

PARENTS' KNOWLEDGE ON HOME SCHOOLING: A SOLUTION TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION FOR REFUGEE CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

The common issue that refugees face all over the world is the educational problem of whether they are displaced internally or internationally. Providing education is considered as important as providing other basic needs such as food, shelter, cloths and medicine, as a way to prevent the education being interrupted and for the sustainable development of the refugee children when they are displaced. One of the major problems that refugees in Malaysia face is the education for their children similar to that reflected all over the world. The literature shows that the home schooling is an appropriate method and solution for the problem of the refugee children. However, the success of it depends on how parents understand of home schooling. The purpose of this study was to find out to what extent the Sri Lankan refugee parents in Malaysia understand about home schooling that would be as a solution for the educational problem of their children. Refugee parents were interviewed to ask about their understanding towards home schooling. The interviews were transcribed and the interview transcripts were coded. Finally, the codings were combined and useful themes were developed. Knowledge of refugee parents towards home schooling was poor. They do not know what the home schooling is about and they haven't heard or come across anything about home schooling. They do not even know how the children learn in a home schooling system. What they understand about home schooling is children learning at private tuition centers and parents helping them in home works, hence they misunderstand the term home schooling. However, generally, the respondents are knowledgeable about the subjects to be taught to the children and the characteristics of the teacher, in this case parents. They point out the importance of teaching the subjects such as English, Mathematics, their mother tongue language Tamil, general things that are demanding in society in order to live and contemporary subjects. This paper concludes that home schooling is an appropriate method and an immediate solution for the educational problem of refugee children while they are displaced internally or globally and can be applied among the refugees all over world. Nonetheless, the parents' knowledge towards home schooling is also a crucial factor for the best practice of home schooling. It is to attain a viable solution for the educational problem of refugee children.

Keywords: Home schooling, refugees, parents' understanding, students' advancement, sustainable education.

Introduction

Getting proper education is a basic human right for every human being regardless of ethnic group, religion or nationality. Arrangements have been made to give opportunity for everyone to get proper education such as compulsory school attendance until for a certain age enforced in most of the countries in the world in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR, 1948) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CROC, 1990), free education (e.g. Sri Lanka) and special education for the special need children or gifted children. The displacement whether internally or internationally is major obstacle for the children's learning to be happened. The problem for the education is common faced by refugees all over the world. The refugees in Malaysia are not exception to this. The reasons are that the Malaysia is not a signatory country in the 1951 Refugee Convention. Thus the refugees in Malaysia are considered as illegal immigrants since they do not have valid document. Even though, accessing to private education is not restricted, the financial situation prevents them from getting to private education. Cannot go out to work due to possessing of invalid document is a cause for their financial situation. Also there is a great influence of Sri Lanka's free education system on refugee parents' decision not to send their children for private schools while they are in another country. The concern over the safety of the children in a host country is another cause for the issue of the refugee children's education. They are afraid their children of being arrested by the local authority and being abducted by gangsters for ransom. Available community-run schools also have lack of resources such as qualified teachers or volunteers to teach, inadequate space for classroom, inadequate space for children to play and lack of teaching facilities.

However, the Malaysian government, under the humanitarian ground, permits the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to do its operations due to the activities the UNHCR are involved in. As a result, the UNHCR in Malaysia is as a regional hub in Asia with 150,669 refugees as of end October 2016. Of them, the majority is from Myanmar with 135,475 refugees, 2,859 refugees are from Sri Lanka, 2,692 is from Pakistan, 1,809 is from Yemen, 1,525 is from Syria, 1,323 is from Iraq, 841 is from Afghanistan, 1,600 is from Somalia, 633 is from Palestine, and others from other countries. The statistic of UNHCR shows that there are 21,880 school-going age children and of them, only 28% have the access to the education, attending either community service schools or NGO's schools and over 70% of the children are home with no hope for the education and no hope for future.

Is there an alternative as a solution for these refugee children's educational problem? Would homeschooling be a solution for the problem? The home schooling would be an alternative solution for the educational problem of the refugee children. The literature depicts that one of the reasons for parents to conduct homeschooling is the security issue at the schools and outside the schools. Thus, the nature of homeschooling would be as a solution for the educational problem of the refugee children. Because of the security issue the parents are concern about and for the financial in capabilities of the refugee parents. However, widely documented in the literature, the value of parental involvement is a key to achievement. One of the successful factors of homeschooling is the fully understanding of homeschooling by parents. Thus, how refugee parents understand the HS will determine the effectiveness of the HS among the refugee parents. Before HS is proposed for refugee children, knowledge that parents has should be known for an effective homeschooling to happen.

