally when I came to school to take my daughter. Some activities I couldn't go because I have other school going children but the teachers took my daughter because she has no problem”.

(S1/P2/INT1)

The Teacher-Parent Collaboration in the planning of the activities can be mapped as per figure 4.1.

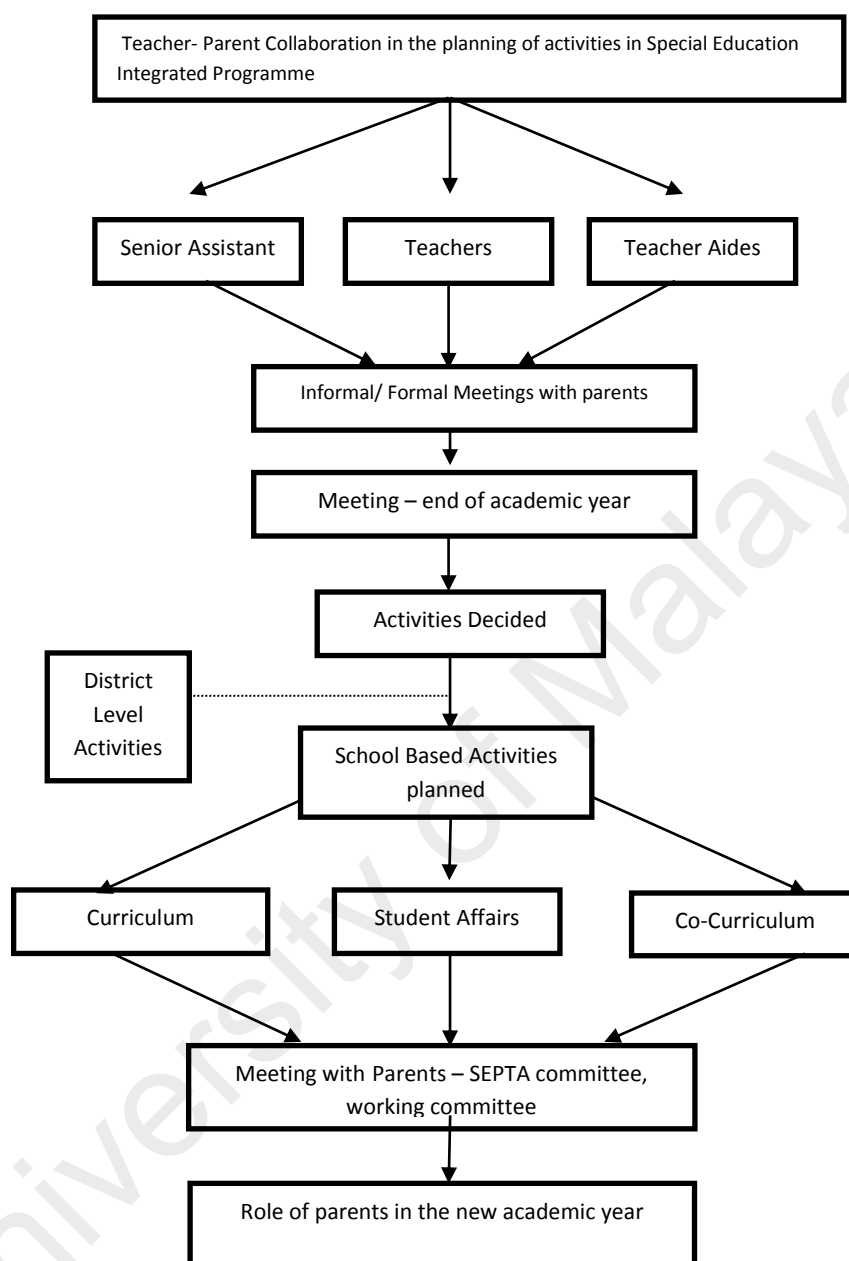


Figure 4.1. Procedure involved in the Teacher-Parent Collaboration in planning the activities in Special Education Integrated Programme

4.2 Summary of Teacher-Parent Collaboration Practice in Planning Activities

The administrators in charge of Special Education in MPS and LPS were of the opinion that TPC was an essential tool to improve the overall development of the CSN. Both these administrators in charge of Special Education had initiated the collaboration

between teachers and parents in planning and implementing activities in the schools. The teachers' effort to collect information of the parents' views and needs to plan their activities for the new academic year was commendable.

The findings indicated the presence of TPC in planning and implementing of activities in both the schools but with some variations. As observed, gathering information and feedbacks, identifying suitable activities, and available resources formed the major part of the planning stage. The teachers referred closely to the schedule of activities provided by the DSEU so that the activities they selected and decided on were not similar to that planned by the DSEU. This stage was noted to be similar in both the schools but their selection of activities depended on the needs of their CSN. The obvious similarity was the schools participated in all the activities carried out by the DSEU. Although the DSEU had not involved the parents, the teachers in MPS and LPS had taken the initiative to get the parents to help them in training the students after school.

The presence of the SEPTA council in MPS enabled the parents to work together in a committee to organise the various activities. Although such a committee was not present in LPS, the working committee formed for every activity worked well. The parents were happy with the manner the activities were planned as they felt that the teachers had considered their interests.

The teachers considered the TPC as planned to understand, share and establish a close rapport with the parents of the CSN, while the parents took it as an avenue to learn and manage their CSN. It was the initial initiative of the administrator in MPS to involve the parents as the directive from the authorities to include parents for academic success came much later. The teachers in MPS were glad that their administrator was aware of the need to interact with the parents frequently.

4.3 Implementation of Activities

Activities are implemented in the school according to schedule throughout the academic year. The schools focused on activities that required them to select participants to represent at the district level activities. Then the teachers focused on the school based activities. However, there are times when the scheduled activities had to be rescheduled due to unforeseen circumstances. The teachers and parents were collectively involved in running the activities.

A comparative summary, which is a pre-requisite for cross-case analysis was constructed to identify common practices across the two schools. Research Question 2 looked at the implementation of TPC practices in the two schools and explained further through discussions based on the common themes that emerged during the cross-case analysis.

Research Question 2

To what extent is teacher-parent collaboration being practised during the implementation of activities in the special education integrated programme in the primary schools?

4.3.1 Parents' Voices being Heard in Meetings

Before a scheduled activity was implemented, the teachers and the SEPTA committee in MPS met to discuss the agenda, the parent sub-committees based on the request made by the parents and plan the activity. Then the teacher-in-charge in MPS prepared a tentative activity plan to seek approval from the authorities.

However, in LPS, there was no tentative plan prepared for every activity but only for major activities that involved taking the CSN out of the school premises, such

as excursions. In LPS, the activities conducted in the school were only documented in the form of reports of activities carried out unlike in MPS where besides the tentative agenda there were also reports of all activities carried out.

Rashim explained the procedure,

(“... kertas kerja mencatatkan jawatankuasa yang bertanggungjawab bagi setiap bahagian, tarikh tentative, kumpulan yang terlibat, tempat aktiviti dan dana yang diperlukan untuk menjalankan aktiviti. Apabila aktiviti itu di adakan di luar kawasan sekolah dan melibatkan komuniti selain daripada guru dan ibubapa, kertas kerja perlu disediakan untuk mendapat kebenaran dari pihak yang bertanggungjawab diperingkat daerah, negeri dan di kementerian”)

(S1/T2/INT2)

(“... the tentative agenda indicated the responsible sub-committee for every activity, the person in charge, the tentative date, target group, the venue of the activity and the resources required to implement the activity. When an activity involved leaving the school premise and involving communities other than the teachers and parents, approval was required from authorities concerned at the district, state and ministry levels.”)

(S1/T2/INT2)

When the tentative activity was approved by the authorities concerned, the teachers then scheduled a number of meetings with the SEPTA committee in MPS to delegate duties, describe the nature of the duties and structure the preparation guidelines. Each committee in MPS had a teacher as a mentor-in charge of each sub-committee so that parents could seek advice from the teachers. The SEPTA committee in MPS involved parents in committees dealing with personal management, discipline, transport, meals, and religious activities. The parents' role in the school was seen on an individual basis, which depended on the needs of their CSN. In LPS, the document reviewed did not indicate any roles assigned to parents. They were merely stated as committee members. The parents dealt mostly with the needs of the CSN. Neither did the reports indicate the working committee of the activities. This procedure was undertaken when the activities involved were held in places outside the school and or

when travelling to other countries (S1/T2/INT2). The presence of the parents in the school and in the committees showed that there were an effort to bridge a gap between parents and teachers.

In LPS, every procedure was planned by the teachers and a parent was placed in a committee and generally the parents' roles were to monitor the behaviour and generally manage their CSN.

A close cooperation was further seen between the teachers and parents when the activity to select the best mini library was organised by the District Special Education Unit. As a strategy to upgrade the mini library before the competition, the SEIP unit in MPS and LPS had a drive to increase the resources in the library. Risha expressed "our SEIP unit together with the SEPTA council organised a competition involving the families of the CSN and the teachers. The teachers informed the parents about the competition and the rules of the competition through letters.

The parents were given the choice to select tasks such as making handicrafts, flower arrangement, making scrap book on various topics. The parents were given a time frame to prepare the materials together with their CSN. Misha briefed "*... the parents about the project and the parents had to guide their CSN to produce a family album* (S1/T1/INT). Miha, the parent in MPS expressed that there were lots of excitement among parents to work on the activity and more so when guiding their CSN along. The teachers in MPS were very glad that the parents' cooperation and commitment enabled them to enhance their library. The parents in LPS were excited about the project but at the same time they were not too confident to do it. To reduce their anxiety Tanya said that "*... the teachers gave some guidance to the parents to plan and develop a family album together with their CSN and they creatively produced*

beautiful family albums while other parents contributed cash and also story books.”

(S2/GPK/INT)

Miha prepared a folio on Autism. She was glad that the competition was organized as it gave her and her family an opportunity to cooperate and read materials on the topic and indirectly learn more about her child's condition. Miha felt contented with her project as it was a collective effort of her family and more importantly her CSN had a role in it too, where he helped to paste the pictures in the folio (S1/P1/INT3). The parents submitted their projects based on the dateline and the winners were also selected.

The researcher observed the 'One Student One Sport' activity carried out on Wednesday mornings in the school. Good cooperation was evident between the teachers and parents as all the CSN came in their sports attire. The CSN were trained by the teachers in games such as volleyball, 'sepak takraw', netball, futsal, football and in athletics. The CSN who had the potentials were encouraged to be trained under coaches. The parents were encouraged to follow to the venues.

The CSN in LPS fell into the severe degree of disabilities therefore, there were activities that the teachers could not identify CSN to participate at the district level. However, the selected CSN were given extra training to participate in athletics by teachers in the school and the parents cooperated with the teachers to train their CSN in the evenings by going for runs in their neighbourhood" (S2/GPK/INT2).

On the whole, the parents had cooperated well with the teachers, not only to provide extra exposure but also to be with the CSN at the bowling alley or at the swimming pool in the Country Club. Some parents frequented the beaches to allow their CSN to be in the water and to allow them to practice their swimming skills. The

teachers opined that with the parents' effort, the CSN were able to learn the skills fast and in a way it had also helped the parents to cut cost as training in the pool incurred payment. The CSN had shown their potentials by winning in the swimming and bowling competitions at the district level (S1/T2/INT3).

As stated in the circular issued by the Ministry of Education, all school-going children, including CSN who are aged 10 years and above are expected to be involved in co-curriculum activities. However, the CSN were all members of the Special Education Scout's Movement. The Special Education teachers are the advisors and they conducted the meetings once a fortnight. The CSN wore their scouts' uniform or their scouts' T-shirt on Wednesdays.

Risha said,

"... all the parents in MPS adhered to the school's request to prepare the scout's uniform and the basic accessories for their CSN and we are glad that we received immediate and good response from the parents

(S1/GPK/INT2)

Rashim elaborated on what Risha said,

"... the CSN were exposed to various scouting activities such as camping and cooking skills during the co-curriculum activity day. The CSN were also given some basic theory on the Scouts Movement.

(S1/T2/INT2)

4.3.2 Shared Responsibility between Teachers and Parents

The curriculum practices in MPS and LPS emphasised the academic needs of the CSN. The senior assistants of MPS and LPS stressed that the curriculum administered in the schools were set by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and all

subjects were taught according to the levels of the CSN and the teachers also prepared the Individualised Education Plan for every CSN in their care.

In MPS and LPS, Risha and Shasha stated that,

“... the teachers identified and grouped CSN who could follow the lessons and were ready for partial inclusion accordingly but the CSN with severe disabilities were given self-management skills and behaviour management skills.

(S1/GPK/INT2)

Furthermore, Misha explained, *“... in MPS, we teachers in MPS were committed in our work and we stressed on parental roles for the academic success of the CSN”* (S1/ T1/INT2).

As Rashim stressed, *“... kita perlu ibubapa menyambung apa yang kita buat di sekolah”* (*“... we need parents to continue what we do in school”*) (S1/T2/INT1).

Risha had similar views as Rashim when she said *“... education is important for CSN, and these children are special, teachers cannot work alone but we need parents to help us”* (S1/S2/GPK/INT3).

In LPS, Tanya said that:

“... we planned many activities in the broad scope of curriculum, teaching and learning is very important but we also participated in curriculum activities that DSEU had planned. We also plan activities and we get parents come and see sometimes how to help the CSN at home.”

(S2/GPK/INT2)

As part of their responsibility, the teachers from both MPS and LPS made it a norm to visit homes of CSN. Most of the visits were done after school hours. Risha from MPS said:

“...the teachers visited the CSN homes but the schedule was not predetermined. We looked at several criteria such as new students to the school, CSN who displayed behavioural problems and also homes of

CSN whose parents rarely came to the school and also sometimes parents invited us”.

