

ATTITUDES OF THAI SUBJECTS IN UNITED  
STATES TOWARD EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION PROGRAMS

By

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of Problem

An important development in the twentieth century has been the growth of early childhood education programs. Educational programs for young children are responding to present needs. The nursery school today is different from what it was when the movement began more than 50 years ago. It is different because the world is changed, the place of education is different, and more is known today about human growth and development.

Programs for young children are being developed in many countries around the world, including Thailand. Knowledge of attitudes of Thai people related to education of young children is important to help educators develop appropriate programs which deal with all aspects of development. Such information would be of benefit to the Thai educational institution that establishes the educational programs for young children and which trains teachers. It would also be of benefit to administrative and teaching staffs of nursery school programs.

In Thailand, parents often send their children to school because they wish to emphasize knowledge rather than

psychological benefit or the nature of children's growth and intellectual development. Because of economic and social forces many Thai mothers are working outside the home. These mothers shift some responsibility in rearing young children to nursery schools or kindergartens. They tend to choose the well-known schools which emphasize academic achievement more than the child's readiness in each stage of development.

An examination of the values of early childhood education programs in the United States should yield information which may later be used as a base for seeking information from Thai people as to their perceptions of the values of educational programs for young children. Such information should be very useful to those planning programs for children programs and training for teachers in Thailand.

#### Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study is to examine attitudes toward early childhood education programs held by Thai subjects in the United States. It is also the purpose of this study to compare attitudes of Thai subjects and American parents in Edmond, Oklahoma, concerning early childhood education programs. The specific purposes of this study are:

1. To examine the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in scores on The Favorableness of Attitudes and Perceptions Toward Early Childhood Education Scale

(Buford, 1975) according to:



- a. Age of subject
- b. Sex of subject
- c. Family status of subject
- d. Number of children in family
- e. Number of preschool children in family

2. To examine the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in responses by Thai subjects and by American parents in Edmond, Oklahoma, (reported by Buford) to each item in The Favorableness of Attitudes and Perceptions Toward Early Childhood Education Scale.

#### Definition of Terms

Early Childhood Education - Education for children under six years of age which "provides continuous education programs for children enrolled on a regular basis under professionally qualified teachers" (Leeper, Dales, Skipper, and Witherspoon, 1968, p. 90).

Nursery School - A school serving the needs of two-, three-, and four-year-old children by offering them experiences adapted to growth needs at these age levels. The nursery school program should be based on play as the best avenue for learning at these age levels. Respect for the individual child and his needs is also an essential base for a good nursery school program (Read, 1971, p. 27).

Curriculum for Nursery Schools - According to Heffernan (1964) curriculum for a good nursery school should consist of activities to satisfy the following basic drives:

- a. The drive to be physically active
- b. The drive to satisfy curiosity

- c. The drive to share and communicate
- d. The drive to express oneself aesthetically
- e. The drive to re-create life about them through dramatic play
- f. The drive to manipulate and construct

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research examining the attitudes and values of Thai and American parents regarding educational programs for young children is extremely limited, and, as a result, there is little available literature dealing directly with this topic. This review of literature is concerned with parental attitudes toward educational programs for young children.

Today many centers for children have developed to meet a social demand for child care while the mother is working outside the home. The goals and objectives of nursery schools should be related to the emotional and physical development, health, and safety of children.

Gardner (1973) wrote:

Schools attempt to design and organize their programs in keeping with the readiness of the child to profit from education. There has been increasing emphasis in school programs on understanding the causes of child behavior, and on seeking the mutual understanding by parents and teachers alike of the individual child and his educational progress. (p. 26)

Gordon (1976) wrote about an American view that the parent is a primary teacher of the child. The parents teach essentially as the teacher teaches. Parents provide a learning environment, model behavior, and engage in direct

instruction with the child. Both parents and teachers make a considerable difference not only in children's learning of facts but in their total development in all areas of their life.

Leeper et al. (1974) wrote:

A parent's selection of a school for his child under six should be regarded as an important decision in terms of what will contribute most effectively to the mental, physical, and emotional health of the child. However, directors of some of the centers for preschool children report that many parents are careless in choosing a school for their child.  
(p. 96)

Gardner (1973) stressed that early childhood education at its best can indeed bring about significant changes in the lives of young children. Potentially, these positive changes endure and contribute to later school success and healthy personality development.

The attitudes and perceptions which parents have toward educational programs for young children influence decisions such as whether or not to send their children, the amount of money they are willing to pay to have their children attend such a program, as well as what type of program they select for their children to attend. Following are some research studies indicating the importance of parental attitudes and child rearing.