The purpose of this paper was to find out to what extent the Sri Lankan refugee parents in Malaysia are knowledgeable about home schooling. Two research questions guided this study to find out the answer; what is the understanding of the Sri Lankan Refugee parents towards home schooling? And what is the understanding of the Sri Lankan refugees regarding home schooling conducted in the area? Under these research questions, information on various attributes of home schooling were gathered such as understanding of concept of home schooling, curriculum of home schooling, children's learning style, classroom settings and facilities and the characteristics of a teacher.

Literature Review

Homeschooling is not a new concept but the movement is very little known until three decades (Knowles, 1991 as cited by Abell, 2002). Homeschooling is a fast growing form of education not only in United States and Canada but also in many nations around the world and it is legal throughout Europe, Australia, New Zealand, North America, Hong Kong, and South Africa. The history demonstrates few leaders/ scholars of home schooling such as George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Thomas Edison, and Albert Einstein (Clark 1994; Kantrowitz & Wingert, 1998).

The characteristics of homeschooling is that it is the education of children conducted under the supervision of their parents or guardian within the home setting apart from any campus base set up (Reich, 2002). In a home school, the parents teach their children an academic curriculum at home instead of sending them out to a public or private school. The models of home schooling differ from non-formal schooling to traditional classroom setting depends on the parents' and children's interest. In a non-formal school setting, the child expresses interest in a particular subject, and the parents take steps to provide the materials for that subject. Many parents who began home schooling in a traditional classroom setting switched to less formal setting, since it happens sometimes outside of home, because the learning happens due to the interest of the child.

Widely documented in the literature, the value of parental involvement is a key to achievement (Bryant, Peisner-Feinberg, Miller-Johnson, 2000; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000 from Lunenburg 2002,) and a way to close the achievement gap and increasing student learning (Lunenburg & Irby, 2002; LaRocque, Kleiman & Darling, 2011). One of the major problems that schools face is the difficulty in promoting and maintaining the participation of the interested groups involved in students learning, especially the parents (LaRocque et al., 2011). Parents are unable to direct in all aspects, the education of their children in other settings except home schooling. They are responsible not only for determining what should be taught to their children in homeschooling, but when and how to teach. Therefore, the teacher of home schooling, in this case parents, is most crucial factor for success.

The researchers feel that it is vital to discuss briefly about the Sri Lanka's free education system. The education system in Sri Lanka was made free of charge in 1938 to ensure that education is provided with equal opportunities for all children in the country regardless of social class, economic condition, religion and ethnic origin. The initiative to establish free education was taken by the late Hon. Dr. C.W.W. Kannangara when he was the Minister of Education. One of the recommendations made by the Executive Committee of Education led by Dr. Kannangara was that education should be made free from the kindergarten stage to University. Making education free of charge enabled the Sri Lankans to meet one of the two fundamental rights without discrimination. The other sector which provides the service free of charge is the health sector.

Literature has highlighted the various forms of education alternatives available for the children other than the public school system. Ronald (1997) describes 23 education alternatives and some of the important systems highlighted by him are free schools, Montessori schools, Essential schools, Progressive education and Home schools. Among the various forms of education alternatives, the home schooling is an appropriate alternative in the refugee context and can be applied easily due to the nature of the system. The free schools are not existed everywhere, but only in few countries such as Sri Lanka. In the Montessori schools, still parents should have to pay. The characteristics of home schooling and parents' decision to choose home schooling would further explain why the home schooling is appropriate method for the refugee children.

Various studies have been conducted to explain the factors influencing the parents' choice for homeschooling education (Barratt-Peacock, 1997; Beirne, 1994; Broadhurst, 1999; Baugus, 2009; Gustafson, 2012; Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007; Reich, 2002; Statistical Analysis Report, USA, 2003). Among the studies, it is shown that most of the parents believe that it is their responsibility to determine the best form of education for their children (Ray, 2009). The most common reason for the parents to choose home schooling is parents' concern about the environment of the local schools (Abell Deborah, 2002; Laing & Newsom, 2011; Margaret, 1997; Higgins, 2008), dissatisfaction with academic instruction at the local schools (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007), positive perspectives of the benefits of homeschooling (Statistical Analysis Report, 2003) to provide religious or moral instruction (Reich, 2002; Bauman, 2002; Gustafson, 2012), to provide education when a child has a physical or mental health problem (Reich, 2002) and when their child has any other special needs or other reasons (Statistical Analysis Report, 2003).