(S1/GPK/INT2)

According to the Risha and Tanya, the administrator of MPS and LPS, the main purpose of the home visits was to get to know the parents and to build a rapport, to understand the background of the families, to know and understand the parent-child relationship and to understand the personalities of CSN while at home and in school (S1/S2/GPK/INT2). Tanya further stressed her overarching reason for the visit was to guide the parents of our CSN not to give in to their behaviour tantrums (S2/GPK/INT2). Shoba, the teacher participant of LPS explained that,

“... the parents’ dilemma to cope with CSN with severe disabilities has caused lots of stress in parents and they turned to teachers for guidance which gave opportunities to the teachers to discuss issues with the parents and also provide parenting skills and another factor, the visits had helped the teachers to overcome problems of absenteeism in school.”

(S2/T2/INT2)

Miha, the parent participant in MPS had expressed “... we, parents and the teachers in the SEIP were like a family and we interacted closely both in formal and informal situations (S1/P1/INT1) and Rita was very happy when she said, “... *the teachers are helpful and very good, they came to my house, saw my son He was very moody in school.*” (S2/P1/INT1)

A basic quality needed in a child is to treasure its own materials. MPS implemented a system whereby CSN had to take care of their school textbooks and other stationaries. According to Risha, this is to train the CSN to manage their books with their parent’s guidance, follow timetable to bring books to school, and also the parents get the opportunity to teach the CSN at home”. (S1/GPK/INT2)

Similarly, in LPS the CSN did not take their books home at the beginning of the year but after the first semester, the CSN started to take their books home (S2/T1/INT2) upon the request of some parents.

The parents, Miha (S1/P1) and Reha (S2/P2) welcomed this move made by the school as they got to know what was being taught in the school, and also made a way to get the CSN to open their books at home. Miha expressed, “... *having the books at home allowed me to know what was being taught. There are times I clarified my doubts, sought information when I do not understand what was taught in the school or make any queries pertaining to the timetable and lessons*”(S1/P1/INT1).

The teachers in MPS stressed that CSN need to revise lessons learnt at home. The CSN needed to be taught repeatedly so that they could make quick progress. The teachers often notified all parents what were taught in school so that they were able to carry out follow-up activities with their CSN at home, based on the information given by the teachers. This was a way to make sure that CSN were given ample practice in what they were learning in school. The parents felt obligated and spent time guiding their CSN at home. Rashim, the teacher participant in MPS said:

“... the parents who had doubts in teaching do ask us how to approach certain topics..... CSN understand better with the teacher’s approach.... we show the parents the simple approach that we teachers use so that they are able to continue teaching at home”.

(S1/T2/INT2)

The researcher took the opportunity to look at the exercise and activity books of CSN and it was seen that there were substantial work done by the CSN. The teachers had emphasized on correction and it was noted that Miha, Mimi, Rita and Reha had frequently guided the CSN in it. The teachers expressed satisfaction that parents had

worked along with them well and had shown their commitment and responsibility in guiding the CSN at home. This is a way to instil the learning habit in the CSN.

The researcher visited the parent, Miha at her home and noted there were some books and stationeries on a table in the living room. Miha showed her son's work and the progress the child has made. She said that her son usually did his homework after his religious class and always in the presence of either his siblings or her. In the process of guiding the child, Miha got to check his school work. Miha sounded very positive when she said, "*... my son had shown great progress since attending MIPS. My son is an Autistic and she had shown great improvement in learning the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics (S2/P1/INT2).*"

The second parent participant, Mimi has a son in MPS, who was diagnosed with ADHD and with multiple medical problems. She said,

"... I made it a point to get my son to do exercises at home and I focused on doing extra work in Bahasa Melayu and English Language with him as he liked learning languages and maybe it was less stressful for him. I also allowed him to attend tuition classes for mathematics and science. I am very grateful to my son's teachers who helped and supported me to identify teachers who could provide personal guidance and prepare the child for the UPSR examination."

(S1/P2/INT2)

Both Miha and Mimi made sure their CSN did learning at home. Besides, homework, their CSN had been trained to do extra exercises based on the topic learnt in school.

The senior assistant, Risha, believed that the CSN's progress depended on the school and home. Our parents are responsible and they have shown interest in their

CSN progress. The teachers too had noted that the CSN always had the homework completed when they returned to school (S1/GPK/INT3).

During the researcher's on-going interactions with the teachers in LPS, Tanya, Shoba and Shasha had stressed that parents' need to be responsible and guide in the development of the CSN and therefore guidance at home was crucial. Shoba said, *"...based on the IEP planned, we always advised the parents to focus on the skill emphasized in the IEP at home so that with repeated practice the CSN can improve"* (S2/T2/T1/GPK/INT1).

Shoba was also positive about the parents' commitment in LPS who sent their CSN to centres such as Happy Kids and Nasom after school hours, which catered specifically for CSN. This is because some parents work late hours, they sought extra guidance for their CSN at these centres. The centres are private so the parents got to pay to send their CSN, so ... not all parents can afford (S2/T2/INT 3). Shoba was very positive that with parents' cooperation, the CSN had improved at least to be independent and manage oneself. She related her experience "... I had a passive CSN registered in the school with no speech and writing abilities. The drawbacks in the CSN were highlighted in his IEP. The teachers in LPS showed the CSN's parents the strategies taken in the classroom and with the parents' commitment and guidance at home the CSN showed a vast improvement in his speech and also in his writing (S2/T2/INT1).

An observation at Rita's home showed that her CSN had a room where he could do his work. Rita said *"... her son had the same routine when he came back from school, after lunch, he did his school work and it was not a problem for him to do work that I had asked him to do for the day, he loved writing lyrics of Mandarin songs"* (S2/P1/INT2). Rita further stressed that she was concerned about his school work so she

made it a routine to check his bag when he got back from school, to check if there was any homework.

When MPS conducted the term examination, the SEIP unit too carried out test for the CSN. Although, during the SEPTA meeting, the parents are briefed on the schedule of the school activities, the teachers in the unit made sure that the detailed assessment schedule were distributed to all parents through their CSN about two weeks before the examination date. In LPS, the teachers too carried out assessments based on the IEP planned for each CSN. Tanya stated that some of their assessments were motor skills depending on the individual CSN's disability.

The parents from MPS and LPS welcomed the assessment schedule as it was a reminder to them of their role. The parents involved in the study were ambitious and they took the initiative to get more information on the topics covered in the examination so that they can prepare their CSN well to sit for the examination.

The administrators in MPS and LPS had decided on the date to have the '*Open Day*' in the strategic plan, for parents to meet the class teachers to collect the assessment progress report. The SEIP units in both schools too held it at the same time. Through this meeting, the teachers and the parents got an opportunity to formally discuss issues such as academic progress, developing a new IEP, co-academic activities and behavioural aspects pertaining to the CSN.

The teachers also showed the parents the CSN's class work such as, language arts work that was displayed in the class. The teachers were generally positive about the parents' keen interest in their CSN school work.

The Academic Awards ceremony highlighted CSN for categories of Best Overall Student, Best Performance in Academic Subjects, and Best Attendance in the academic year, Best Performance in Co-curriculum, and Best Attitude. Risha viewed

this event as important as it allowed them to highlight the abilities and the potentials of the CSN (S1/GPK/INT2). Furthermore, Risha pointed out that these CSN needed the effort of the parents to excel and when these parents interact with the teachers, most often they are able to instill and enforce positive values in the CSN. The parents felt awesome to note that their CSN were able to excel with their disabilities.

At the district level, the District Education Office organized the appreciation ceremony with the help of all SEIP in other mainstream schools. This was a graduation ceremony for CSN moving into the secondary schools, joining the transition programme or the workforce.

In, the appreciation ceremony, the SEPTA committee helped the teachers in transporting the CSN to the venue, in serving food and in setting the display counter with the exhibits. This ceremony was usually held at a hotel. Besides the parents too cooperated with the teachers and helped to prepare the CSN for the presentations during the ceremony.

The teachers appreciated the Appreciation Ceremony as it was a proud moment for parents of CSN and an enjoyable time for CSN. The ceremony highlights the best CSN in the District based on their participation in the various competitions held in the district.

The document reviewed showed that the purpose of hosting this ceremony was to recognise the ability of the CSN and to motivate the CSN to keep working hard till the end of their schooling years.

4.3.3 Continuous Communication between Teachers and Parents

Communication bonds the teachers and parents. “Jom kembali ke sekolah” (Back to School), activity was carried out on the first day of the school term in MPS. Documents reviewed showed that before the start of the school holidays, the teachers had issued a letter to alert the parents on their preparation for the new school term and the tentative dates to purchase exercise books, stationery and uniforms at the cooperative store, so that all the students would be well equipped on the first day of the new school term. This move was to make the parents aware of the school system. Risha said, “ ...the “Back to school programme” is merely to return to school after long holidays, almost seven weeks of holidays andeffort of the teachers to instill in the parents the need to encourage their CSN to attend school regularly and punctually” (S1/GPK/INT2).

On the first day of school, the researcher observed some of the parents bringing their CSN to their classrooms. There were a few CSN who were reluctant to go into the classroom and were crying, trying to follow their parents back. However, this situation was immediately attended to by the teachers and their aides. Soon the CSN were able to follow instructions and those who needed help were guided by the teacher aides. All the CSN were guided to the assembly ground where a formal assembly is held every Monday of the week. This assembly is held together with the mainstream school students and teachers. After the first assembly for the academic year, the special education unit had a special visitor, the state legislative assembly member YB Dato Ayub bin Rahmat, who spent some time with the CSN (S1/OBS).

Based on the researcher’s observation, the parents’ cooperation in this activity was seen when they took the effort to send their CSN to school on time. The parents left

soon after sending their CSN to the classroom. Some CSN were seen accompanied by their siblings who are in the mainstream school. In LPS, the teachers waited for their CSN at the school entrance and the parents were seen having brief conversations with the teachers.

The teachers and parents in MPS and LPS used log book to communicate when they interacted about the lessons and homework of the CSN. There were times they made telephone calls, texted messages and went to the school personally when they had pertinent queries to make. The relationship between the teachers and parents are cordial and approachable. Miha expressed the good friendly nature in the teachers that parents felt that they could have easy interactions with the teachers. Mimi, who had her son in the mainstream school initially, felt that the special education teachers were more compassionate than the mainstream teachers.

The teachers too felt that the continuous meeting of parents for various activities provided parents an opportunity to understand the functions of schools and most of all the role of parents. Rashim, the teacher who coordinated the family day activity with SEPTA said that he received full cooperation from the parents. The parents readily communicated with him as they were equally excited and readily volunteered transport facilities, foodstuffs, financial support and manpower and they even cooperated and made sure the activity planned was executed well. (S1/T2/INT/2). Miha, a parent participant in the study expressed:

“... it was a great learning experience to go for the family day with the teachers. She said, ‘we, parents realized the commitment the teachers have in handling the CSN. They were strict with the CSN but at the same time they showered lots of love and we parents admired the patience they had. Sometimes, we as parents did not have the patience that these teachers had.’”

(S1/P1/INT/2)

Risha said that the parents had good communications with us as they enjoyed being with us. Risha stressed:

“...the family day outings exposed to the parents the abilities of their CSN and it dawned in many parents on how to value their CSN. Many activities involving every member in the family and the CSN were carried out, such as CSN sewing with mothers, treasure hunt with fathers and games with siblings and inter- family activity were also carried out where parents were divided into groups and the CSN were teamed with other parents and this gave room to the parents to understand the conditions of other CSN and the CSN were given the opportunity to interact with other parents”

(S1/GPK/INT2)

A dental care activity was planned and organised by the teachers and parents with the collaboration of the local dental health clinic. Its objective was to instil knowledge in parents and CSN on the importance of dental care. Mimi received this information from her friend, and she presented the idea through the SEPTA council to the administrators of MPS. MPS agreed to take the offer from the dental health clinic to organize a one day activity in MPS. The teachers, Risha and Misha discussed the details of the activity with the dental clinic authorities and planned the working paper with the theme “Healthy Teeth, Attractive Smile”. The teachers too obtained the approval from the District Education Office to conduct the programme. The SEPTA council members were assigned to monitor the programme with the help of the parents.

Unfortunately, the activity had to be shelved as the teachers had to be involved in ad hoc programmes such as meetings and in-service courses organised by the MOE and state education department. MPS had requested the clinic for a new date but the clinic was unable to set a day yet due to their busy schedule. Misha, the coordinator of this activity hoped that MPS could reorganise the programme with the dental clinic in the forthcoming academic year.

In LPS, Tanya said that the community link was mainly through the assistance given by the government departments, private sectors such as the banks, business sectors and individuals. In LPS, the teachers had not initiated any communal link with the neighbouring SEIP. Tanya said that since the CSN in LPS were mostly critical, it was difficult to organise any activities with CSN of other SEIP. The CSN in LPS did interact with other CSN in the district when activities were organised and carried out by the DSEU. Through the DSEU activities the parents too, got to interact with other parents although DSEU had not initiated any activities to bring the parents of CSN together (S2/GPK/INT3).

In MPS, the teachers expressed that they did not plan activities involving other schools nor had community links. This is because the DSEU had programmes involving all schools in the district, so in MPS the teachers planned only for their CSN. Furthermore, the enrolment in MPS was sufficient so they need not have links with other schools to conduct excursions for the CSN in MPS. In MPS, the teachers need to charter a bus for all the CSN. The administrator in MPS said that there were community links when they sought help from other departments to have activities in the school or to provide services for our CSN. We have got links to clinics and also to other service centres for our parents to get special rates when they take their CSN to clinics and even to recreational centres which incurred payments. Documents reviewed showed that the teachers in MPS had organised health programmes in the school where a doctor and staff from the hospital had provided services to CSN and guidance to parents. The teachers had also helped to ease the burden of the parents by getting the staffs from a commercial bank to come to the school so that all CSN can each have a saving account.