Baruch (1939) indicated:

Every once in awhile--no matter how a parent may try to disguise it--the real reason for entering a child in preschool is mainly to have him out of the way. (p. 22)

The young child today may be reared in a home by parents who are both working or attending school. Young parents may be continuing their education, either in vocational school or college. Therefore, young parents may have available a vast array of information regarding the child himself as well as advice to parents. At times they are confused. They need guidance in distinguishing between recommendations based on reliable research and those made by biased individuals or groups. Some parents have been advised to have the child ready for school at age six. This advice has been interpreted to mean ability to read, write one's name, and to know certain facts. Other have advised the parent to leave the child alone, that the school's job is to teach him everything he should know. Some children, therefore, arrive in first grade with certain taught skills, others with none. The push to educate very young children has had growing impetus since the atomic age intensified the need for further education in all lines of endeavor. Parents may pressure young children to know certain facts where other parents have a "let-well-enough-alone" attitude. Some parents who work with or teach young children in organized groups feel they should prepare the five-year-old to read and write in order that he be equipped to meet the standards of first grade (Leeper et al., 1974).

It has been reported that there is a relationship between parent's perceived level of expectation for their child and educational aspiration of the child. Baragona (1964)

found a negative correlation between parental authoritarian attitudes and parental acceptance of the child. Parents who differed most (one authoritarian and the other nonauthoritarian) tended to have children with the least degree of spontaneity, friendliness, belongingness, and same-sex identification. Parents who differed least tended to have children with a greater degree of spontaneity, friendliness, belongingness, and same-sex identification.

Curtis (1971) stated:

Most parents care a great deal about their children's education, but very few know enough about the day-to-day program, or administrative details. Parents often send their children to nursery school for the wrong reason. In doing so they may select a school they eventually learn to resent. (p. 1)

Read (1971) wrote that parents differ in their attitudes concerning the correct degree of punishment for various wrong doings. The parents want the school to emphasize good health, but teachers usually do not emphasize health care as much as the parents. Parents may feel nervous about their children's behavior. They may wish the child to be more mature. Many parents are afraid their children might learn bad manners from school environment.

Pallister and Wilson (1970) compared the attitudes, aspirations, and knowledge of working-class and middle-class mothers with regard to the education system. They found that:

The working-class mothers proved to know very much less about the system and were less eager for their children to go on to higher education. Middle-class parents tended to be ambitious beyond the

child's intellectual capacity, while working-class parents tended to be under-ambitious and to underestimate the child's intellectual ability. In terms of job ambitions, parents' expectations conformed with their own class background rather than with children's actual potentialities. (p. 56)

Hefferman (1964) found that most parents emphasized academic achievement for their young children from the early childhood educational programs. They expect that school should teach children early reading. A few private nursery schools tend to satisfy parents' demand by teaching formal learning for young children at too early an age. The premature reading instruction is detrimental and dangerous. Hefferman used other research reports to support her conclusions that:

1. Approximately 25 per cent of the children in kindergarten have reached a neurological maturity to cope with the symbolization necessary for reading. The eye may be ready to receive the visual image, but for more than 75 per cent of the children, the neurological system has not reached the maturity needed to make connections between what they see and what they understand. There is nothing that can be done to speed up this readiness--only time can do this.

2. At least 50 per cent of the children with learning problems referred to the neurological clinic at Harbor General Hospital have had no traumas, no birth injuries or other physical deviations. Their trouble seems to come from pressure to do a task they have not the maturity to do.

3. All educators need to become more informed about neuromaturation. The development of the child's nervous

system is closely related to his ability to perceive ideas and perform abstract tasks. Since reading is a complex neurological process as well as a physical and social process, educators need to study carefully the complete growth pattern of each individual child to determine the type of abstract learning for which he is ready.

Hefferman (1964) finally suggested that curriculum for good nursery schools should be planned to meet the needs arising from these following basic drives:

- a. The drive to be physically active,
- b. The drive to satisfy curiosity,
- c. The drive to share and communicate,
- d. The drive to express oneself aesthetically,
- e. The drive to re-create life about them through dramatic play, and
- f. The drive to manipulate and construct.

Butler (1975) wrote:

Parents have their own expectations for the child which are based on their family values and the levels of achievement that other family members have attained or not attained. When the parents have had a choice, they may have selected a particular school because of their understanding of the program and its appropriateness for their children.  
(p. 31)



## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURE

#### Selection of Subjects

The 163 subjects of this study were obtained from Thai subjects in the United States. The subjects included Thai people who were parents, married but not parents, and single. Cover letters explaining the research study and assuring anonymity were sent to approximately 200 families. Mothers and fathers were requested to complete the questionnaires individually and not to compare answers. A stamped, self-addressed return envelope was included with each questionnaire. The data were obtained during the months of October and November, 1976. The cooperation of the Thai Student Association in some states, including Oklahoma, California, New York, Illinois, Kansas, and Missouri, was utilized in collecting the data.

#### Instrument

The questionnaire selected for assessing attitudes was Buford's (1975) The Favorableness of Perceptions Toward Early Childhood Education Scale. Buford reported all 12 items on the scale were significantly discriminating at the

.0001 level when a chi-square test was utilized for item analysis. An index of the reliability of the items in The Favorableness of Perceptions Toward Early Childhood Education Scale was reported by Buford to be a reliability coefficient, computed with the Spearman Brown Correction Formula, of +0.90.