According to the reasons mentioned above based on past researches, one of the reasons for choosing home schooling by the parents is because of security issues. The parents fear that their children are not safe in schools where guns and other weapons are commonly used among the students and the students' excessive use of drugs (Abell Deborah, 2002; Laing & Newsom, 2011; Margaret, 1997; Higgins, 2008). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (1999), parents indicated that one of the reasons for home schooling is the students' behavioral problems at school. The study of Bauman (2002) also reveals that the respondents stated that one of the reasons for home schooling is because of the students' behavioral problems. Most homeschooling parents have religious objections into placing their children in a public or even a private school environment which they believe is better since their children's moral and spiritual needs will not be met in campus-based schools (Reich, 2002). That is the reason why a number of religious-based (Christianity) home schooling is increasing, especially in the United States of America (Muncy, 1994, see also the web page of the "Christian Home Educators Association of California"). It is because Christians started condemning what they perceive to be the increasingly secular nature of public Schools. Also, many families choose home schooling because they want to provide individual attention, especially for the special need students and gifted students (Laing & Newsom, 2011; Margaret, 1997). The dissatisfaction over the curriculum and with regards to some other issues with the public and private schools is also to be a reason for choosing home schooling by most parents. Parents believe that their children cannot benefit from the public and private schools and that leads to a positive perspective of the benefits of home schooling (Statistical Analysis Report, 2003). This is also one of the many reasons for parents to choose home schooling.

Various studies found that the curriculum of a home schooling and the qualifications of teachers of home schooling are different from each other (Rudner, 1999; Knowles, 1988a; 1988; Mayberry, 1987; Nazareno, 1999; Wahisi, 1995; Clements, 2002). Literature reveals that the qualification of teachers of home schooling varies from PhD level to no high school diplomas (Lines, 1987; Mayberry, 1987; Rudner, 1999; Shepherd, 1986; Statistical Analysis report, 2003; Ray, 2006). Although the number of homeschooling increased among parents who are not very educated with only a high school diploma or less, the majority of home schooled parents are educated, holding PhDs (Statistical Analysis report, 2003). Therefore, literature stresses parents to be educated for a better understanding of home schooling and for conducive learning to take place. When parents become more familiar with homeschooling, there seemed to be little skepticism about it and perhaps they will have a more positive attitude towards homeschooling and its effectiveness with regards to academic achievement, college preparation, academic and social adjustment, higher levels of business ethics, and higher levels of academic engagements. Parents remain at home throughout the day with the kids thus allowing parents to teach and supervise their children. Therefore, the understanding of and knowledge about home schooling is very important.

Methodology

The purpose of this preliminary study was to find out the understanding of Sri Lankan refugee parents in Malaysia. This study was aimed at identifying the underlying themes pertaining to the understanding of refugee parents towards home schooling. Qualitative research designed with in-depth interview using semi-structured interview was employed among the participants. Interviews are an effective method in gathering information while conducting qualitative research and it is useful in the following ways; to collect significant amounts of data in a short period of time, the meaning of participant's views are subject to the researcher's interpretation, a wide variety of topics or themes can be collected and interviews allow the researcher to probe for clarification right away for in-depth information (Patton, 2002). Taylor and Bogdan (1998) suggested that "understanding people from their own frames of references and experiencing reality as they experience it" is the main part of the qualitative research. Therefore, using qualitative methodology allowed us to understand the phenomenon of home schooling.

Participants

The population of the study was the Sri Lankan refugees in Malaysia and the sample is chosen from Setapak, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The reason for choosing Setapak as a site is because the majority of the refugees from Sri Lanka reside in Setapak and its surroundings. Three refugee families were interviewed. The sampling is a purposive sampling whom they consider the most suitable to assist in addressing the research questions and to get rich information and discovering the phenomenon to be studied. The sample of this study was of 3 families; one single parent family and two families of two parents' family. So the total number of individuals involved in this interview is five. The participant number one is a single mother with three girls aged 15, 13 and 10. In the second and third interviews with the families, husbands and wives participated. The second family has got three sons aged 8, 5 and 1 and the third family has got one son aged 14.

Instruments and Procedure

The researchers sought the permission from the UNHCR Geneva before going to the field to collect data from the refugee parents. The UNHCR Geneva then forwarded the request to UNHCR in Malaysia. The researchers were neither granted the permission nor given the information of the refugees to conduct the interview. However, we were advised by the UNHCR office Malaysia to make the contact directly with the refugees. So the researchers managed to contact a refugee mother who is in-

charge of a micro finance project run by an NGO. She provided the contacts of five families who have school-aged children where researchers could obtain in-depth information about home schooling in refugee context. We contacted them and explained the purpose of the interview, four families agreed to participate in the interview. The researchers set up the convenient time for the interview. Before the interview began, a woman withdrew from the study and only three families (five parents) were finally interviewed.