Rashim said that community link is evident in MPS although not directly involving the CSN and the parents. Most of our activities are sponsored by NGOS and private organizations. They provide financial aids and in kinds when we have

programmes. For example, Rashim said that during our religious and festival celebrations various organizations and individuals gave foodstuffs and also clothes for the children. Rashim said that without these sponsorships it would be difficult to organise activities (S1/T2/INT3).

In LPS, Tanya said "... the NGO contributed to organise various events. They sponsored to celebrate the CSN's birthdays every year, helped to subsidize cost of activities and also in the infrastructure of the school. Document reviewed showed that the teachers, parents and NGOs had close communication. The Lion's Club had frequently helped in their activities. The contributions from the NGO helped the teachers to organise various activities for the betterment of the CSN (S2/T2/INT3).

Tanya said, "*...the Magnum Corporation made cash contributions to every CSN in LPS at the beginning of the academic year and it was done voluntarily by Magnum Corporation without any request from the LPS*" (S2/GPK/INT3).

Various NGO such as REACH, NASOM, and CALVARY HOME organised an awareness campaign involving all SEIP in the district together with other NGOs and the week long campaign was officially launched by the Deputy Prime Minister in LPS. Some parents from LPS took the initiative to attend the function and gathered knowledge on the different categories of disabilities. The event was very useful for the public as through interaction with different society members, the parents were exposed to various input.

Tanya further expressed that the DSEU had a drive to encourage CSN to have saving accounts. So in LPS, the teachers encouraged the parents to start an account for their CSN. To ease the burden of parents to take the CSN to the bank, the school communicated with a local bank to visit LPS and all the parents were informed and they took the opportunity to start an account for their CSN. Rita felt it was a good move

initiated by the teachers as working parents did face problems to take their CSN to the bank (S2/P2/INT3).

Another service offered in LPS, was the link to a clinic which offered special charges for the CSN in LPS. This has eased the burden of parents who had to take their CSN frequently to a doctor (S2/GPK/INT4).

In LPS, the community link is also seen through the government health clinic contribution. The teachers in LPS initiated and organised a visit for the local health clinic personals to visit LPS to have discussions with parents and the teachers on the general health conditions of CSN and also to screen the CSN. This eased the burden of the some parents who were ignorant of the facilities available and had never taken their CSN for any form of treatment. The CSN who needed further treatment or screening were identified and the parents were briefed on the procedures (S2/T2/INT3).

Tanya said that while the activities were conducted by the various communities in LPS, the teachers made it a point to include the parents in the working committee. In this way, the parents got to interact and learn more about the condition of their CSN. Besides, the rapport between the teachers, communal members and the parents were enhanced. The CSN too, got opportunities to see different people other than the normal people in their daily life namely, their friends, teachers and family members (S2/GPK/INT4).

This effort by the parents to interact with the teachers showed that they not only had keen interest in the development of their CSN but also to cooperate with the teachers in the school.

4.3.4 Explanation of Curriculum by Teachers to Parents

School curriculum in SEIP is made up of two components. The predominantly focused is the academic curriculum that covers subjects such as language arts, maths, science and social studies. The second component is the functional aspects –that dealt with social and behavioural curriculum is as important as academic curriculum especially when dealing with CSN. Therefore, parents should have a clear understanding of the entire curriculum so that they know the expectation of the school and also be aware of the school system, encourage their CSN, provide extended and consistent practice at home in both academic and functional needs of CSN.

The Individualised Education Programme (IEP) is an important document in Special Education. Rashim, a teacher participant elaborated on the importance and purpose of developing the IEP:

“.....it was to change the behaviour, learning disabilities of children, if the student had problems in acquiring the Bahasa Malaysia language, then the IEP would emphasize that specific need and the teachers worked towards improving the specific weakness.....if a behaviour problem, was observed in the class we discussed individually with the parents our observation and collectively we came to a consensus to develop the CSN’s IEP.

(S1/T2/INT1)

The teachers went through the process to prepare the IEP for a child at least 3 times a year (S1/GPK/INT1). The parents were invited to the school, to discuss and together with the teachers develop the IEP based on the CSN’s needs and abilities. The parents are required to be involved in developing the IEP, as they needed to know what the CSN are taught in school, the CSN’s capacity to develop and the assistance they needed at home. The discussion of developing the IEP was done during the end of the year meeting, during the Open day in the new academic year and during the second

term. The IEP development can also be held much earlier if the CSN showed progress and both parents and teachers collectively agreed to change the focus in the IEP. The parents and teachers were able to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the CSN in the classroom and also in the assessments conducted. This knowledge of the curriculum planned allowed the parents to understand the entire curriculum and thus enable them to guide their CSN.

The researcher observed the second IEP session held for the year after seeking permission from the administrator, teachers and parents concerned. The parents waited in queue for their turn to meet their CSN's class teacher. The IEP session observed was carried out between the teacher and the parent, Miha. First, the teacher presented the academic performance of the CSN to the parent. Then the teacher elaborated on the behaviour, strengths and also on the weaknesses that were observed in the CSN. Miha was seen to agree with the teacher, in areas of strengths of her CSN but she disagreed when the teacher said that her CSN needed training in writing. She expressed her observation at home and said that her CSN had made vast improvement in his writing during the holidays. She further said that she had made her son to do copying exercise during the holidays and that he was able to write with a space between words. However, the parent agreed with the teacher that her son has reading problem. The teacher suggested as to how Miha could approach to teach reading at home. Before the IEP session ended, the teacher agreed to accept the Miha's views and in the new IEP, the focus would be in writing sentences and also in the reading skill. There was mutual agreement between the teacher and the parent and they then signed the IEP.

The second IEP session was held between the teacher and Mimi, the parent participant in the study. Mimi accepted the teacher's view of her son's strengths and weakness. She was aware of her son's weakness as her son's medical officer had briefed her. However, Mimi expressed surprise and shock when she was shown the

progress report of her son. She was disappointed with the grade as her son had achieved low marks in mathematics and science. Mimi showed interest and commitment in helping her CSN and she met the other subject teachers to discuss how she could give guidance at home as her CSN was following the inclusive programme and would be taking the Ujian Pentaksiran Sekolah Rendah (Primary School Assessment test). Generally, the IEP observations showed that the parents accepted the feedback from the teachers positively and they agreed with the teachers on the IEP planned.

In LPS, the first IEP was planned based on the medical report and discussions with the parents concerning their CSN. However, there were parents who were ambitious and expected academic skills to be included. The teachers advised the parents not to stress the CSN and they explained to the parents how the upgrading of skills was done in the IEP. However, in LPS the teachers made a change in the IEP if the CSN was capable of mastering what was prepared earlier than the time stipulated. This factor was explained to the parents by the teachers. Tanya expressed, “ the teachers and the parents will collectively discuss and agree to an IEP planned and if there was a difference in opinion then based on the individual cases, the teachers and the parents held further discussion (S2/GPK/INT4).

The researcher observed the IEP session between the teacher and parent, Shasha and Reha. The session took place in the classroom and Reha's daughter was seated beside her. Shasha explained in detail the progress in every subject of the CSN. Shasha also explained how the teaching was carried out in the classroom and that homework was given occasionally to the CSN. Shasha said that Reha's daughter's problem area was in mathematics. Based on the progress report, Reha asked for clarifications on the Living skills subject. It was noted that the CSN were taught three topics, cookery, sewing and agriculture and the medium of instruction was in Mandarin. However, for Reha's daughter, the teacher explained to her in Bahasa Melayu. Reha and the teacher

had detailed discussion on her daughter's progress. Reha complained to the teacher as her daughter never wanted to do any studies at home, other than that given by the teachers. The teacher boosted Reha's confidence by asking her to keep the home activity book in the school bag and she would assign homework for her daughter to do at home (S2/T1/P2/OBS1).

Rita, the other parent participant expressed satisfaction in the progress report of her CSN as it was encouraging. Her son had shown improvement in writing and reading. His only problem was his mood swings. He easily got irritated when other children disturbed him. When that happened, he would refuse to do any work but sulk. Rita, being an understanding parent, had requested the teachers to send his incomplete work home and that she would get him to do at home (S2/P1/INT2). The researcher had an opportunity to meet Rita and Reha after their IEP sessions and varied reactions were noted. The parent, Reha showed disappointment in her CSN's progress as she felt that her daughter had done a lot of work in school but she cannot do any simple work on her own at home. She felt there was no progress academically. However, Rita was very positive and totally agreed with the teacher's feedback on her CSN's problem areas. She was of the opinion that the teachers knew the best. The IEP sessions were carried out smoothly and it showed that both the teachers and parents worked collectively to develop an IEP for every CSN.

4.3.5 Ensuring Understanding in Each Other's Beliefs and Values

The CSN in MPS and LPS were involved in a society or club as stipulated in the circular issued by the education ministry. The teachers in MPS and LPS had collectively decided to involve the CSN in the cultural society as they were of the

opinion that they had many talented CSN and who just required consistent guidance and training to expose their hidden talent.

The SEIP teachers in MPS had a number of cultural events planned and carried out throughout the year. The teachers in SEIP and together with the mainstream teachers collectively organised some of the cultural programmes. The cultural activity was practiced in MPS as the CSN needed to be exposed and made to understand the cultures and festivals that the community and in general, the society celebrates. As a strategy to instill a close rapport with the families of CSN in MPS and LPS, it was a norm for the teachers to visit the homes of the CSN. The cultural activity was a routine programme and the activities planned were Maulidur Rasul Celebration, Khatam Al-Quran, Breaking fast, Hari Raya , Chinese New Year and Deepavali celebrations and 'Marhaban' in MPS and Moon Cake festival, Chinese New Year celebration in LPS. MPS was also appointed by the DSEU to host a district level cultural event with the collaboration of all the SEIP in the district. These activities were carried out well as there was an understanding of beliefs and values between the teachers and parents and the community at large.

SEIP unit in MPS too participated in activities organised by the DSEU. One such event was the Semarak Islam Programme where various competition, were carried out. MPS participated as a team in the 'Nasyid' competition and as individuals in the 'Hafazan' and 'Tilawah' competitions. The participants had won the competitions and earned accolades for the school.

In MPS, when students were selected for particular competitions, the parents were informed. Risha said "...the teachers interacted with the parents and explained on the nature of the competitions and the nature of guidance and expectations expected from the parents. The teachers had to have constant link with the parents so that parents

were able to provide the necessary guidance and here, the teachers and the parents were involved in training the CSN both at school and at home respectively (S1/T1/INT2). Risha also said, “... *I encouraged the parents to seek professional guidance if their CSN had great potentials parents had accepted suggestions ... and had sent their CSN for Quran recital classes*” (S1/GPK/INT2).

Furthermore, Misha said

“... for cultural competitions such as dance, the parents were roped in to prepare the outfits for the contestants, we had a few parents who were seamstress and they were creative and they took charge of the outfits for the participants, based on the advice of the teachers .

(S1/T1/INT2)

Tanya said “...we took part in competitions organised by the DSEU so the English, Mandarin and Bahasa Melayu Language panels carried out creative writing competition in school, to select participants for the Semarak Islam Programme. In preparation for the competition the parents were informed and the teachers requested the parents to help the CSN to practice the creative writing at home. Tanya expressed:

“...the parents were not keen but when they understood the nature of the competition they showed a lot of commitment in training their CSN to do their best and they felt delighted and proud when their CSN won the competitions.”

(S2/GPK/INT 3)

Risha stressed that the parents’ guidance was crucial especially when their CSN were competing in competitions and when they needed frequent practice. The teachers coached the CSN in the school but due to time constraint the parents were advised to ensure that the CSN had follow-up practice at home but it must be said that in this school we, teachers had the cooperation of parents and at times they were even willing to send their CSN to the teachers’ homes, after school, usually at the request of the

teachers, when skilled practices were needed in competitions such as “Tulisan Had” or creative writing so that the CSN could be trained to write within the stipulated time. The parents’ guidance was also needed to train the CSN in reciting the “Quran” so that the CSN were well-prepared to participate in competitions. Through this close interaction and effort between the teachers and the parents, MPS were able to produce CSN who had won competitions at district and state levels. The CSN from MPS emerged runners-up in the “State Tilawah Competition”

(S1/GPK/INT3)

The religious activity, “Khatam Al-Quran” was a district programme planned by the DSEU but MPS was in charge of hosting the event. The venue was the community mosque near the school. All the 35 SEIP in the district were assigned duties. It was a heavy responsibility on MPS, who only had the manpower of 9 teachers and the event was expected to cater for 800 people, CSN, parents and invited guests. However, Rashim said MPS took it on as a challenge and organised the event.

Rashim elaborated that a couple of meetings were held at district level with all the participating schools and the district officers. In MPS, the administrator involved the SEPTA members in planning and executing the event. SEPTA members of MPS were very committed as they helped in terms of manpower and financial support. The parents helped to prepare the place in the mosque and a parent who owned a restaurant agreed to sponsor food for the event. Other parents helped in the transporting things to the mosque, setting the canopy, decorating the venue and also in preparing the ingredients for the bulk cooking (S1/T2INT/3). The teachers were glad that the SEPTA members contributed a great deal to make this event a success. The parents, Miha and Mimi were happy that the DSEU had taken the effort to prepare this event as it helped to reduce the

burden of many parents, who had difficulties to celebrate this ceremony for their children due to financial constraint.

The documents reviewed by the researcher showed that festival activity was also part of the Moral and Islamic Studies Panel programme in MPS and LPS. Risha said that during the festival season, the teachers in MPS would select to visit a number of homes of CSN. This selection was done on a rotation basis. The teachers and the CSN who could manage themselves participated in visiting the homes of their friends collectively on the days set. The teachers felt that this exposure was a new experience for the CSN as they got an opportunity to interact and celebrate the festivals with their friends, besides their families.