Buford's (1975) questionnaire was designed to obtain information concerning: (1) favorableness of perceptions of subjects concerning early childhood education, (2) perceptions concerning needs of children which are met by a successful early childhood education programs, and (3) perceptions concerning important areas of early childhood education programs and the most important services a child should receive from such a program. In addition, a face sheet was included to obtain background information about the subjects.

The Favorableness of Perceptions Toward Early Childhood Education Scale (Buford, 1975) was utilized to measure the respondents' favorableness of perceptions toward early childhood education. This is a 12-item Likert-type scale. There are five degrees of response to each item, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The items are scored in such a way that the most favorable responses yield the highest score. Items in The Favorableness of Perceptions Toward Early Childhood Education Scale were presented in both positively and negatively worded statements to avoid set response.

In addition to the 12-item scale, 14 items developed by Buford concerning the most important components of early childhood education programs and the most important benefits that a child should receive from such a program were also included in the research instrument used in the current study. Also, one additional item, particularly appropriate to Thai subjects, was included. This item asked whether the subject would send his/her child to an American-type pre-school if such were available.

A face sheet was developed to obtain information describing the Thai subjects. Some of the items used by Buford were not considered appropriate for the Thai subjects and were, therefore, deleted. A new category concerning family status was added, since all of the respondents would not be parents of young children. A copy of the instrument may be found in the Appendix.

#### Analysis of Data

Frequencies and percentages were used to analyze various background characteristics of the subjects. The frequency and percentage description was also used to determine the respondents' perceptions and attitudes concerning the most important areas of early childhood educational programs, needs of children which are met by a successful early childhood education program, and the most important services a child should receive from such a program.

The median test was used to examine the hypothesis that there are no significant differences in Thai subjects perceptions of early childhood education scale scores according to each of the following:

1. Age
2. Sex
3. Family status
4. Preschool children in family
5. Number of children in family

Chi-square was used to compare the responses reported by Thai subjects and by parents in Edmond, Oklahoma, (as reported by Buford in 1975) for each item of The Favorableness of Perceptions Toward Early Childhood Education Scale.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Description of Subjects

The 163 subjects for this study were Thai subjects who were living in the United States in 1976. Most of the subjects were enrolled in higher education in different major fields of study. Some of them were parents who had sent their children to early childhood education programs. Therefore, these parents knew the difference between the early childhood education programs in the United States and in Thailand. Those who were single and married couples with no children also have some slight knowledge of programs for young children, since they have been concerned with education in Thailand and the United States.

A detailed description of the subjects in this study may be found in Table I. Males made up 61 per cent of the sample, and 39 per cent were females. The respondents ranged from age 15 to over 46, with the greatest proportion falling in the age category 26-30 years (45 per cent), and the smallest proportion was in the age categories 41-45 years (1 per cent), and 15-20 years (2 per cent). The number of children in each family ranged from none to four or more. Most of the Thai

TABLE I  
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUBJECTS

Variable	Classification	Number	Per Cent
Sex	Male	99	60.74
	Female	48	39.26
Age	15-20	3	1.84
	21-25	39	23.93
	26-30	73	44.79
	31-35	28	17.18
	36-40	14	8.59
	41-45	2	1.23
	Over 46	4	2.45
Preschool children in family	One	21	12.88
	Two	4	2.46
	None	138	84.66
Number of children in family	One	28	17.18
	Two	8	4.91
	Three	3	1.84
	Four or More	2	1.23
	None	122	74.85
Family Status	Father	24	14.72
	Mother	19	11.66
	Married but not parent	37	22.70
	Single	83	50.92

respondents in this study (75 per cent) did not have children in the family. The number of children in families having preschool children in the family ranged from one to four or more, with 17 per cent of the total subjects reporting one child. Among the total respondents, 15 per cent reported that their children had attended early childhood education programs in the United States or Thailand. Approximately 12 per cent of the Thai respondents were mothers, 15 per cent were fathers, 22 per cent were married without children, and 51 per cent were single.

The Favorableness of Perceptions Toward  
Early Childhood Education Scale  
Scores--Item Responses

The scores range from a low of 28 (least favorable) to a high or most favorable score of 58. The mean score for the entire sample was 43.47.

The information reported in Table II also indicates that approximately 91 per cent of the respondents agreed that early childhood education programs encourage the development of a child's ability to get along with other children. It should also be noted that Items 4, 8, and 3 received responses indicating 91, 86, and 84 per cent of "agree" responses, respectively. All of these items reflect positive attitudes toward early childhood education programs.