A set of semi-structured interview questions were prepared by the researchers and interviews were conducted as the research sought to gather reliable qualitative data (Patton, 2002). Semi-structured interviews were used to investigate each participant's personal perception, understanding and awareness with regards to home schooling in "their own words" (Kvale, 2006, p.481). The interviews were conducted in Tamil since the participants could only speak Tamil. The first language of the researcher is also Tamil and it enabled the researchers to conduct the interview without any language barrier between the participants and the researchers. It also enabled us to get richest data from the participants.

The analysis was ongoing as the transcripts were continually reviewed. Two phases were involved in analyzing the interviews; in the first phase preparing transcripts and coding the data accordingly under appropriate patterns or themes were done and in the second phase, the coded data were analyzed (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Once the interview was completed, a verbatim transcription of their input as their understanding of home schooling was made by the researchers using the Express Scribe software. Each participant's personal inputs were constructed accurately (Creswell, 2003). The data was reviewed a second time in order to ensure accuracy as categories and codes were created. Since the interview was conducted in Tamil, it was translated into English. One page from each transcription and the translation of the transcription page was given to a language expert to make sure whether the translation done was correct. Additionally, the transcripts from the interviews were coded into themes and categories that were identified through the Long table approach throughout the third time review (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Categories were clustered into segments related to the research questions. Varying themes were then placed under the appropriate category and then examined holistically. Upon analyzing the data, the researchers identified refugee parents' understanding and awareness of home schooling.

Results And Discussions

The section, the most important part of the paper, discusses the findings from the interviews among the refugee parents regarding the understanding of home schooling.

Parents' Understanding of Home Schooling

The purpose of this study was to find out the understanding of the Sri Lankan refugee parents in Malaysia towards home schooling. The refugee parents were asked to what extent they understood, know and are aware of what home schooling is about. The findings from the refugee parents revealed that the refugee parents did not know what home based learning was. For example, when the researcher questioned one of the respondents about what they knew of home schooling, the answer received has given below;

"What do you mean by teaching at home? Is it teaching by you or teaching by us?"(1/2P).

By asking this question, it is very clear that the participant doesn't know what home based learning is about. They do not know who conducts homeschooling. Another response given when the researcher asked both the mother and the father about home schooling was they mentioned about helping their children at home with their home works. What the parents understood by the term home schooling is helping the children with their homework. They misunderstood that children doing their homework and their parents helping them is the homeschooling. It is evident from what they shared:

"...but we help them to do the works from the school, when they got homework, and anything regarding the general knowledge" (2/2H).

The parents were asked whether they know anyone in their area conducting home schooling and if so what do they know about the home schooling in their area. This is to understand whether they gained knowledge with regards to homeschooling from the area where they live and is influence on their understanding. The parents never heard anything about home schooling from their area they live. Thus there is no influence of homeschooling in their area on their knowledge towards homeschooling. It seemed that their awareness is limited regarding the home schooling conducted in their area. There are a number of reasons for this. First of all, they do not know what home schooling is all about to differentiate it from other form of educational alternatives. Another thing is that they do not know whether anyone in their area conducts home schooling except the tuition in the neighborhood of one participant claimed it to be the home schooling.

It is possible for the parents to have knowledge on home schooling, if any of the parents from their community conducts home schooling in their area or other parts of Malaysia. When the researcher asked whether if anyone from Sri Lanka conducts home schooling for their children, the refugee parents explained that the refugee families have still not recovered from the post war trauma. Therefore, the parents in this study feel that parents are not in a situation to conduct home schooling.

"I didn't hear like that... (1/14P). "...Nobody is in that mentality...
...Because they are still thinking of the incidents they have seen...."
(1/118P). So because of this, they are not in a clear mind and not in a good situation" (1/124P).

The researcher further probed that whether the refugee parent has ever gone to the house which she claimed to be home schooling. She has never been to the house. So the second reason is that it seemed that their social interaction and mixing up with the local people is limited since they are foreigners. The education system of the country and the place where they are from, are also cause for refugee parents' understanding of the home schooling. Because the education system in Sri Lanka is free of charge from primary to tertiary, thus parents send their children to the public schools. Therefore, the possibility for the parents to conduct home schooling is very rare. The refugees are mostly from the rural areas of Northern and Eastern part of the Sri Lanka and their understanding is limited than the people in the urban areas. Thus, they neither heard in Sri Lanka nor in Malaysia about homeschooling. What the participants heard and understood about homeschooling is the private tuition center as the participant mentioned about conducting tuition at the neighbor's house in the evening time.