The parents of the CSN were informed of the programme and they readily welcomed the idea. Some parents, who were not listed for the visit too, extended their invitation to have the CSN and the teachers at their homes.

Risha explained that the parents were not expected to spend a lot of money to prepare and entertain the CSN. She went on to explain that the idea was to get the CSN to visit the homes of their friends and for the teachers, an opportunity to interact with the families and understand their background. It also provided an avenue for the teachers to understand the behaviour patterns of the CSN in different environment. Risha said MPS received a lot of support from parents in this activity. Risha went on to say that besides providing exposure, the CSN had the opportunities to socialise with their peers' families. Some of the parents were very excited and they had a grand celebration for the CSN (S1/GPK/INT/4). This activity was well received by the parents.

Miha and Mimi too had positive feedbacks about the programme. Miha was glad that MPS had organised this programme as she saw a change in her CSN. She said,

“my son disliked meeting people, refused outings with his extended family members, he cannot stand any kind of loud noise, but with the coaxing from the teachers he participated in the activity and I saw an improvement in him as after the visits he was excited and was happy to relate to me what he did”. Miha too expressed her happiness in her CSN’s improvement in going outing with his peers and the teachers. Mimi too was overwhelmed with her CSN’s cheerfulness when he returned home with money packets given by the parents of CSN that they visited (S1/P2/INT/3). The parents of CSN in MPS were informed about the activity so that they were aware of their CSN’s movement.

Risha further elaborated that all the parents whose homes were selected for the visit agreed to welcome the CSN and the teachers and that showed the cooperation, commitment and the responsibility of the parents towards their CSN and the school.

Tanya said that during the festival season, the teachers and the teacher assistants took the opportunity to visit the homes of CSN, especially the newly registered CSN. Shasha said “... we visited new CSN because we wanted to build a rapport with the family and also get to know the nature of the CSN at home” (S2/T1/INT2). Tanya said that she informed the parents just to make sure that they were at home and were willing to accept their visit. Besides, Tanya said the visits were important to form a close link between the school and the homes. Tanya said, “... it was the hope of the administrators in LPS and the teachers in LPS to have a good understanding with the parents knowing that the parents of these CSN were stressed in looking after the CSN” (S2/GPK/INT3).

Tanya said that the cultural practices were highlighted in LPS as it gave an opportunity to the CSN to experience festivals in the school as some of them did not get

an opportunity to celebrate festivals such as Chinese New Year and Moon Cake Festivals at home (S2/GPK/INT3).

As mentioned earlier, a number of CSN in LPS lived in homes, away from their parents. Bearing this in mind, Tanya said that in LPS they organised celebrations during the major festivals. The teachers with the support of the parents organised Chinese New Year celebrations in LPS (S2/GPK/INT1). Shoba said the Lions Club also contributed towards the success of this activity. The CSN living in the homes were given new clothes and during the celebration, all the CSN came to school in their new clothes. During this celebration, the CSN were entertained to a lion dance show and a meal. The parents gathered and organised the meals, serving and guiding the CSN.

Moon Cake Festival was another major festival celebrated in the school. This celebration was celebrated at night and the CSN carrying lantern walked around outside the school premises with the parents and the teachers. Before the walk, the parents cooperated with the teachers to help out with the dinner. Then the parents organised and guided the CSN, with the lanterns during the walk. Some CSN threw tantrums after a while but the parents helped to calm them (S2/T2/INT2).

Rita and Reha said that in LPS the teachers and the parents had a close knit relationship as they often partake in all activities planned by the teachers. During the activities, the parents carried out duties such as disciplining the CSN, managing the food and helping the teachers whenever necessary.

The NGOs played an important role in LPS as they sponsored many activities in the school. The observation by the researcher showed that Rita and some of the parents were well-known among the teachers and the headmistress.

Table 4.2:

Teacher's and Parent's Roles in Implementing Activities

Component	Focus	Teacher's role	Parent's role
Curriculum	Briefing the parents	Attended meetings	Attended meeting
	Developing IEP	Discussed CSN ability	Discussed CSN ability
	Classroom instruction	Understood classroom instruction	Told the role of children in class
	Library Scrapbook	Provided guidance	Understood and sought help and guided CSN
	Homework	Teacher taught and explained	Sought guidance from teachers
	Open Day	Gave progress report	Discussed progress report
	Convocation	Guided and trained CSN	Helped to transport CSN to venue
Co-curriculum	Scouts Movement	Trained CSN	Follow-up training
	1 Student 1 Sports Sports Day	Instilled moral values	Guided CSN
	Competitions Excursion	Decided on field trips	Planned field trip
	Cultural Programme	Conducted activities	
	Outreach Programme		Helped in managing
	Religious programme		CSN
Student Affairs	Back to School Programme	Instilled the habit in school	Took responsibility
	SEPTA council	Trained students to adapt	Attended meetings
	Discipline Management	Met parents	
	Health Programme	Instilled discipline	Trained CSN
	Community Links	Instilled healthy habits	
	PTA meeting	Met parents	Met teachers
	Festival Celebration Birthday Celebration	Planned celebrations	Planned celebrations

4. 4 Summary of Teacher-Parent Collaboration Practice in Implementing Activities

The initial implementation stage of TPC involved the teachers. In MPS, the teachers held a meeting with the SEPTA committee and selected the parents who were determined during a previous meeting. The meeting was held to select a working committee for the planned activity and to collectively detail the itinerary for it. The teacher in charge of the activity prepared the working paper. However, the process differed a little in LPS. Before an activity was carried out, the teachers planned the working committee and the members selected from among the parent were notified.

When the working paper was approved, the teachers informed the parents on the details of the activity so that the parents could make the necessary arrangements to get involved in the activity.

The administrators in charge of Special Education in MPS and LPS stressed that teachers and parental collaboration was a necessary tool to improve the general development of the CSN. The senior assistants in both schools mooted the collaboration of parents in the school activities. The teachers took the effort to collect information from parents on their views and needs to plan the TPC for the new academic year. Through the data collected, the teachers decided on the activities for each academic year. The parents had close rapport with the administrator and teachers so they initiated the parents to be active in school so that the teachers and parents could work together in organising the various activities. On the other hand, the parents were happy the manner the activities were planned as they felt that the teachers had considered their interests.

The teachers considered the TPC was a platform for teachers and parents to understand share and have a close rapport with the parents of the CSN while the parents took it as an avenue to learn and manage their CSN. It was the initiative of the administrators in LPS and MPS to involve the parents as the school was not aware of the directive from the authorities to include parents for academic success. The teachers in both the schools were glad that their administrators were aware of the need to interact with the parents frequently.

Generally, all the parents collaborated with the teachers in most of the activities. However, in MPS there were occasions when parents are unable to attend due to work commitments or certain family issues. In such situations, Risha said the parents did make it a point to come to school. In LPS, Tanya said that the parents of CSN who lived in homes did make visits to the school, usually at the beginning of the year. At all other times it was the caretakers who came to the school. The CSN lived in homes because of the work commitments and due to the responsibility of other siblings.

The activities were well planned although there were no documents to know how the activities were planned got the approval from the relevant authorities. The activities carried out had the cooperation of the parents who worked along with the teachers to make every activity a success. In activities where the parents were not directly involved, they too showed their commitment in preparing their CSN to be ready for all activities. It was seen that when parents were keen in their children's development, a positive growth was seen in the children although the severity of the disability varied from child to child and therefore the success rate too varied.

4.5 Written Report on Teacher-Parent Collaboration Practice

The documents reviewed showed that after every event, MPS and LPS had a written report. The report was crucial as it was a proof of the event being carried out. The report stated the objective, aim, target group, date, venue, the participants, the tentative programme, the working committee, the strength and the weakness of the activity. The schools prepared the report with some pictorial evidence for documentation purpose. The implementation procedure can be mapped as below in figure 4.2.

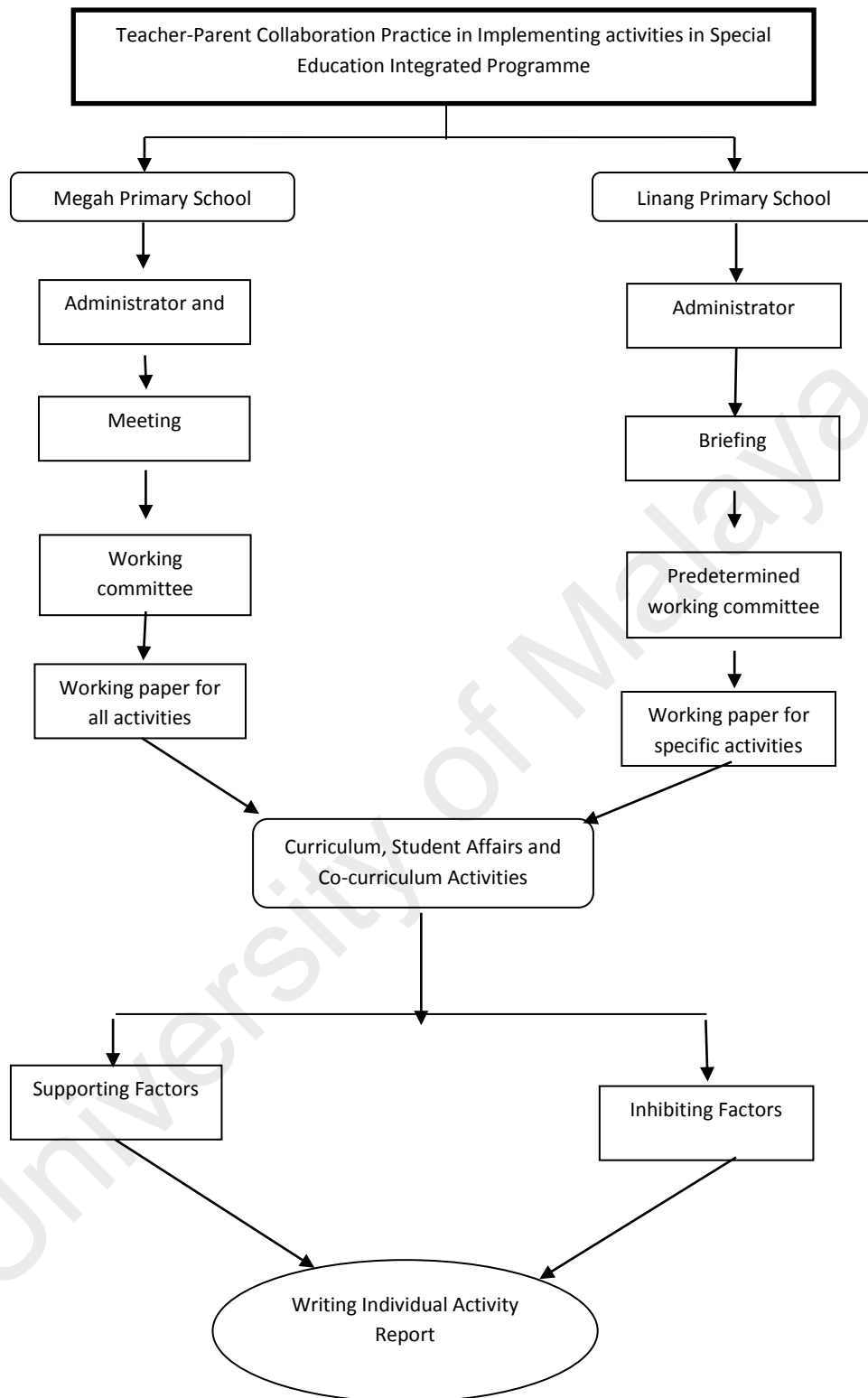


Figure 4.2. Process involved in implementing activities

4.6 Factors That Supported Teacher-Parent Collaboration Practice in the Planning and Implementation of activities

Any activity carried out need to be evaluated to identify the extent of positive impact it had on the participants in general. The success of an activity greatly depended on the participants involved. The TPC carried out too was gauged its effectiveness through its participants.

This section looks at the third research question used in this study that is the factors that supported the TPC.

Research Question 3

What are the factors that supported the teacher-parent collaboration practice in the special education integrated programme in the primary schools?

4.6.1 Experienced Teachers

The administrators of MPS and LPS expressed that their SEIP senior assistants, Risha and Tanya were experienced teachers in dealing with CSN. The administrators opined that it was their experience that enabled them to plan many activities in the schools. Risha from MPS expressed “... *my hands-on experience with the CSN has taught me more than what I had learnt formally and that was what made me form the SEPTA council in MPS and also got the parents to be involved in school activities*” (S1/GPK/INT1).

Likewise, the teachers in MPS too expressed that Risha had the skill to approach and talk to the parents and even encouraged the parents to express care and

love to their CSN. This view was further expressed by Rashim, “... *Madam Risha is clever to talk, so she is good in building a rapport with parents. Risha’s personality and her experience helped to successfully influence many parents to attend school functions*” (S1/T2/INT2).

On the other hand, in LPS, Tanya and the teachers had been the motivating force for the parents as said by Rita “...*Madame Tan and the teachers really like parents to attend activities planned in the school. They always talk to us when we come to school to take our children home. I like. The first meeting was very good. They tell what is that, they give us this paper if our children want to work can apply for training some more. The teachers every time tell us how to take care of our CSN*” (S1/P1/INT3).

4.6.2 Approachable and Cooperative Nature

Cooperation is a key factor that is crucial in any organisation for it to function well. From the researcher’s observation, both the schools had the full support from the headmaster of MPS and the headmistress of LPS. Tanya and Risha said they had the full support from their school administrators in the activities they had planned.