Approximately 65 per cent of the respondents disagreed that a great many children are better off if they do not go

TABLE II

FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES OF THE  
FAVORABLENESS OF PERCEPTIONS TOWARD EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION SCALE SCORES

Item	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1. I feel children ages 3-5 learn a great deal of responsibility in an early childhood education program.	89	54.60	19	11.66	55	33.74
2. I believe an early childhood education program makes little difference in helping children feel good about themselves.	74	45.40	12	7.36	77	47.24
3. I feel a child's social development is enhanced by attending an early childhood education program.	137	84.05	16	9.82	10	6.13
4. I feel attending an early childhood education program helps a child learn to communicate well with others.	148	90.80	8	4.91	7	4.29
5. I feel a great many children are better off if they do not go to early childhood education programs.	19	11.66	38	23.31	106	65.03
6. I feel that most children enjoy going to early childhood education programs.	96	58.90	28	17.18	39	23.93



TABLE II (Continued)

Item	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
7. I feel that early childhood education programs encourage the development of a child's ability to get along with other children.	149	91.41	4	2.45	10	6.14
8. I believe most children ages 3-5 would benefit by attending an early childhood education program.	141	86.50	14	8.59	8	4.91
9. I believe that an early childhood education program really does not make much difference with how a child develops intellectually.	46	28.22	20	12.27	97	59.51
10. I believe that attending early childhood education programs causes children to grow up too fast.	36	22.09	28	17.18	99	60.73
11. I believe that early childhood education programs have very disadvantages for children.	94	57.67	23	14.11	46	28.22
12. I believe early childhood education programs cause children to become too dependent on their peer group.	56	34.36	42	25.77	65	39.87

to early childhood education program. About 26 per cent of the Thai respondents believe that early childhood education will cause children to become too dependent on their peer group. It should also be noted that the greatest percentage of undecided responses was reported for Item 12, which represented a concern for a child's becoming too dependent on his peer group.

Responses by Thai Subjects Concerning  
Needs of Children Which Are Met by a  
Successful Early Childhood  
Education Program

According to the results shown in Table III, a majority of parents (82 per cent) felt that children's health needs should be met in early childhood education programs. Eight per cent felt it was not the responsibility of an early childhood education program to be concerned with health needs of children, while 10 per cent responded they were undecided.

Approximately 63 per cent of the Thai respondents felt that children should go to an American preschool system if there was an American preschool system in Thailand. Nine per cent felt they would not send children to an American preschool system if there was an American preschool system in Thailand.

Concerning the four areas of growth and development, 43 per cent of the parents felt that emotional growth and psychological development of children were the most important

TABLE III

FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES BY THAI SUBJECTS  
CONCERNING NEEDS OF CHILDREN WHICH ARE MET BY A  
SUCCESSFUL EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM

Item	Classification	Number	Per Cent
1. I feel children's health needs should be met in an early childhood education program.	Yes	134	82.27
	No	13	7.98
	Undecided	16	9.82
2. If there was an American preschool system in my community, I would send my child.	Yes	103	63.19
	No	15	9.20
	Undecided	45	27.61
3. Which one of the following do you most desire that a child get out of an early childhood education program?	Social development	51	31.29
	Academic growth	22	13.50
	Physical care of child	19	11.66
	Emotional growth--psychological development	71	43.56
4. Which one of the following do you consider to be the <u>most</u> important element of a successful early childhood education program?	Social development	52	31.90
	Academic growth	11	6.75
	Physical care of child	29	17.79
	Emotional growth--psychological development	71	43.56
5. Which one of the following do you believe to be the <u>least</u> important element of a successful early childhood education program?	Social development	26	15.95
	Academic growth	96	58.90
	Physical care of the child	24	14.72
	Emotional growth--psychological development	17	10.43
6. Which one of the following do you believe to be the problem of the children attending preschool?	Transportation (to and from school)	50	30.67
	Immaturity of child regarding separation from mother	74	45.40
	Finance	39	23.93

developmental needs which a successful early childhood education program could emphasize. When considering the least important developmental needs, the greatest proportion (58 per cent) thought that academic growth of the child was the least important element of a successful early childhood education program.

A sizeable group of Thai respondents (45 per cent) felt that immaturity of the child regarding separation from the mother was the most important problem of children attending preschool.

Responses by Thai Subjects Concerning  
the Most Important Areas of an Early  
Childhood Education Program

Table IV indicates that the Thai respondents felt that the following seven areas of an early childhood education program were the most important for teachers to assist young children in learning:

- (1) Honesty and integrity (11.66 per cent)
- (2) Cooperation (11.53 per cent)
- (3) Seeing each person as having dignity and worth  
(10.24 per cent)
- (4) Play activities outdoor and indoor (10.18 per cent)
- (5) Help children to feel good about themselves  
(9.33 per cent)

TABLE IV  
 FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES BY THAI SUBJECTS  
 CONCERNING THE MOST IMPORTANT AREAS OF AN  
 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM

Item	Number	Per Cent
1. Help children to feel good about themselves	76	9.33
2. Art activities	51	6.26
3. Music activities	38	4.66
4. Principles of good health	42	5.15
5. Science	7	0.61
6. Physical development of their bodies	42	5.15
7. Good nutrition	72	8.83
8. Play activities outdoor and indoor	83	10.18
9. Fostering creativity	58	7.12
10. Cooperation	94	11.53
11. Self-discipline	41	5.03
12. Seeing each person as having dignity and worth	108	10.24
13. Self-respect	93	2.82
14. Loyalty	20	2.45
15. Honesty and integrity	95	11.66
16. Determination and perseverance	53	6.50