"I didn't hear like that. If the parents are educated, they will teach at home. The neighbor is also a teacher. She teaches the children in the evenings" (1/14P).

"I did hear about conducting tuition at home" (2/13H).

Therefore, they misunderstood the term home schooling and they are not aware of whether home schooling and tuition centers are a different form of setting. Whenever the researcher pronounced the term home schooling, they repeatedly say tuition center, referring to home schooling. When it comes to the understanding of home schooling, knowledge about how the children learn and how the learning takes place in a home schooling is an important factor and parents should be well aware about this for a successful home schooling to happen. When the participants were asked whether they know how the children learn in home schooling, they are not aware of it. In conclusion, they do not know how the children learn in home schooling.

Another important factor to understand about home schooling is the class room and its facilities. The parents were asked whether their home and facilities at their place are adequate enough to conduct home schooling. The parents do not know how a classroom should be and the facilities in home schooling. However, they admit that having a separate place to study with some furniture is important and their place to conduct the home schooling is not suitable. The reason because two families interviewed are staying in one house renting a room each from a house. The researcher observed that they are doing everything in this room. This room is used as bed room, visiting room, living (hall) room and kitchen and etc. The researcher conducted the interview also in this room. So the parents felt that it is difficult to conduct home schooling in a bet-sit. That is why one of the parents mentioned;

"We rent only this room. It is not possible to conduct tuition ("home schooling" –from researcher). If we can arrange a separate place only for this purpose, they will just learn there "(1/152P).

The other parent felt that the available facility at home is enough to conduct the home schooling for their children. The children can just sit on the floor and study. However, the father in the second family felt that for an effective and efficient learning to take place there should be a place with more facilities. Because the children will feel that they also want to have a proper classroom with the table and chair like others studying in the neighboring tuition centers.

".....It is not compulsory to have all the facilities. They can learn just sitting here as normal.....but there should be table at home, and if they have the facility whereby they can sit on the chair and study, they will study without losing their concentration and they will be comfortable....." (2/116H).

He further explained;

".....they may think that while the children at the neighbor house studying using the table, why we don't have the table. It would be quiet comfortable for them., if there is a place with the facilities.." (2/120H).

The understanding of home schooling is a combination of knowledge about the concept of home schooling, class room and its facilities and how children learn and how the learning takes place. With regards to these attributes of home schooling, the parents' understanding is lacking. They do not know what the home schooling is about; they haven't come across the term. Therefore, they do not know the classroom setting and its facilities or how the children learn and how the learning takes place in a home schooling setting. However, they do know about the tuition and they misunderstand the term home schooling and are confused with the term.

Curriculum: Parents' View

The parents in this study believed that certain subjects are most important to teach the children in home schooling, though they don't know much of what the home schooling is about. Parents' understanding of what to teach the children in a home schooling, if they were to teach in a home schooling is a welcoming finding of this study. All the parents interviewed stressed the important of teaching English to their children. Because they felt that it is the international language to communicate wherever they go. That is the reason, one of the participants mentioned that teaching at home is impossible for her because of her lack of English language fluency.

“So if I want to continue my study now..., I don’t know English at all. Only the Tamil, I know.
So it* is not possible for me.....” (1/6P and 12P).

This finding fit nicely with the findings of Hautamaki (2011) provides the details of the subjects required by the Michigan State Statues and one of the subjects is English Grammar. She further mentions that work books for the children in English Grammar are the commonly practiced in home schooling classes in USA.

The other important subject, the parents’ feelings, to be taught in the home schooling class is computer and computer related subjects. In line with finding of Clements (2002) study which reveals that one of the curriculum the parents use is completely computerized curriculum which is practiced independently by each student. Therefore parents indicated that computer and related studies should be taught the children in a home schooling setting. One of the parents mentioned as;

“The computer, the children will like. Mostly they will like the computer”
(1/38P).

There are numerous researches and arguments about the relationship between the mother tongue as a subject and/or teaching in on the achievement level. The parents feel that the children should be taught the mother tongue at home and the mother tongue should be the medium of instruction. The husband in one of the families participated mentioned;
“So we will have to teach the Tamil Language at home. Because the Tamils should be able to speak Tamil” (2/88H).