The cooperation given by the teachers and the parents in the two schools was another factor that facilitated the TPC. The teachers readily accepted the procedure decided collectively by the administrators and colleagues had planned and the parents too always tried to attend all activities. Miha, a parent and a nurse by profession, said that since the schedule was planned ahead, she was able to take leave from work. Reha, another parent participant, expressed satisfaction as she was always included in all activities in the school. There was always a teacher to translate for her what was briefed in Mandarin (S2/P2/INT2). The good rapport that the administrators had with their teachers had motivated them to work closely with the parents. The teachers did not

find it a burden to meet and interact with the parents at all times. The administrators rarely encountered any problems with the teachers when they planned and drew the working paper. The teachers in charge were prompt in preparing the working paper and they readily made amendments when they received feedbacks from the administrators. The administrators were pleased with the cooperation and support given by the teachers (S1/GPK/INT2).

The parents were always alert of the activities in school and they made necessary arrangements at their workplace to accommodate to the schedule set by the teachers. Before an activity was implemented in the school, the parents attended two formal meetings with the teachers and the meetings were held in the afternoons so that the parents can attend after work. If parents needed more information they met through informal meetings or contacted them through telephone calls. The cooperation from the parents were also noted when they supported major activities such as family day and excursion to neighbouring countries that the teachers had planned. The cooperation on the part of the parents was commendable.

Risha, the senior assistant in charge of SEIP in MPS said that her headmaster was very friendly and approachable, and that he provided constructive suggestions when she discussed the activities planned in MPS with him. Tanya too had similar opinion of her administrator. Tanya expressed “... *the administrators of mainstream school were always there to guide the SEIP based on their job designation*” (S2/GPK/INT2). Tanya further elaborated that the activities planned is linked to the different portfolios in the school and the senior assistants need to approve the activities depending on the scope of the activity.

The parents in LPS seemed to be very familiar with the headmistress as Rita said “...*big teacher, (headmistress) always come for the activities in the schools and*

she talks to us” (S1/P1/INT2). The researcher observed the close rapport the parents had with the headmistress and the teachers during the family day activity in the school and even some of the CSN were seen talking to her.

The teachers in MPS admired Tanya as said by Misha “... *we were glad we had Puan Risha an experienced person as our senior assistant as we could approach her any time if we faced any difficulties*” (S1/T1/INT2).

The parents in MPS too found that MPS was the best place for their CSN as the teachers were very kind and approachable. “We are like a family” said Miha. Mimi too felt happy as her son liked going to school in MPS compared to his previous school. Mimi said, “... *I am proud of the teachers in MPS, they gave us importance when they want to plan activities and I am very happy my son was placed in inclusive class and was allowed to take his UPSR* (S1/P2/INT2).

4.6.3 Excellent Interpersonal Skills

The administrators’ ability to interact with every one with such patience and demure is another factor that had made the working place to be a conducive environment in the schools. The teachers were able to express their views and the administrators always gave a hearing ear to their ideas, opinions and even their problems at times.

Misha, a teacher in MPS said that the senior assistant’s personality had helped the teachers to take the various duties as a challenge for the betterment of the CSN. The teachers felt comfortable with the senior assistant as they were able to discuss and at times negotiate with her. This good relationship between the senior assistant and the teachers reduced the stress which at times the teachers face with the CSN.

The teachers had good interactions with the parents of CSN in MPS. Their frequent short encounters in the school had enabled them to discuss various matters informally and these interactions too had forged a good rapport between them as stated by Miha, a parent participant in the study that the teachers were very friendly and they were like a family (S2/P1/INT2).

Through these interactions, the teachers requested the parents to instill the learning habit in the CSN. A positive factor was evident when the parents showed the effort and initiative to teach and guide the CSN in their academic subjects and also in preparing the CSN to compete in competitions.

4.6.4 Knowledge

Another supporting factor was the administrator's knowledge on special education. The senior assistants in the SEIP units in MPS and LPS had vast experience as a teacher, a trainer and as an administrator in a mainstream school. They had attended courses on special education curriculum, in-service courses on management besides the hands-on experiences gathered as a teacher. Their experience as a trainer and the knowledge they had gathered from courses they had attended in the past had given them a perspective to guide teachers on how to plan and implement activities and to involve the parents. The coordinator of SEIP had been trained in special education and this had helped to guide new teachers and also provide advice and guidance when parents sought for help.

The supporting factor in MPS included the input given by the parents. Some parents had the knowledge of facilities available at the hospital and they shared the procedures on how to seek treatment and medical advice with fellow parents and the teachers. Besides, the parents who took their CSN for therapies also shared the

knowledge with fellow parents and teachers. Some parents who had links with NGOs too provided the contacts to the teachers. The contributions from the parents came in different forms such as, from the mere acceptance of school invitations, to volunteering and to work along with the teachers.

4.6.5 Positive Growth in Children with Special Needs

The progress shown by the CSN had motivated the parents to provide sufficient learning time at home and to have frequent contacts with the teachers. Initially, some parents were emotionally affected and they did not take any effort to improve the abilities of their CSN. The close rapport that the parents had with the teachers had motivated and boost their confidence and they had realized that their CSN had the potentials in their own way. Miha too expressed "... the teachers were able to guide us on how to handle our children. Sometimes, we parents have no patience but the teachers instilled in us to keep working on the same thing with our CSN and it had been so true, for now my CSN can read and also write fairly well" (S1/P1/INT2).

4.6.6 Recognition and Mutual Trust

The ability of the teachers to recognise parents as fellow human being was a plus point for the success of TPC implementation in the schools. The home visits undertaken by the teachers were an eye-opener to parents especially those from low social economic status. These parents realised that the teachers were not biased or selective. To the teachers all parents were alike. Through the visits, the teachers were able to counsel and guide the parents so that they could accept the condition of their child and they worked towards developing their potentials. The 'Marhaban' and

Chinese New Year visits initiated by the teachers during festive seasons had not only created a closeness between the school and the homes but it also showed a difference in the character of the CSN as they were able to interact with other people whom they were meeting for the first time.

The parent participants were actively involved and they played their role in the activities planned by the school. The parents were very happy with what was planned by the teachers as they were aware of what was needed for every CSN. Miha said “... *I am happy with what was planned by the teachers for I believed in them. They know the best*” (S1/P1/INT1).

Shoba expressed

“... through frequent communication with parents we could develop a relationship and then only we could build the trust and only then the parents will share ideas and their problems. We need parents to talk to us and tell us about their CSN nature and only then we could give the appropriate intervention. For example, I had a CSN who was good in school but reacted differently at home, I had been trying to gather information and finally the parents opened up to tell what was the cause. So, if we have trust of parents, we could work fast to solve issues”

(S2/T2/INT3)

Most of the times, the parents were just followers of their CSN's teacher as they opined that teachers work their work the best. Rita and Miha said that they trusted the teachers' intentions and therefore they mean the best for our children. This grip of trust towards the teacher's effort is an energizer for the teachers to do their best for the CSN.

4.6.7 Monitoring

The aim of the TPC was to involve the parents in the education of the CSN. Therefore, the teachers and parents need to interact frequently to note and understand the changes seen in the CSN.

It is crucial for teachers and parents to monitor the CSN. The CSN needed to be monitored at all times on all educational activities that took place. Therefore, the teachers and parents in MPS and LPS had ongoing monitoring of the CSN. This was noted in teachers when they noted abnormalities in the CSN behaviour. The teachers tried to address the root cause of the problem. This attitude was noted when Shoba noted a change in her CSN and after much interaction the parents related the possible reasons.

The parents made it a point to closely guide their CSN's work at home. All parent participants had regularly checked their CSN bags to look out for homework and they made sure to attend to all activities organised in the school. Besides, the parents and teachers did communicate informally through communication logs, letters, text messages and telephone calls to keep a tap on the CSN. This regular guidance by the teachers and parents had developed a close rapport between them.

4.7 Summary of Factors that Supported Teacher-Parent Collaboration Practice

The success of any activity depended on the people involved in it and also how the approaches were taken to carry out the activity. In situations where we were handling adults affected emotionally, lots of tenderness need to be applied so that we can bring them out of their emotional state and face the world with what they have.

The parents of CSN were emotionally affected people as coping with CSN could be stressful so the manner teachers approached and communicated with them played an important role. The parent participants in the study were very positive and liked being involved in the activities as it had been a learning process for them too.

4.8 Factors That Inhibited Teacher-Parent Collaboration Practice

The findings of the study showed that there were several factors that influenced the effective implementation of TPC in the two SEIP.

Research Question 4

What are the factors that inhibited the teacher-parent collaboration practice in the special education integrated programme in the primary schools?

4.8.1 Clash of Activities

The main inhibiting factor was the clash of activities planned at the ministry, state and district education departments. There were occasions when the higher authorities host courses, meetings and activities within a short notice and the teachers and CSN were requested to participate in those activities and this had caused the school to postpone its scheduled activity due to limited manpower.

The teachers and parents were equally disappointed as it entailed a lot of preparation and at the eleventh hour an activity which was not easy to host had to be cancelled. A scenario such as this meant that the CSN and their parents had lost some good information especially when the activity intended involved people or professionals

from the community. Although, such clashes were not frequent, but when such clashes occurred, the rescheduling of the activity takes a long process.

4.8.2 Lack of Commitment

Another challenge faced by the teachers was the lack of commitment from some parents. These parents always had excuses that they had work commitments. Such commitments may be true but it cannot be all round the year. Although the number of parents who lacked commitment was small but it did affect the development of their CSN. The senior assistant in MPS opined that the purpose of education was sometimes not fulfilled such as, CSN not given guidance at home, CSN were pampered at home, and thus, developmental growth of CSN was hampered. Teachers were not been able to conduct activities if parents showed negative attitudes. The school took the effort to bring the parents into the school for various activities but not all parents complied, simply because they took things for granted.

In LPS, some of the CSN stayed in paid private homes, run by individuals. This happened, when parents faced the stress of managing their CSN among other duties. The teachers got to meet the parents of these CSN but rarely. Most often, the teachers only met the guardians who were sometimes unable to interact much with the school.

4.8.3 Passive followers

The researcher noted that generally, the parents were passive followers or readily accepted the decisions made by the school. During the SEPTA meeting in MPS and the briefing in LPS, most the parents who attended the meeting accepted the plan presented by the teachers. Miha and Rita opined that they agreed with what was decided

by the teachers for they felt that the teachers knew what the school needs. They went on to say that they saw improvement in their CSN so therefore what the teachers had planned was good for the CSN.

Mimi said, “... we, parents had given our views to the teachers so when they planned the activities, they had to view many factors before deciding so as a teacher I know the constraints so we accept what had been decided” (S1/P2/INT3).

The IEP meetings observed by the researcher too showed that the parents accepted what was stated by the teachers. Only a number of them tried to discuss what they felt was lacking in the IEP drawn for their CSN.

A key factor observed by the researcher was that the parents were passive takers of teachers’ decisions mainly because they had limited knowledge on education as Rita said, “.... teachers know what is best for the children and I only completed Primary 6 education.” Another reason, according to Tanya was, “...the parents were sad with the severe disabilities of the CSN and they just want some help from teachers on how to manage these CSN.” Tanya further said that these parents felt that the teachers knew the best and the parents accepted the teachers’ suggestions and opinions in relation to the needs of their CSN.

4.8.4 Negative attitude

The teachers had worked hard to provide the best for the CSN but unfortunately, there are parents with negative attitude who felt that their presence was not important. They had the mind-set that their role was in the home and that it is the teacher’s duty in the school. These parents never wanted to attend any school functions other than to apply for the allowances.

Risha said

“... there were a minority group of parents who had excuses as work factor, transport problems among others and kept away from the meetings. They are seen only when they want to withdraw the allowances. I had parents whose CSN who were frequently absent in school but when it was time to withdraw the allowance they sent their CSN to school and these parents I needed to counsel them.”

(S1/GPK/INT2)

4.8.5 Irregularities

A drawback was observed by the researcher, who participated as a non-participant observer in MPS during the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting. It gave a glimpse of how the IEP meeting was conducted. The meeting was carried out between a parent and the class teacher. The teacher had already prepared the IEP much earlier than the meeting. When the teacher expressed on what was planned, she was not acceptable to the teacher's decision. Miha (P1) explained what training her CSN had undergone and the teacher agreed to reevaluate her son and prepare a new IEP.

The researcher realized that the IEP session was rather short as there was only a minimal discussion between the teacher and the parent. There was no third party, the administrator during the IEP discussion as stated by Rashim a teacher participant in the study. The teacher told the parent that a copy of the IEP would be given to her later after the administrator had signed the document. The brief session could be due to time constraint as there were many parents waiting in queue. Some parents readily agreed with the teachers and signed the documents.

However, the second IEP session observed by the researcher took a longer time. The parent went through the progress report of her CSN in detail. The parent expressed

her disappointment as she did not expect her CSN not to perform well as she wanted him to undergo inclusive education and prepare for the Year 6 national examination. She was aware of her son's condition and his ability level as she was briefed by the doctor who treated her son. The sensitiveness of some parents was an area that the professionals had to deal with at all times.

4.9 Summary of Factors Hindering Teacher-Parent Collaboration Practice

Any activities plan in an organisation would face hindrances. The severity depended on the people involved and the target audience. Identifying the pitfalls was necessary so that the hindrance could be rectified and could be carried in the forthcoming years. The teachers need to be alert so that they could identify the loopholes and make immediately revamp the activities. Problem adults needed to be tackled carefully so that they understood their roles. The factors that hindered could be solved by counselling the adults. If the activities were affected due to human slips then the teachers needed to solve it collectively.