- (6) Good nutrition (8.83 per cent)
- (7) Fostering creativity (7.12 per cent)

Responses by Thai Subjects Concerning  
the Areas That Teachers of Young  
Children Often Fail to  
Help Children Learn

Table V reflects the attitudes of Thai subjects concerning the following seven areas that teachers of young children most often fail to help children learn:

- (1) Fostering creativity (11.90 per cent)
- (2) Help children to feel good about themselves  
(9.20 per cent)
- (3) Determination and perseverance (8.96 per cent)
- (4) Self-discipline (8.96 per cent)
- (5) Seeing each person as having dignity and worth  
(8.34 per cent)
- (6) Good nutrition (8.22 per cent)
- (7) Self-respect (7.24 per cent)

A suggestion of the areas which are of greatest concern to Thai subjects may be derived from combining the seven areas rated as most important with the seven areas judged to be those in which teachers of young children most often fail. Four areas appear on both lists. They are: fostering creativity, helping children feel good about themselves, seeing each person as having dignity and worth, and good nutrition.

TABLE V

FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE OF PERSPONSES BY THAI SUBJECTS  
CONCERNING THE AREAS THAT TEACHERS OF YOUNG  
CHILDREN OFTEN FAIL TO HELP CHILDREN LEARN

Item	Number	Per Cent
1. Help children to feel good about themselves	75	9.20
2. Art activities	32	3.93
3. Music activities	33	4.05
4. Principles of good health	39	4.79
5. Science	37	4.54
6. Physical development of their bodies	35	4.30
7. Good nutrition	67	8.22
8. Play activities (outdoor and indoor)	24	2.94
9. Fostering creativity	97	11.90
10. Cooperation	31	3.80
11. Self-discipline	73	8.96
12. Seeing each person as having dignity and worth	68	8.34
13. Self-respect	59	7.24
14. Loyalty	20	2.45
15. Honesty and integrity	52	6.38
16. Determination and perseverance	73	8.96

Responses by Thai Subjects Concerning  
Importance of Services Offered by An  
Early Childhood Education Program

Table VI indicates that the majority of Thai subjects (63 per cent) rated the item "a rest period should be provided for the children" with a "five" (the greatest degree of importance in an early childhood education program). The Thai respondents (52 per cent) also rated "teacher should have frequent conferences with the parents about their children" as the second most important for early childhood education programs.

Examination of Hypotheses

Comparisons by the median test of total scores on The Favorableness of Perceptions Toward Early Childhood Education Scale were made to examine the hypothesis that there would be no differences in total scores among the Thai subjects according to sex, age, family status, number of children in the family, and number of preschool children in the family.

Table VII reveals the following results:

- a. There was no significant difference between total scores on Favorableness of Attitudes Toward Early Childhood Education Scale according to sex.
- b. There was no significant difference between total scores for subjects who are less than 25 years of age and those who are over 26 years of age.



TABLE VI  
 FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES BY THAI SUBJECTS  
 CONCERNING IMPORTANCE OF SERVICE OFFERED BY AN  
 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM

Item	Rating*	Number	Per Cent
1. The preschool should be located in the same building that the elementary school is located in.	1	48	29.45
	2	32	19.63
	3	48	29.45
	4	16	9.82
	5	19	11.65
2. The teachers of preschool children should make home visits.	1	19	11.65
	2	16	9.82
	3	42	25.76
	4	32	19.63
	5	44	26.99
3. Parents should be allowed to observe school activities at anytime.	1	6	3.68
	2	9	5.52
	3	25	15.34
	4	53	32.52
	5	70	42.94
4. The school should provide a nutritious snack at mid-morning and midafternoon.	1	6	3.68
	2	5	3.07
	3	30	18.41
	4	49	30.06
	5	73	44.78
5. A rest period should be provided for the children.	1	7	4.29
	2	7	4.29
	3	10	6.14
	4	36	22.09
	5	103	63.19
6. Teachers should have frequent conferences with the parents about their children.	1	5	3.07
	2	5	3.07
	3	15	9.20
	4	53	32.51
	5	85	52.15

\*Rating: 1 = least important and 5 = most important

TABLE VII

COMPARISONS BY THE MEDIAN TEST OF TOTAL SCORES ON THE  
FAVORABLENESS OF ATTITUDES TOWARD EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION SCALE

	$\chi^2$	Level of Significance
Sex	1.575	n.s.
Age	0.573	n.s.
Preschool children in family	0.592	n.s.
Number of children in family	0.002	n.s.
Family status:		
Parent vs. single	0.061	n.s.
Parent vs. married, but not parent	0.001	n.s.
Mother vs. father	0.043	n.s.