Apart from the subjects mentioned above, the finding of this study reveal that parents interviewed felt they understand the important of teaching the children the general things. Since the participants are uneducated and they do not know what is home schooling about, they felt that they can teach the children the general things using their school books. What they meant here by the general things is that whatever the parents can understand from the school books. Their educational practice in public school books is their point of reference. They indicated that their method of teaching should in line with the public school curriculum and to meet the expectations of refugee children. The reason for this is that the parents are aware that whatever children study in these days is not the same as that they studied during their period. One of the parents mentioned;

“...because I don’t know much of the subjects they study currently” (1/140P).

“I can teach mostly the general things from their book. But everybody might not have the knowledge to teach from the book...” (2/21H).

With regards to the parents’ understanding pertaining to curriculum, they mentioned that the curriculum of home schooling should prepare the children for the current world. The children should be given the updated knowledge to make them capable for the current challenging world. That is why the parents indicated that the children in the home schooling should be taught the contemporary subjects since current world is developed and modernized.

“So they should learn as much as they can until they are here. By that they should keep them as strength and be potential” (1/50P).

“Now everything is modernized and developed” (1/10P).

Widely documented in the literature that one of the reasons that the parents to choose the home schooling is because of the pedagogical reason. The parents feel that the public schools are far behind in preparing the children for the current world and the curriculum in the public schools are not adequate to challenge the students. This dissatisfaction with the public schools curriculum motivated the parents to provide home schooling for their children. Schroeder’s (2009) study which aims to explore the motivational factors of the parents to choose the home schooling, ideological and pedagogical factors are identified as strong motivational factors. In his study he further validates the advantages of the home schooling and one of those is individualization of curriculum. So the parents can teach the students to become what they wanted them to be. One of the parents mentioned;

“Because of I am teaching him individually. Because of that he will get more knowledge....” (2/ 56 and 58W).

According to National Center for Education Statistics (1999), 48.9 percentages of the parents choose home schooling because they think that they can give better education at home. So, the finding of the study nicely fit with the previous reports whereby the home-based learning is a way to widen the children’s knowledge.

Despite the refugees’ understanding with regards to home schooling limited, their indication about the curriculum is a welcoming finding in this study. The curriculum is an important factor in home schooling and the refugee parents interviewed felt that teaching certain subjects in the curriculum is important. The subjects that the participants mentioned are English, computer and computer related subjects, mother tongue (Tamil), general things, and contemporary subjects.

Characteristics of Teacher: Parents’ View

Parents’ understanding pertaining to one of the important factor of the home schooling; the characteristics of teacher, was asked. Useful information from refugee’s point of view was sought. The parents informed that the teacher of home schooling, in this case parents should have certain characteristics if they were to teach in home schooling. All the refugee parents, interviewed,

mentioned that the person who teaches in home schooling should be knowledgeable. It is well known fact that if anyone wants to be a teacher he/ she should be knowledgeable. It is not exceptional even in home schooling. When the literature reports the characteristics of teacher, various studies show that the parents who home school their children are educated. The parents' educational level and level of achievement of home schooled children have a strong positive correlation with each other. Majority of the parents who homeschools are qualified with at least a teaching diploma. The Rudner's (1998) study reveal that home schooling parents had more formal education than parents in the general population; 88% continued their education beyond high school compared to 50% for the nation as a whole. Further it pointed out many home school parents were formally trained as teachers. Almost one-fourth of home school students (24%) have at least one parent who is a certified teacher. In Margaret (1997) study with 12 home schooling parents mentioned that almost every parent had a qualification of college education. Also, National Center for Education Statistics (1999) reveals that the parents who are home schooling have the highest educational attainment; 25 percent of parents of homeschoolers attained bachelor's degrees as their highest degree. Home school progress Report (2009) found that 2.5% of mothers and 8.7% of parents have the doctorate, 11.6% of mothers and 20% of fathers have master's degree and 48.4% of mothers and 37.6% of fathers have Bachelors degree. The parents felt that their current knowledge level is not adequate enough and competent to conduct home schooling.

“.....what I studied is until 8th grade. “If they ask me to help them, I will tell them that I have studied until 8th grade.....” (1/4P and 1/88P).

What the refugee parent meant here is that her education level even to help in children's home work is not enough. So the person, who conducts the home schooling, in this case the parents, should be knowledgeable to teach the children. So it is clear that the parents who home school are educated group and it suggests that the refugee parents who conducts the home schooling should be knowledgeable. So this finding fits with the previous reports.