4.10 Application of Epstein's framework in Teacher-Parent Collaboration in the Two SEIP Primary Schools

Based on the data collected in MPS and LPS, the researcher was able to analyse and identify the presence of Epstein's framework with some variations although during the interviews, with Risha and Tanya, the senior assistants in charge of Special Education had stated that they was not aware of any framework. As stated earlier, the TPC in the two schools took the approach similar to the mainstream school where they planned activities based on the three administrative portfolios. The nature of the

activities determined the roles of the portfolio. The co-academic competitions fell into the co-curriculum portfolio and likewise, the excursions is with the student affairs portfolio. Based on the findings, the researcher made comparisons to answer research question 5 by identifying the extension of Epstein's framework that was evident, that is the common and unique features seen in the two schools. The following sections report on the findings in relation to Research Question 5, stated as follow:

4.10.1 The Common Features and Unique Examples Evident in the Teacher-Parent Collaboration

The TPC in the two SEIP had some similarities with the Epstein's Framework. The essence of the framework was evident through the themes that emerged from the data collected. There were some common features in both the schools during the TPC practice although some uniqueness was noted. These features were noted and analysed based on the different stages of the collaboration. The elements in Epstein's Framework are inter-linked and therefore no one activity can be separated to a specific element.

Research Question 5

How is the framework advocated by Epstein incorporated in the teacher-parent collaboration practice in the special education integrated programme in the primary schools?

During the planning stage, the common and unique features of TPC in the planning the activities were noted through the themes that emerged from the data obtained. The three key themes that emerged were information provided by parents, information disseminations through various means and school-based activities developed by the teachers. The elements in Epstein's Framework that played a major role to highlight the themes were parenting, communication and decision-making.

Parenting is a crucial element in the planning stage as it is through information provided by the parents that teachers were able to gather necessary information about the CSN and the parents' needs. Based on the gathered information, the teachers made decisions to select activities that were developmental in nature. Routine activities which were mandated in the curriculum were carried as scheduled at all times. Communication was the key element that linked the parents. The teachers and parents communicated through different modes. The parents were accommodating and they agreed with the activities decided

The unique features seen were the manner the activities were carried out. In MPS, the SEPTA council was formed while in LPS, there was a working committee for every activity. There were constant interactions between the teachers and parents in both the schools and it helped to build a rapport between them. The parents in MPS were more active and they readily offered their services based on their ability and capacity while in LPS, the same parents were involved in the activities planned.

The common and unique planning strategies in the two SEIP schools were as seen in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

The Common and Unique Features of Teacher-Parent Collaboration in Planning the Activities

Epstein's Framework	Themes	Common Features		Unique Features	
		MPS	LPS	MPS	LPS
Parenting	* Information Provided by Parents	*Gather information on parents' needs *Identify capacity of parents	*Gather information on parents' needs *Identify capacity of parents	*Parents feel free to express themselves to teachers' questions	*Parents feel free to express themselves to teachers' questions
Communication	* Information disseminations through various means	*Formal and informal interactions with parents *Log book records * Teachers explain to parents- their roles and activities decided	*Formal and informal interactions with parents *Log book Records * Teachers explain to parents- their roles and activities decided	*Formation of SEPTA council *Parents understood the reasons why the specific activities were selected by teachers	*Working committee for every activity
Volunteering					
Learning at home					
Decision -Making	* Schools-based activities developed by teachers	*Parents agreed with teachers' decisions after discussion	*Parents accepted decisions of teachers	*Parents readily offered to be involved in activities based on capacity	*The same parents agreed to be involved in all the activities
Collaborating with the community					

4.10.2 The Common Features and Unique Examples of Teacher-Parent Collaboration in Implementing the Activities

The implementation stage of activities in the schools was done after the teachers had met the parents and decided on the sub-committees. The elements from Epstein's Framework that played a key role were communication, volunteering, decision-making and collaborating with the community and learning at home as the themes that emerged were parents' voices being heard during meetings, continuous communication between teachers and parents and shared responsibility between teachers and parents and explanation of curriculum by teachers to parents.. The elements, volunteering and decision-making from Epstein's Framework were inter-linked to the theme parents' voices being heard in meeting. This is evident as the theme revealed that parents need to think and decide on their roles and then volunteer in their participation.

The unique features identified were that teachers and most of the parents in MPS interacted closely to run the activities, parents willing volunteered to work with the teachers and generally, parents were active and volunteered to take charge . However, in LPS, parents were rather passive and they took secondary roles after the teachers and the NGO's organised activities.

A new element evident in the Malaysian context was the emergence of the element "Spiritual and Cultural Knowledge." This shows that the different race and religion can work amicably together to foster a good relationship.

Table 4.4 shows the common and unique features of TPC in implementing the activities.

Table 4.4

The Common and Unique Features of Teacher-Parent Collaboration in Implementing the Activities

Epstein's Framework	Themes	Common Features		Unique Features	
		MPS	LPS	MPS	LPS
Parenting					
Communication	* Continuous communication between teachers and parents	*On-going interactions between teachers and parents	*Formal and informal interactions between teachers and parents	*Teachers and most of the parents interacted closely to run activities	Teachers and one or two parents interacted to run activities
Volunteering	* Parents' voices being heard in meetings	*Different parents volunteered to take different roles during the activities	*The same parents offered themselves as volunteers	*Parents willingly volunteered to work with teachers	*Generally, passive parents
Decision –Making		*Generally, parents agreed with teachers but at times they state their views and ideas	*Accepted decisions made by teachers.	*Parents were active and volunteered to take charge	*Took a secondary role after teachers
Learning at home	*Explanation of curriculum by teachers to parents	*Initiative to gather information from teachers to train CSN	*Knew what was being taught through log book of each CSN	*Parents were proactive and gathered teaching techniques from teachers	*Parents guided CSN with their homework
Collaborating with the community	* Shared responsibility between teachers and parents	* Good effort from parents to bring in links from the community to the teachers	*Teachers initiated links with NGOs and parents supported the programmes.	*Parents brought contacts of community links occasionally	*The NGO's frequently organised activities
Spiritual and Cultural Knowledge (an element evident in Malaysian context)	*Ensuring Understanding in each other's beliefs and values	*Carried out inter-cultural activities at school level and also hosted district level activities	*NGOs and teachers organised inter-cultural activities and parents helped around	* Parents and CSN of different race and religion participated in the inter-cultural activities	* Parents and CSN participated in the inter-cultural activities

4.10.3 The Common Factors and Unique Examples That Supported Teacher-Parent Collaboration

The supporting factors of TPC activities were evident in both the schools. The elements from the Epstein's Framework that played a crucial role were parenting, communication, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community. The new element evident in the Malaysian context too supported the TPC. The themes that emerged were teachers were experienced, approachable and cooperative, excellent interpersonal skill and knowledge, positive growth in CSN monitoring and recognition and mutual trust. The elements collaborating with the community and spiritual and cultural knowledge merged with a common theme recognition and trust.

The common features that supported the TPC were the positive nature of the parents about the teachers, good rapport between teachers and parents, parents were motivated to teach elements to be with the CSN and to teach them, recognition and mutual trust between teachers and parents.

The unique features were that the teachers in MPS and LPS were positive and were keen in the CSN's development. There were good interactions between parents and teachers, parents were motivated when they saw positive growth in CSN, teachers guided CSN and the NGO's were very supportive in MPS. Most importantly, there was mutual trust and beliefs during all religious activities.

Table 4.5 shows the common factors and the unique examples that supported the Teacher- Parent Collaboration.

Table 4.5

The Common Factors and Unique Examples That Supported Teacher-Parent Collaboration

Epstein's Framework	Factors that supported	Common Features		Unique Examples	
		MPS	LPS	MPS	LPS
Parenting	*Teachers were experienced, approachable and cooperative	*Parents were positive about teachers-willing to work along	*Parents were positive about teachers-willing to work along	*Parents were keen in CSN's development	* Parents were keen in CSN's development
Communication	*Excellent inter-personal skill *Knowledge	*Good understanding between teachers and parents	*Good rapport between teachers and parents	*Teachers were role models in dealing with CSN	*Teachers and parents interacted well at all occasions
Volunteering					
Learning at home	*Positive growth in CSN	*Parents were motivated to spend more time with CSN to teach them	*Parents were motivated to spend more time with CSN to teach them	*Improvement in CSN – a positive sign to motivate parents	*Improvement in CSN – a positive sign to motivate parents
Decision -Making	*Monitoring	*Mutual responsibility between teachers and parents in monitoring CSN	*Parents accepted responsibilities willingly from teachers	*Parents cooperated with teachers	*Teachers guided CSN – a positive sign to motivate parents
Collaborating with the community	*Recognition and mutual trust	* Teachers respected parents and have mutual trust between them	*Teachers, parents and NGOs supported the programmes.	*NGO's roles were rather limited	*NGO's were supportive.
Spiritual and Cultural Knowledge (an element evident in Malaysian context)			*Teachers and parents had positive roles	* Mutual trust and beliefs in religious activities	* Mutual trust and beliefs in religious activities

4.10.4 The Common Factors and Unique Examples That Inhibited Teacher-Parent Collaboration

The inhibiting factors in TPC activities were evident in both the schools. However, they were not serious factors which could not be easily solved with some commitment from the different parties concerned. The elements in the Epstein's Framework which inhibited the TPC were parenting, communication, volunteering and decision-making. The themes that emerged were some parents had negative attitudes and they showed lack of commitment. There were clash of activities due to poor communication at times which forced certain planned activities to be removed. Parents preferred to be passive followers and there were irregularities during decision-making and in the new element evident in the Malaysian context.

The common features that inhibited were ad hoc activities planned by higher authorities, parents who lived away from CSN, excuses of work commitment, parents preferred to take instructions and not volunteer, IEP was pre-determined and the clash of beliefs.

The unique features in both schools had some similarities. In MPS and LPS, the parents believed that CSN cannot be taught due to their severe disabilities. There were a variety of activities planned in MPS unlike, LPS where limited activities were planned. The parents in both schools had full trust in their teachers and they preferred to take instructions and not readily volunteer at all times. Some parents disagreed with the IEP planned as the parents felt that their CSN had improved in certain areas through their guidance during the holidays. Finally, the clash in beliefs was an area where the teachers needed to explain to the parents before they understood well. Table 4.6 shows

the common factors and the unique examples that inhibited the Teacher- Parent Collaboration in the schools.

Table 4.6

The Common Factors and Unique Examples That Inhibited Teacher-Parent Collaboration

Epstein's Framework	Factors that inhibited	Common Features		Unique Examples	
		MPS	LPS	MPS	LPS
Parenting	*Lack of commitment *Negative attitudes	*Parents had work commitments	*Parents lived away from homes and CSN	*Parents believed that CSN cannot be taught	*Severe disabilities in CSN
Communication	*Clash of activities	*Ad hoc activities by authorities	*Ad hoc activities by authorities	*Activities planned not carried out	*Reduced number of activities
Volunteering	*Passive followers	*Parents Preferred to follow teachers	*Parents waited for directions from teachers	*Parents believe teachers know the best	*Parents trust teachers and preferred to follow
Learning at home					
Decision -Making	*Irregularities	*Some IEP meetings were predetermined	*Some IEP meetings were predetermined	*Some parents disagreed with IEP planned.	*Some parents disagreed with IEP planned
Collaborating with the community					
Spiritual and Cultural Knowledge (an element evident in Malaysian context)	*Irregularities	*Parents felt this activity clashed with their beliefs	*Parents felt this activity clashed with their beliefs	*Participated with some restrictions	*Parents needed to be convinced by the teachers

4.10.5 Application of Epstein's Framework in Malaysian Context

The Framework in Table 4.7 shows how the activities selected had inter-relatedness in the Epstein's Framework.

Table 4.7

Application of Epstein's Framework in Malaysian Context

Administrative Portfolio	Epstein's Framework							Finding
	Parenting	Communication	Volunteering	Learning at home	Decision Making	Collaborating with Community	Spiritual and Cultural Knowledge	
Activities								
Curriculum								
1 Briefing parents	*	*			*			
2 Follow up	*	*	*	*				
3 Resource material	*	*			*			
4 Homework	*			*				
5 Open Day	*	*						*
6 IEP		*			*			
7 Home visits		*	*	*				
8 Managing books	*	*		*				
9 Assessment	*	*		*				
10 Award ceremony	*	*	*					
11 Convocation	*	*				*		*
Co-Curriculum								
1 Family Day	*	*				*		*
2 Scouts Movement	*	*			*	*		*
3 1Student 1Sports	*	*			*	*		
4 Games		*	*	*		*		
5 Competitions	*	*				*		*
6 Excursions	*	*	*			*		*
7 Cultural Society	*	*			*	*		*
8 Exhibitions	*	*				*		*
9 Outreach		*			*	*		*
10 Back to school	*	*						
11 Camping	*	*						*
Students' Affairs								
1 Therapies	*	*	*			*		
2 Discipline	*	*				*		
3 Health	*	*			*	*		*
4 PTA		*			*	*		*
5 Community		*			*	*		
6 Birthday Celebration	*	*			*	*		*
7 Festive/Cultural	*	*			*	*		
8 SEPTA	*	*	*		*	*		*

4.11 Summary

This first part of the chapter discussed the findings in MPS and LPS situated in the state of Johore. There was a teacher and parental collaboration in MPS and LPS. The content was planned collectively by the teachers based on the suggestions made by the parents and teacher aides and teachers. The teachers tried to have routine activities where the events were carried out every year whereas, in developmental programmes, the activities varied from year to year so that there is a variety and creativity.

This programme had received good support from the parents and they had worked hard to collaborate with the professionals. A close rapport was evident between the teachers and the parents and there existed a mutual trust and respect. The parents were elated with the teachers who were humble and friendly.

There were challenges that the teachers had to face as the activities were carried out. Some of it was teething problems which could be overcome with close interaction with them.