- c. There was no significant difference between total scores for subjects who have and those who do not have preschool children.
- d. There were no significant differences between total scores of the following group:
  - (1) parents and single
  - (2) parents and married but not parents
  - (3) mothers and fathers

Comparisons of the responses of Thai subjects and parents from Edmond, Oklahoma, to items on The Favorableness of Perception Toward Early Childhood Education Scale were made through the use of the median test. Table VIII reveals that there was a significant difference between the Thai subjects and Buford's Oklahoma subjects on the following items:

- a. I feel that most children enjoy going to early childhood education programs ( $\chi^2 = 41.235$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). Both have larger percentages of agreement than disagreement, but Edmond parents have a much greater difference between amount of "agree" and "disagree" responses.
- b. I believe that an early childhood education program really does not make much difference with how a child develops intellectually ( $\chi^2 = 6.501$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Both disagreed; the difference is in degree, not direction.

TABLE VIII

COMPARISONS BY THE MEDIAN TEST OF THAI SUBJECTS AND  
SUBJECTS FROM EDMOND, OKLAHOMA TO ITEMS ON SCALE

Item	$\chi^2$	Level of Significance
1. I feel children ages 3-5 learn a great deal of responsibility in an early childhood education program.	42.3754	.0001
2. I believe an early childhood education program makes little difference in helping children feel good about themselves.	38.348	.0001
3. I feel a child's social development is enhanced by attending an early childhood education program.	.0126	n.s.
4. I feel attending an early childhood education program helps a child learn to communicate well with others.	.1111	n.s.
5. I feel a great many children are better off if they do not go to early childhood education programs.	.3908	n.s.
6. I feel that most children enjoy going to early childhood education programs.	41.2352	.0001
7. I feel early childhood education programs encourage the development of a child's ability to get along with other children.	2.7079	n.s.
8. I believe most children ages 3-5 would benefit by attending an early childhood education program.	2.2318	n.s.

TABLE VIII (Continued)

Item	$\chi^2$	Level of Significance
9. I believe that an early childhood education program really does not make much difference with how a child develops intellectually.	6.5012	.02
10. I believe that attending early childhood education programs causes children to grow up too fast.	1.1305	n.s.
11. I believe that early childhood education programs have very few disadvantages for children.	11.1243	.001
12. I believe early childhood education programs cause children to become too dependent on their peer group.	4.9612	.05

- c. I believe that early childhood education programs have very few disadvantages for children ( $\chi^2 = 11.12$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Both agreed; the difference is in degree, not direction.
- d. I believe early childhood education programs cause children to become too dependent on their peer group ( $\chi^2 = 4.961$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Both groups responded with more "disagree" answers. The difference is in degree, not direction.
- e. I feel children ages 3-5 learn a great deal of responsibility in an early childhood education program ( $\chi^2 = 42.375$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). Both agree; again the difference is in degree, not direction.
- f. I believe an early childhood education program makes little difference in helping children feel good about themselves ( $\chi^2 = 38.353$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). Both groups responded with more "disagree" than "agree" responses; however, the Thai subjects reported only slightly more disagreements, while Buford's subjects responded overwhelmingly "disagree."

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY

The purposes of this study were to examine attitudes and values of Thai people concerning early childhood education programs. This study was related to the background of the Thai people, the respondents' favorableness of perceptions toward early childhood education programs, willingness to send their children to American-type preschool if there were one in Thailand, the services of the program, and the differences of perceptions between Thai people in the United States in 1975-1976 and American parents at Edmond, Oklahoma, in 1975.

The sample consisted of 163 Thai subjects between the ages of 15 and over 46, who were parents, married but not parents, and single. The subjects were predominately 26-30 years of age and single.

The data were obtained during the months of October and November, 1976. The questionnaire used for assessing attitudes of Thai subjects was The Favorableness of Perceptions Toward Early Childhood Education Scale developed by Buford (1975).

Frequencies and percentages were used to examine various background characteristics of the subjects and attitudes

concerning the most important areas of early childhood education programs, needs of children which are met by successful early childhood education programs, and the most important services a child should receive from such a program. The median test was used to examine the difference in Thai subjects' perceptions of early childhood education scale score according to a) age, b) sex, c) family status, d) preschool children in family, and e) number of children in family. Also, the median test was used to compare the responses of Thai subjects and American subjects in Edmond, Oklahoma, for each item of The Favorableness of Perceptions Toward Early Childhood Education Scale.

The results of this study were as follows:

1. In analyzing the responses to the items of The Favorableness of Perception Toward Early Childhood Education Scale, it was found that the Thai people held favorable perceptions toward early childhood education.

2. The largest number of Thai subjects felt that: (a) children's health needs should be met in early childhood education programs, (b) parents would send children to American-type preschool if there was one in Thailand, (c) emotional needs and psychological development were the most important developmental needs which early childhood education programs could emphasize, while academic growth of the child was the least important need, (d) the immaturity of the child regarding separation from the mother was the most important problem of children attending preschool, (e) honesty and integrity



was selected as the most important area (component) of an early childhood education program that the teacher should assist young children in learning, and (f) fostering creativity was believed to be an area in which teachers often fail, (g) a rest period being provided for the children was given the greatest degree of importance in early childhood education programs.