Another thing that the refugee parents pointed out with regards to the person who conducts home schooling is fluency of English. The parents feel that teaching English is important for their children. Therefore, the parents should be fluent in English to teach in home schooling. Due to the lack of English Language fluency, one of the participants felt that teaching the children at home is not possible for her.

“So if I want to continue my study now..., I don't know English at all. Only the Tamil, I know” (1/6P).

All the refugee parents interviewed can speak only the Tamil Language. They studied in Tamil Medium as well. They cannot speak any other Language except Tamil. They know only few basic words in English.

“.....If it is English I can teach only few of small words.....” (1/182P).

So, the parents feel that the lack of English Language fluency is a barrier for them to teach the children in the home schooling and therefore they indicated that the person who conducts home schooling, in this case parents should be fluent in English.

Whatever the form of school that the children are studying in, knowledge given to children should be updated. The refugee parents felt that their children in home schooling should be given the updated knowledge. Therefore the parents should have the contemporary knowledge and be able to teach contemporary knowledge. According to the researches, one of the reasons for choosing home shoaling by the parents is the dissatisfaction with the existing public schools. Their dissatisfaction is due to the curriculum in the public schools. The parents perceive that the graduates from public schools are illiterate and unprepared for the work force (Clark, 1997; Lyman, 1998, Mayberry, 1988 cited by Abell, 2002). Some researches argue that the children are not provided the basic fundamental education which is essential for their development (Abell, 2002). So this satisfaction made them to choose home schooling, so they can teach their children according to their own curriculum. The parents in this study stated that they have lack of contemporary knowledge which is an essential in the current modern world. Therefore they feel that they cannot teach in home schooling.

“.....Now everything is modernized and developed (1/10P). So it is not possible for me.....” (1/12P).

So the parents feel that they should have the contemporary knowledge in the current modernized and developed world.

Another important characteristic the parents mentioned was that the person who teaches in home schooling should be in clear and stable mind. The refugee parents' current situation is an alarming factor for them not to conduct home schooling. The participants mentioned that the refugee parents have been traumatized due to the first hand experienced incidents that they went through back in the country during the ethnic war. They are still thinking of the bad experience that they had and they haven't get back from trauma. Due to this, their mind is unclear and unstable; therefore, they are not in a situation to teach. The post war trauma has the negative influence on choosing the home schooling by the parents. One of the participants mentioned;

“Nobody is in that mentality.....Because they are still thinking of the incidents they have seen” (1/118P). “So because of this, the mind is not clear and not in a good situation” (1/124P).

Therefore they believe that the person who conducts the home schooling should be in a clear mind especially with regards to mental status which should be free from mental disturbance which prevent him from teaching.

Apart from this, the parents mentioned that the person who can conduct the home schooling should be goal oriented and motivator. The parents should plan for their children; they should work to achieve a goal by motivating the students to achieve that goal. The maximum amount of students of a home schooling five and the parents can easily plan the goals and motivate the students. When one of the parents mentioned;

“.....If I teach my child individually, I will think that my son should study well for a good future. I teach him keeping in my mind like this (2/52W).

I motivate him like you should get more marks next time than whatever you took this time” (2/54W).

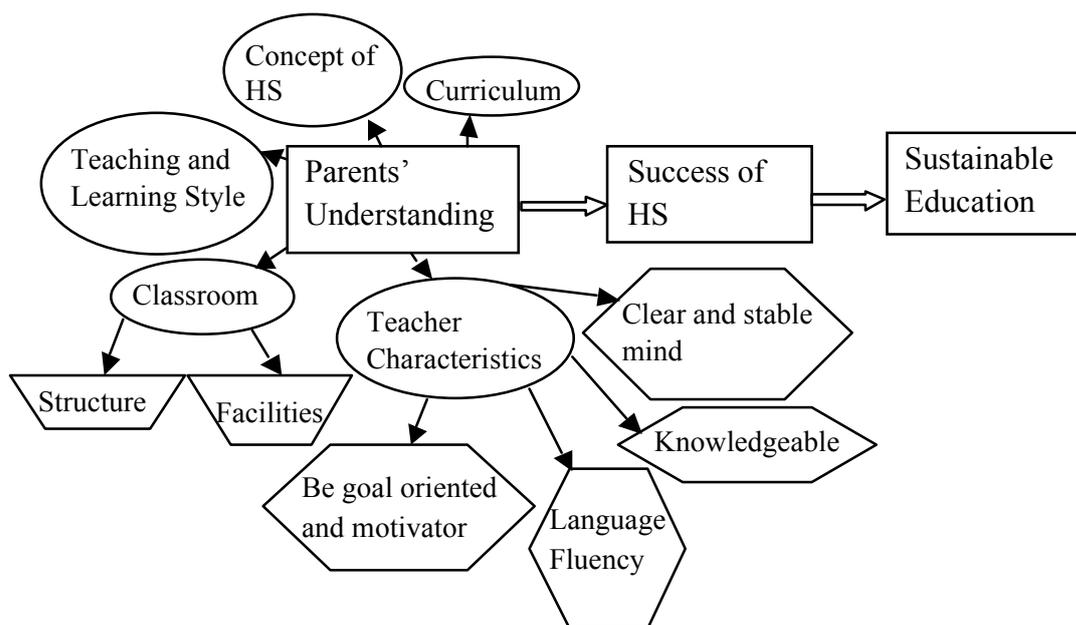
So the parents can give individual attention to their children and motivate everyone to achieve their own goal. Therefore, it is important characteristics for parents to be goal oriented and to be a motivator for a successful home schooling to happen.