How the TPC was carried out in each SEIP for CSN was described in detail. The themes that emerged from the data were used as sub topics to explain how each stage in parental collaboration was conducted in the individual SEIP. The description began with the planning stage and then the implementation and finally the feedback from the professionals and the parents involved. The chapter ended with a cross case analysis of how Epstein's framework was incorporated in the TPC in the two SEIP schools. The focus and the criteria emphasized in each case were compared in detail and the gist is presented. This comparison helped to derive at findings which will be discussed in the next chapter

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Conclusion

5.0 Introduction

This qualitative case study explored how the teacher-parent collaboration (TPC) was practised during the planning and implementation stages, the factors that supported and the barriers encountered during the activities and how Epstein's framework was incorporated in the two special education integrated programme (SEIP) in the two primary schools. This chapter connects the descriptions of the recommended practices, to help build an informed interpretation of TPC provided in the two primary schools, answering the fifth research question: How is the framework advocated by Epstein incorporated in the teacher-parent collaboration practice in the special education integrated programme in the primary schools?

The conceptual framework (Figure 2.3) and questions such as the following: Is there a link to the various elements during the TPC practices? How was the recommended TPC model relates to the features evident in the schools helped in this discussion exercise. Recommendations include suggestions for practice in the MOE, further research and a framework for TPC practice in Malaysian primary schools. This framework incorporates research findings and recommended practices, thus helping to bridge the gap between research and practice.

5.1 Summary of the Findings

The main aim of the study was to explore to what extent was TPC practised during the planning and implementation of the activities in the SEIP in the two schools. The study also explored the factors that supported and inhibited the TPC practised during the implementation of activities and to what extent was Epstein's Framework incorporated in the TPC practised during the planning and implementation of activities in the SEIP in the two schools. The overall findings indicated that there was a common framework in which the TPC was practised during the planning of activities for the SEIP in the education system, such as the one in Malaysia. The in-depth cross-case analysis of the data revealed several important findings during the TPC practiced during the implementation of the activities in the two schools

The findings revealed that there were no specific guidelines for teachers to use as a guide to practice TPC during the planning and implementation of activities in the SEIP in the two schools. Megah Primary School (MPS) had received a letter from the Ministry of Education (MOE) in the middle of the academic year, stating that school administrators should involve parents in the school so that the children with special needs (CSN) could improve their academic performance. Linang Primary School (LPS) received no such document. However, both the schools had the TPC practiced during the planning and implementation of activities, even before receiving the letter, on the initiative of the senior assistants in charge of special education. The planning was done based on the administrative portfolios, namely curriculum, student affairs and co-curriculum that are evident in the education system in Malaysia.

The teachers interacted with all the parents frequently and through these interactions they collected information on the parents' abilities, needs and their desires

so that the teachers were able to identify the parents who could be put in charge of a particular working committee of an activity planned. They also referred to other sources, the mainstream school planner and the District Special Education Unit (DSEU) planner to decide and plan how the TPC could be practiced during the activities and to develop a strategic plan for the academic year in the schools. Therefore, the information they collected became a necessary tool when the teachers discussed, planned and prepared the strategic plan in the SEIP, for their own academic calendar.

The implementation stage saw the procedure where the TPC was practised as the planned activities were carried out. The senior assistants of MPS and LPS disseminated the planned academic calendar to the parents at the beginning of the academic year. In MPS, all parents of CSN were members of the Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA) council, and they were informed of the activities in the first meeting held in the new academic year. In LPS the information was presented at a briefing held in the school. Initial documents reviewed showed an impressive plan, with various activities and a working committee for every planned activity, in both schools. The initial review of activities slated to be carried out in each academic year, seemed similar in both schools but further scrutiny showed that it was not so. LPS carried out the mandatory activities that the DSEU had listed in its calendar. Additional activities that the school held were family day, tele-match, excursions, annual meetings, open day and communication with parents on instilling discipline in the children within the school except for excursions. In MPS, there were lots of activities involving the parents. The SEPTA council, initiated by the senior assistant, was a good platform and the roles of the committee members were highlighted as some parents in MPS were willing to volunteer and bring in contacts. What was obvious was that in most cases the teachers knew the strengths of the parents, so the teachers were able to decide on the working committee suitable for the parents based on the feedbacks the teachers had

received. This step was taken by the teachers so that the parents were placed in a committee that was of their interest and furthermore they were not left alone to carry out the duties alone. In LPS they did not have a council like MPS but when an activity was planned they assigned a number of parents as committee members. Some of the active parents volunteered themselves in certain committee. They felt that parents needed to cooperate with the teachers, and in an actual sense, the mere attendance of the parents in all activities in the school indicated they did cooperate. However, the teachers did not wish to have parents in the classroom, which they felt hindered their lessons as they had experienced disappointment and failure in the past. The parents' presence in the class hindered the flow of the lesson and the specific CSN of the parent misbehaved. This view was also supported by a parent participant who said that she had to wait for the school hours to be over before she went near her son's class, just to avoid him from coming out from the class on seeing her. Now the teachers involved the parents when they felt the parents needed some parenting skills in guiding the CSN, and it was done in isolation that is the parent, teacher and the CSN are in a different classroom alone. Some teachers had the perception that the role of parents was to provide the necessary basic needs such as books and stationery, to adhere to school rules on attendance and punctuality, and to guide the CSN in self-management and basic learning skills. However, parents were always welcomed to the school to seek guidance, to clarify or to make enquiries at any time, but they were required to adhere to the procedure and the protocol set in the school. Parents were not allowed to meet the teachers directly. They needed to register at the school's office before meeting the senior assistant in charge of SEIP and discussing related issue. Most often the meeting was allowed in the presence of the senior assistant, at times, the CSN. The activities based on the three main portfolios were conducted within the time frame that is within the academic year set by the DSEU. This was to ensure the selected CSN had time to prepare for their

participation and also to be in school for their normal daily lessons. Trainings were on-going so that the CSN were able to follow the classroom lessons as well as outdoor activities.

The factors that supported the TPC practice during the activities outnumbered the factors that hindered the TPC practice during the implementation of the activities. Generally, the personalities of the teachers were the plus point and the 'teacher knows the best' attitude of the parents revealed some parents' passive nature. The parents were very expressive when describing the teachers, as friendly, knowledgeable, helpful and understanding as the parents had frequent interactions with them. Getting in touch with the teachers was not an issue for the parents. Teachers were very accommodating when parents faced issues regarding their CSN and they eased the burden of parents by finding solutions. However, the major setback was when the planned activities had to be called off due to programmes set by the higher authorities, lack of commitment from parents or even reluctance of some parents to be seen with their CSN.

Although the planned activities followed the three administrative portfolios, the activities had some similarities and differences, as they were inter-related. Activities carried out in the curriculum had an academic focus; but if parents were involved to resolve certain behavioural issues, then, that involvement was linked to the student affairs portfolio. Thus, there was a link between the activities and the portfolios. These activities were then categorised into the different types as advocated by Epstein's framework.

In a nutshell, TPC practice in the schools involved i) gathering information from different sources; ii) planning the activities for the academic calendar year; iii) appointing the working committee and implementing the activities; iv) post-mortem and documentation of the activities were also carried out. The TPC practiced during the

planning and implementing of the activities were compared to the conceptual framework which was derived from Epstein's framework.

5.2 Discussion of This Study

Investigating how the TPC was practiced during the planning and implementation of activities gave rise to an interesting revelation as it exposed the real scenario in the SEIP. The study also provided an in -depth understanding of how the teachers tried to link their own ideas and knowledge to develop the TPC practices through school activities. The discussion on the findings drew on the enormous amount of information available, related to TPC as outlined in the conceptual framework in Figure 2.2. The literature based information pertaining to TPC in various aspects of children's development and learning were stressed in frameworks with almost similar scope of involvement (Epstein, 2009; Henderson & Berla, 1994).

Analysis of TPC practices in the two schools showed that the teachers in the SEIP did involve the parents in some of the school activities. Research had indicated various ways to involve parents. For example, the Epstein Six Types of Involvement stated how parents could be encouraged to be involved in the school, Henderson and Mapp (2002) had stated the positive developmental outcomes that stemmed out of teacher-parent collaboration. The need to involve the parents, as stated in the Individualised Education Plan (IEP) document, had been done to a certain extent and also in activities designed under the curriculum, co-curriculum and student affairs portfolios. Since, there was no specific guideline on how to involve parents, the teachers at the individual schools discussed and planned the activities based on their children with special needs (CSN). However, there were activities common to both the schools, as both schools undertook most of the activities that were also carried out at the district level.

Generally, it was noted that the essence of collaboration was evident in certain activities but the degree of involvement of parents in the activities were greater in one school than the other. This opinion was formed based on the definition stated by Cook and Friend (1991), where collaboration involves direct interaction between at least two co-equal parties, voluntarily engaged in shared decision making, as they work towards a common goal. Collaboration was seen when the parents were involved in excursions, when the school was involved in hosting district level programmes developing the IEP, and in getting professional trainers for the CSN. Parents' involvement was evident in almost all activities to which the school invited them. The parents tended to wait to be invited to participate. They were not pro-active but preferred to get instructions from the teachers.

The following elements, highlighted by Henderson and Mapp (2002), were adopted by the teachers, with positive outcomes in the TPC practiced.

5.2.1 Recognition of Parents

Analysis of TPC practised in the two schools showed that not all parents were involved in the TPC practices and this could be due to many factors, such as insecurity, past experiences and even embarrassment on the parents' part. Here the teachers' played a crucial role on involving the parents in the education of their children. Parents with CSN go through a demanding role to cater to the needs of the CSN and thus they may rank school activities on a lower priority. They would rather not get involved and social stratification only furthered the isolation. Prater (2010) thought that parental involvement depended on the parent's perceived skills and abilities provided by the school. Therefore, the teachers' stance in recognising all parents as equal was important.

5.2.2 Knowledge of Teachers

The parents in the study perceived the teachers as knowledgeable and had high regards for them. The teachers were able to guide, advice, and counsel the parents at all times. The teachers had practical knowledge and were helpful at all times. Although, the teachers had no specific knowledge of any TPC, they were able to plan activities to overcome certain behavioural patterns of CSN and also create conducive environment for teachers, parents and families to interact and build a rapport. This is a commendable attitude in the teachers.

Further scrutiny by the researcher on the activities planned, revealed that the activities had the elements of Epstein's framework in it. In the Malaysian context, the programme had the three administrator portfolios. The activities planned under each portfolio adhered to the scope of duties outlined for each administrator, and the teachers brainstormed with fellow teachers to determine the different activities, which had features of parenting, communication, learning at home, volunteering, decision-making and collaboration with the community.

5.2.3 Inter-connectedness in the activities

Bearing in mind Epstein's framework, the activities carried out in the schools had the elements of the framework in them. Although the teachers were unaware of the framework its' features were evident in the TPC carried out in the school. The planned activities cannot be strictly categorised into each type, as defined in the framework, as they are inter-connected (Epstein, 2009) with the other types of involvement as described in the framework or under the portfolios in the local context (Appendix J).

Epstein's Framework had involved professionals from different disciplines unlike the local context, where only teachers and parents were involved. However, the presence of professionals from other disciplines was evident in the school when the school involved them in programmes such medical talks, religious activities and bank programmes.

5.2.4 Communication between Teachers and Parents

The teachers maintained the close rapport they had forged via their willingness to close the gap through direct communication. The communication skills of the parents had improved to a certain extent, that the parents were able to express their views when they are expected to make decisions when it is necessary. However, parents' involvement was limited to the activities outside the classroom. Their links to the classroom were only when requested by the teacher. Communication is the key that measured successful TPC. This element was clearly seen in the two SEIP in Megah Primary School and in Linang Primary School, where there were constant interaction between the teachers and parents. The teachers practiced both one way and two way types of communications in the school. The one way communication was where the teachers introduced curriculum matters and policy matters by which parents had to abide, and also the rules and regulations set by the ministry, state and district education departments as well as the school. The two way communication took on a lighter note, where the teachers were informal in approach, friendly and empathised with the emotions of the parents. The teachers needed to show love, care and concern not only to the CSN but also to parents as according to Ramirez (2002) who adopted a way of making short calls to parents of his students during school hours. He held the view that that gesture would allow room for more interaction.

5.2.5 Adapting to Communal Activities

One of the major activities carried out involved religious practices of the three major communities, namely, Malay, Chinese and Indians. The religious celebrations of the Chinese and Indians were held on a low key within the schools but the Semarak Islam programme involved all races in the community. The teachers were successful in coaxing the parents of the Chinese and Indian communities to participate in the “Tulisan Khad” competitions. Although it was known as Semarak Islam, many competitions were planned for all CSN.

5.2.6 Religious Obligations

Carter (2007) said that an area that received much focus was quality-of-life outcomes, with reference to the religious or spiritual areas of CSN. This was an area highlighted in the curriculum in the SEIP. The approach is praiseworthy as the parents had also arranged religious classes for their CSN with religious teachers. In school, while the Muslim CSN attended religious classes, the non-Muslims attended moral classes. The CSN was also commended for participation and winning accolades in competitions held by religious organisations.

5.2.7 Trust

The parents stated that they trusted the teachers. By trust, they meant that they believed whatever the teachers told them and the manner in which they made decisions, given that the teachers showed so much care, attention, love, patience, towards the best interest of the CSN at all times. Stoner and Angell (2006), in their study, said that parents had trust in the teachers based on the above attributes, and added that although the parents had limited knowledge on therapy that can be exercised on their CSN, they

always took the advice and suggestions given by the teachers. This opinion was also shared by a participant in this study who said that teachers were able to guide in simple therapies but not where a professional approach was required. The parent said that the teachers were interested in gathering information from her on the therapy her son received at the hospital.

5.2.8 Spiritual and Cultural Practices

The framework advocated by Epstein had six types of involvement namely, parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaboration with community. However, in the Malaysian context the frequently added element was the involvement of the CSN in religious and cultural practices. This is an important aspect in the Malaysian perspective as the CSN are exposed to this aspect at a very early age in life. Practicing certain ablutions had been the norm in the culture. Therefore adding this element to the framework would make it complete in the Malaysian context.