3. The comparisons by the median test of total scores on The Favorableness of Perceptions Toward Early Childhood Education Scale showed that no significant difference between (a) sex, (b) age, (c) preschool children in family, (d) number of children in family, and (e) family status.

4. The results of chi-square comparison of the responses of Thai subjects and American subjects from Edmond, Oklahoma, concerning agreement and disagreement of favorableness in early childhood education programs were:

A. Both Thai respondents and Edmond respondents agreed:

- 1) the children enjoy going to early childhood education programs
- 2) early childhood education programs have very few disadvantages for children
- 3) the children ages 3-5 learn a great deal of responsibility in an early childhood education program

Edmond respondents were significantly more favorable toward early childhood education programs than Thai respondents.

B. Both Thai respondents and Edmond respondents disagreed with the following statements, but

the Thai respondents reported only slightly more disagreements, while Edmond respondents overwhelmingly disagreed concerning the following:

- 1) an early childhood education program really does not make much difference with how a child develops intellectually
- 2) an early childhood education program causes children to become too dependent on their peer group
- 3) an early childhood education program makes little difference in helping children feel good about themselves

### Conclusion and Discussion

The results of this study showed that most of the Thai people held favorable perceptions toward early childhood education programs. Their positive perceptions and attitudes may reflect that most of the Thai people who were living in the United States during 1975-1976 were working or continuing their education. Therefore, Thai people in the United States may have available a vast array of information regarding the benefits of early childhood education (Leeper et al., 1974). Also, the study of Buford (1975) suggested that respondents possessed favorable perceptions because of the influence of increasing industrialization and mobility of families as well as the great increase in the number of women who have been employed in the labor forces during the twentieth century. These social forces also influence Thai society.

An analysis of the perceptions and attitudes of Thai people showed concern that the children's health needs should be met in early childhood education programs. This finding

is in agreement with the finding that parents want the school to emphasize good health, but teachers usually do not emphasize health care as much as the parents (Read, 1971). One of the interesting results was that Thai people would send children to American-type preschool if there was such a school in Thailand. This finding indicated that parents have their own expectations for the child which are based on the family values and the levels of achievement that other family members have attained or not attained. When the parents have had a choice, they may have selected a particular school because of their understanding of the program and its appropriateness for their children (Butler, 1975).

An analysis of the perceptions of Thai people concerning the needs of children which should be met by a successful early childhood education program revealed that Thai people feel the most important need is that of emotional growth and psychological development. This finding is in agreement with other evidence which indicated that emotional development is an essential aspect of a child's development and should be facilitated in an early childhood education program (Hurlock, 1972).

The finding that Thai subjects considered one of the most important problems of children attending preschool to be the immaturity of the child regarding separation from the mother. This finding may suggest that Thai people view their children 3-5 years of age as being in the developmental stage of interpersonal maturity which Dewey characterized as

"unsocialized." Dewey recommends this information should help the teacher see how she might work most effectively with each child to promote psychological growth (Hunt and Sullivan, 1974). Also, Butler (1975) wrote that the emotional development of children at this age usually reflects an attachment to a small family circle, especially to the mother. According to Cherry (1973), most children have difficulty adjusting to school because they are separated from the parent. Learning to accept change and being away from home is a normal part of a child's wholesome growth during the years 3-5.

Another finding was the importance given to the area that the teacher should assist young children in learning honesty and integrity. This result may reflect the influences of the culture which are powerful determinants of young children's behavior (Leeper, 1974). Also, the Thai people have their own cultural background and values in rearing their children. Results of this study may suggest the importance of planning teaching and instructional strategies appropriate to Thai culture and Thai people's expectations in order to get benefit from an early childhood education program.

In a related finding, results indicated that Thai people believed that teachers of young children often failed in fostering creativity. This finding suggests that many Thai people feel that early childhood education programs are not very successful in helping children develop divergent

thinking. This reflects parents' expectations from their own class background rather than with relation to children's actual potentialities (Pallister and Wilson, 1970).

The analysis of the attitudes of Thai people concerning services that are important in an early childhood education program revealed that a rest period was judged to be very important. This finding indicated that the very high proportion of Thai people attached a high degree of importance to an early childhood education program having an adequate scheduled time for children to have rest periods to prevent their fatigue. In this case the program should plan by being aware of personal physical needs by planning a daily schedule to include alternatively vigorous and relaxed activities to ensure a safe and healthful environment which fosters and maintains physical well-being (Carmichael, 1971).

As indicated by the results of comparing Thai people's perceptions toward early childhood education programs, there is no significant difference in responses according to sex, age, preschool children in family, number of children in family, or family status. This finding may suggest that most Thai respondents came from the upper-middle class who had higher education backgrounds in different major fields of study. Therefore, they considered that a good background in education, especially for young children, is very important to provide a foundation and to nurture the children's intellectual, emotional, and physical development. In considering the attitudes, aspirations, and knowledge of middle-class

mothers concerning the educational system, Pallister and Wilson (1970) found that middle-class mothers tended to be ambitious beyond the child's intellectual capacity. In terms of job ambitions, parents' expectations conformed to their own class background rather than with children's actual potentialities.