The findings of this study suggest that the refugee parents understand well about the characteristics of the teacher, in this case parents, who conduct home schooling. They mentioned that the characteristics that a teacher needs to have are lacking in their case and that are the preventing factors for them to conduct home schooling. Therefore, they indicated that the person who has these characteristics can teach in a home schooling setting. The characteristics that they mentioned, as important, are be knowledgeable, be fluent in English and have contemporary knowledge, should be in clear and stable mind, be goal oriented and be a motivator.

Conclusions And Implications

This study allowed us to describe the refugee parents' understanding of home schooling and its attributes to understand the feasibility for a home schooling for refugee parents in Malaysia. Their reflection is the key in understanding factors that influenced their choice to begin home schooling and to consider in formulating policies. Understanding how refugee parents understand the concept of home schooling will contribute to better comprehension of refugee children's education which will ultimately serve to improve children's status as they continue to their educational life.

This study amongst the refugee parents clearly indicate that the understanding of refugee parents regarding the home based learning is very limited and they never heard about home schooling either in Sri Lanka or in Malaysia. What they understand by the term home schooling is that the children doing homework and parents helping them. And also they do not understand the tuition and home schooling are different form of setting and tuition center differs from homeschooling. Understanding of the home schooling in the first place is an important factor for the successful home schooling to happen. The parents should have the full understanding of what is home schooling about, how does it work, why and when is it conducted, what form of education provider is it, and how does the learning take place and how do the children learn in a homeschooling. Without fully understanding of these issues related to home schooling, they wouldn't be able to conduct home schooling. It was found in this study that the parents are aware of what to teach the children and what should be the characteristics of a teacher. However, this understanding is meaningless if they don't know what the home schooling is about and how does it work. Though they understand what subjects to be taught their children in homeschooling and what should be the characteristics of a teacher, they neither have the ability nor the knowledge of the subjects to teach and they do not have those characteristics at all. Therefore, it is right to say that the refugee parents' understanding about home schooling is poor, the knowledge of the parents to teach their children is low and the characteristics for a teacher are lacking. A successful home schooling is possible only when all these attributes come together for children's better advancement as shown in the following model developed in this study.



Implications

In order to provide proper education together with the basic and immediate needs for the sustainable development of the refugee children when they are displaced internally or internationally, home schooling should be proposed by the relevant authorities and arrangements have to be made to provide homeschooling. For that, a proper homeschooling project has to be developed including to teach parents how to teach their children in a homeschooling. For the success of home schooling, the parents are the main factor and their involvement is the crucial factor for the achievement as discussed previously. Therefore, the parents should be educated on home schooling. The awareness program about the home schooling should begin immediately after they are displaced. This could be done through providing leaflets, giving classes, and trainings where they should be given information about the feasibility of home schooling while they are displaced. After that, parents should be given real training on how to teach in a home schooling setting to begin home schooling for their children. The level of knowledge of parents on home schooling and the effectiveness of home schooling can be gained through conducting pre-test and post-test among the parents and children. Finally, an evaluation could be done to make sure the parents are conducting home schooling in a proper way and monitoring can be done by the subject expert to make sure the learning takes place.

Limitations and Future Research

As this study is limited only to find out the refugee parents' understanding towards home schooling, further studies could be made to investigate the children's perceptions towards home schooling. Methodology used in this study was interview among five parents. Quantitative methodology such as questionnaire could be used to collect data from a large amount of refugee parents. Further studies could be possible to find out the refugee parents' involvement in children's learning.

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