5.3 Epstein's Framework in Malaysian Context

In the Malaysian context, the presence of Epstein's framework was evident but with some variations. Epstein's framework had an action team for partnerships with 6-12 professionals from various disciplines, who planned, implemented, coordinated, monitored, publicised and reported the activities but in the local context, the school organisation chart consisted of administrators and the teachers and they were responsible in the planning. The teachers interacted with the parents frequently and through these interactions they collected information on the parents' abilities, needs and

their desires. They also referred to other sources, the mainstream school planner and the District Special Education Unit (DSEU) planner to decide and plan the TPC activities, and to develop a strategic plan for the academic year in the schools. Therefore, the information they collected was important and a necessary tool when the teachers discussed, planned and prepared the strategic plan in the SEIP, for their own academic calendar. The study also provided an in -depth understanding of how the teachers tried to link their own ideas and knowledge to practice the TPC through school activities. The teachers planned activities based on the three portfolios. The literature based information pertaining to teachers and parental collaboration in various aspects of children's development and learning were stressed in frameworks with almost similar scope of involvement (Epstein, 2009; Henderson & Berla, 1994).

The roles of the other professionals were evident in the local context, as the teachers had planned activities involving medical personals, social workers and bankers among others. The six types of involvements namely, parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community advocated by Epstein was evident in the two schools but it was placed in the umbrella term of the administrative portfolios, namely curriculum, student affairs and co-curriculum that are evident in the education system in Malaysia. For example, the curriculum portfolio had the teachers briefing the parents as an activity. This activity can be linked with the Type 1 Parenting and Type 2 Communication in Epstein's framework as Epstein (2009) had stressed that the different types of involvement may have an interlink between one another. This is because every activity planned had to undergo a series of communication before a decision is made. Likewise, the activities planned in the local context can be grouped into the different types of involvement and the same activities can have more than one type of involvement. Another activity,

developing the IEP in the curriculum portfolio involved the elements of parenting, communicating, learning at home, and decision making to a certain extent.

The Type 3 Volunteering and Type 5 Decision Making advocated by Epstein played a minor role at most times in the schools. It was noted as very rarely parents volunteer to make contributions in terms of manpower, unless the teachers made personal request. The study also revealed that decision making was rare as the parents had the preconceived notion that the decisions pertaining to learning is decided by the school. This scenario existed because teachers preferred to keep parents outside the classroom and decision making was left to the teachers and the administrators. Studies revealed by Seeley (1989) and Zuria, Norshidah and Zalizan (2002) showed that teachers considered the classroom as their territory and parents did not have direct involvement. Furthermore, the administrative hierarchy system too hindered parents to voice their views.

5.4 Suggested Malaysian Framework

Analysis of TPC planning carried out in the two schools showed that the teachers in the SEIP had a set format based on the administrative portfolios. The study revealed that teachers planned the activities based on the administrative capacity of each portfolio. It showed that the planning was comprehensive as the administrative portfolios covered all aspects of learners' development. The activities planned under each portfolio could be linked to the different types of involvement advocated by Epstein.

The Epstein Six Types of Involvement stated how parents can be encouraged to be involved in the school, Henderson and Mapp (2002) had stated the positive academic outcomes that stemmed out of parental involvement. The need to involve the parents, as stated in the Individualised Education Plan (IEP) document, had been done to a certain extent in both the schools. Since there was no specific guideline on how to involve parents, the teachers at the individual schools discussed and planned the

activities based on their children with special needs (CSN). However, there were activities common in both the schools, as both schools undertook most of the activities that were also carried out at the district level. In the local context, the religious and cultural element plays an important part in the school activities. This could be added to the Malaysian Framework as its seventh type of involvement.

However, some differences were evident in the planning of activities in the two schools. MPS had a council where the teachers had meetings with the committee members before the information was disseminated to other parents to discuss issues. In LPS, the teachers interacted only with parents whom they have decided to involve in the activities.

Generally, it was noted that the teachers had considered parents while planning their activities. The involvement of parents depended on the parents themselves and the essence of collaboration was evident in certain activities. This opinion was formed based on the definition stated by Cook and Friend (1991), where collaboration involves direct interaction between at least two co-equal parties, voluntarily engaged in shared decision making, as they work towards a common goal.

5.5 Implications from the Findings

5.5.1 Theoretical Implication

The findings from the study supported the ecological system theory and the theory of overlapping spheres of influence to a certain extent. Although, each theory has its own identity, generally it stressed on the nature of the surroundings and how it affected the human being placed in such a setting. The close proximity of any individual in a specific situation, at home, school or even the communal setting may give a degree

of influence to the person to the surrounding he or she is in. However, the nature of completely complying with people or situations you are in is not always possible as one is also set with one's own surrounding and ideas and may find it difficult to adjust into the new surroundings. The two models do show an impact but not at all times. Parents generally worked along with the teachers, except for a few parents were passive due to work commitments and depended on caretakers. The role of teachers with their experience of meeting different people had usually been able to manage the situations. Most often what appears in theory was not always workable at that point in time.

The purpose of this study was to develop a good relationship with the participants, through their insights, to gain awareness on those factors which promote TPC in education. Parental involvement is crucial to the success of all school going children (Spann, Kohler & Soenksen, 2003; Epstein, 2009). It is more so when the learners are CSN and it is the role of educators to develop effective TPC that will help to ensure that their learning needs are met. Keyes (2000) notion that parents are key players was noted, when she stressed the need for teachers and parents to work together within the complex nature of the microsystem, mesosystem and macrosystem advocated in Bronfenbrenner's model. Similarly, Epstein's "theory of overlapping spheres of influence" exemplifies a close interaction that teachers and parents hold through a close partnership. She believed that when teachers and administrators were able to develop a family-like schools, with the child at heart at all times, parents will also be able to create a school-like families, where they would stress on the importance of school at all times. These positive attitudes of the teachers and parents help them to go beyond these levels to a broader scope of the community, where groups of parents and even teachers can interact and work together (Epstein, 2009).

As said before, the teachers in this study, the activities planned were guided by the scope of the administrative portfolios in the school. However, comparing the

activities planned in the school, there is a strong evidence of Epstein's framework present in the school. The teachers had to guide and counsel parents when they have difficulties coping with their CSN. This shows that teachers provide parenting skills to meet the demands of the CSN, be it in behaviour management or in educating their children. This Type 1 element (parenting) is strongly evident in the schools. The schools' effort to have communication (Type 2 Communication) with the parents and vice-verse goes a long way to show that close rapport exist in the schools. The parents are ambitious for their CSN and this was noted in parents when they hope for higher levels during IEP meetings. The parents generally work along with the teachers to carry out follow up lessons at home. The parents also get extra books for their children to do exercises at home. This shows the presence of Type 4 element – Learning at home. Another area where parents are seen active was during activities involving the community. The parents participated in the activities (Type 6 Collaborating with the community) and gathered as much knowledge and information for the betterment of their children. The parents were happy to interact with other families in outings as they felt lots of merriment as a group then to go alone as a family.

The Type 3 Volunteering element was not strongly evident at all times, as parents are shy and remained passive when the teachers looked for volunteers. The parents have the ability but they are reluctant and this is an area, where teachers need to overcome in future. The Type 5 Decision Making is rarely seen in our schools. This is generally because, the teachers held the fort in schools. A give and take nature has to be developed so that teachers will see parents as co-partners and work together.

This framework is comprehensive as all the elements crucial for a child upbringing is evident, so practising this framework will bring a positive change in the development of children through their teachers and parents.

5.5.2 Practical Implication

The call from the MOE to involve the parents is in line with literature by Singh, Mbokodi, Msila (2004) who stressed that parental involvement was perceived as necessary approach to improve the quality of education. It is a deep rooted belief that parents and families should be actively involved in the process in order for schools to educate children effectively (Sanders & Epstein, 1998).

The findings of this study do support the call, made by previous researchers, to look into the possibilities of building constructive partnerships between teachers and parents (Nora, Azlina & Yeo (2002). The findings of the current study showed that parental roles were evident but the teachers took control to make final decisions. The parents, who volunteered worked along with the teachers. However, some parents maintained the role at home for they felt that teachers were able to monitor their children at school while the activities are carried out.

The findings from the two schools showed that they managed to plan and implement parental involvement reasonably well, but for an organisation to reach greater heights there should be specific guidelines to adhere to. The MOE needs to provide in-service training to teachers to teach them to be innovative and creative when linking parents and the community at large. The Education Blueprint (2013-2025) stressed the need for parents to be part of the education system, and therefore this study has a strong implication for the betterment of all children, in particular the CSN in this study.

5.6 Suggestions for Future Research

There are several suggestions for further research in this section. This includes a comparative study of TPC practices in other SEIP in mainstream schools in the local context. A TPC framework advocated by Epstein should be implemented in the Malaysian schools with formal guidelines. The TPC is in action but what is seen is teachers' planned and developed the activities based on their current need and that the parents role were pre-determined with role. An in-depth research could also be carried out to identify how school administrators can promote a more comprehensive TPC model to be used in the schools.

Another area of research that is deemed very crucial is a toolkit for teachers to use as a guide when involving parents. This study should be taken up soon as the Education Blueprint (2013-2025) states that it hopes to develop a toolkit for teachers so that a comprehensive approach can be undertaken.

5.7 Conclusion

The core of TPC is that the planning must be based on a set of guidelines. Only then can an effective TPC be planned and it can be perceived to have a strong impact on improving CSN in schools. The TPC implementation should aim to develop goal oriented teachers and parents, so that what is planned is executed well while instilling load sharing concept.

The framework as shown in Figure 5.1, suggests practical ways of incorporating recommended activities based on the existing portfolios in the SEIP. The MOE could allow the schools to identify other job related professionals such as counsellors and

medical personnel for their TPC panel, so that immediate guidance could be given to the CSN.

It is hoped that any researcher in the future who intends to use this suggested framework, and finds that my conclusions no longer hold true then it can be said that an effective and comprehensive TPC has been developed with the portfolios incorporated.

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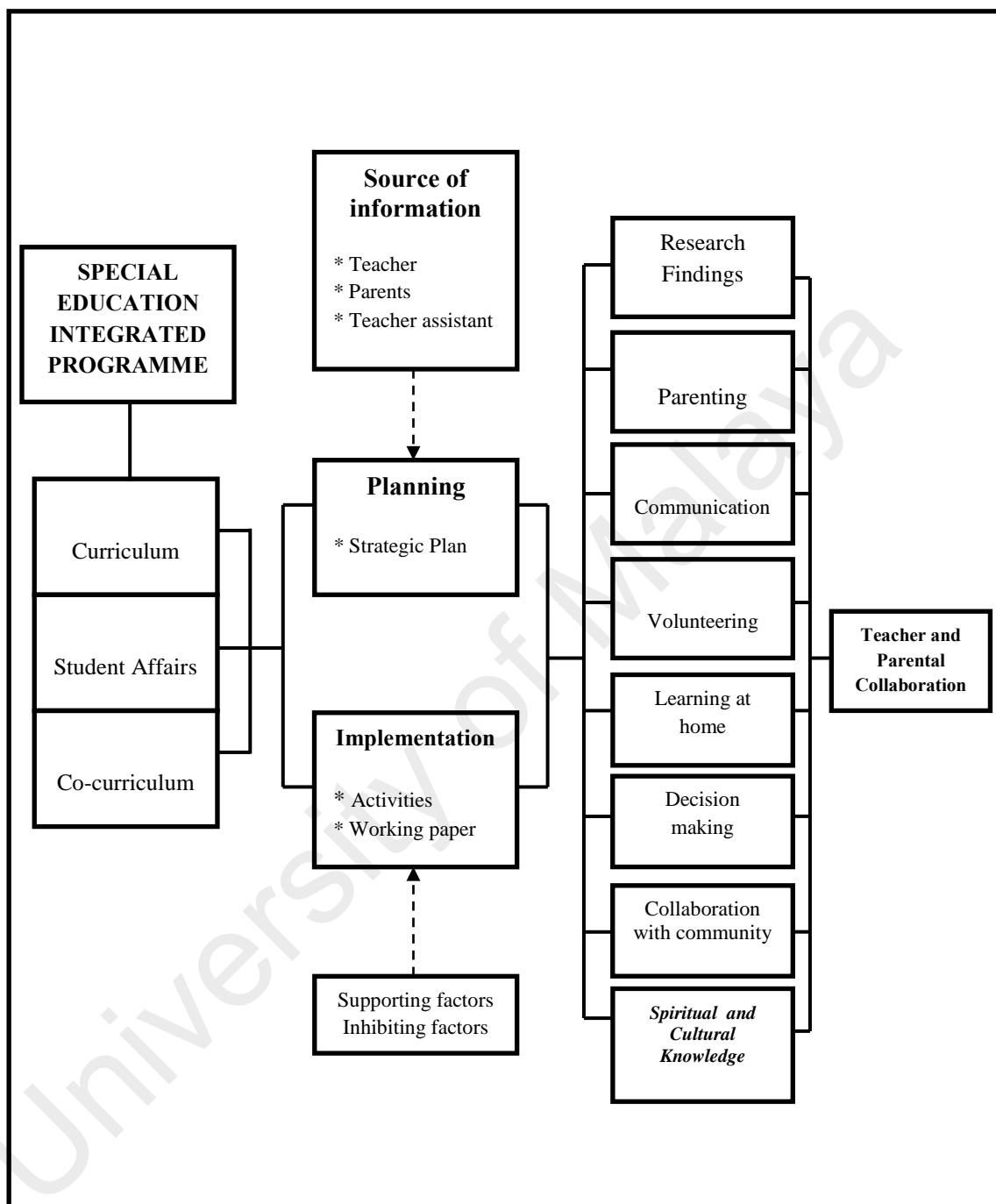


Figure 5.1 Suggested Framework for Teacher and Parental Collaboration based on research findings

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