The major conclusion of this study in comparing the responses of Thai people and Edmond parents concerning early childhood education programs was that both of these groups showed similarity in attitudes toward such a program, but Edmond respondents expressed a stronger degree of favorableness toward early childhood education programs.

The result of this research may be explained by the Thai people's exposure to American values while they were living in this country. Some of them were parents who had sent their children to early childhood education programs. Therefore, these parents have adopted for their own, values and attitudes that are close to American parents' values and perceptions toward early childhood education programs.

#### Limitations and Recommendations

This study was concerned only with Thai people who had been living in the United States during 1975-1976. The various levels of educational and family status did not represent the entire population of Thai people; therefore, their attitudes cannot be generalized to reflect the attitudes of all Thai people toward early childhood education programs.

For further research, it is recommended:

1) To repeat study of the attitudes of Thai people toward early childhood education programs. For example, it would be particularly important to obtain representative samples of Thai people in Thailand, including all educational levels, economic groups, and varieties of family status.

2) To compare attitudes of parents in different nations toward early childhood education programs.

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## APPENDIXES

ATTITUDE OR VALUE OF THAI PARENTS  
 IN UNITED STATES RELATED  
 TO EDUCATION OF  
 YOUNG CHILDREN

Your cooperation in this research project is greatly appreciated. Your contribution in a research project of this type helps us gain greater knowledge and insight into educational programs for young children.

Please check or fill in an appropriate answer to each item. Since your name is not required, please be as honest in your answers as possible.

1. Age:
 

<input type="checkbox"/> 1. 15-20 <input type="checkbox"/> 2. 21-25 <input type="checkbox"/> 3. 26-30 <input type="checkbox"/> 4. 31-35	<input type="checkbox"/> 5. 36-40 <input type="checkbox"/> 6. 41-45 <input type="checkbox"/> 7. 46 and over
--	---
  
2. Sex:
 

<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Male	<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Female
----------------------------------	------------------------------------
  
3. How many preschool children (age 3-6) do you have?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> 1. One <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Two <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Three	<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Four <input type="checkbox"/> 5. None
---	--
  
4. Number of children in family:
 

<input type="checkbox"/> 1. One <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Two <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Three <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Four-Five	<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Six-Seven <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Eight and above <input type="checkbox"/> 7. None
--	--
  
5. Please state your family status:
 

<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Mother <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Married but not parent	<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Father <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Single
--	--

We want to find out what you think about early childhood education. There is no right or wrong answer. Early childhood education is referred to as educational programs provided for children ages 3 through kindergarten, not making reference to day care centers.

For each item below indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree by circling the response which best describes your feelings.

Scale The response code is as follows: SA--strongly agree,  
Item A--agree, U--undecided, D--disagree, SD--strongly  
# disagree.

- ( 1.) \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I feel children ages 3-5 learn a great deal of responsibility in an early childhood education program.  
SA A U D SD
- ( 2.) \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I believe an early childhood education program makes little difference in helping children feel good about themselves.  
SA A U D SD
- ( 3.) \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I feel a child's social development is enhanced by attending an early childhood education program.  
SA A U D SD
- ( 4.) \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I feel attending an early childhood education program helps a child learn to communicate well with others.  
SA A U D SD
- ( 5.) \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I feel a great many children are better off if they do not go to early childhood education programs.  
SA A U D SD
- ( 6.) \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I feel that most children enjoy going to early childhood education programs.  
SA A U D SD
- ( 7.) \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I feel early childhood education programs encourage the development of a child's ability to get along with other children.  
SA A U D SD
- ( 8.) \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I believe most children ages 3-5 would benefit by attending an early childhood education program.  
SA A U D SD
- ( 9.) \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I believe that an early childhood education program really does not make much difference with how a child develops intellectually.  
SA A U D SD

- (10.) \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I believe that attending early childhood education programs causes children to grow up too fast.  
SA A U D SD
- (11.) \_\_\_\_\_ 16. I believe that early childhood education programs have very few disadvantages for children.  
SA A U D SD
- (12.) \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I believe early childhood education programs cause children to become too dependent on their peer group.  
SA A U D SD

Please fill in the blank with the response that most nearly describes your feelings.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I feel children's health needs should be met in an early childhood education program.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ 2. No \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Undecided
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. If there was an American preschool system in my community, I would send my child.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ 2. No \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Undecided
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. Which one of the following do you most desire that a child get out of an early childhood education program?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Social development  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Academic growth  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Physical care of the child  
\_\_\_\_\_ 4. Emotional growth--psychological development
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. Which one of the following do you consider to be the most important element of a successful early childhood program?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Social development  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Academic growth  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Physical care of the child  
\_\_\_\_\_ 4. Emotional growth--psychological development
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. Which one of the following do you believe to be the least important element of a successful early childhood program?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Social development  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Academic growth  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Physical care of the child  
\_\_\_\_\_ 4. Emotional growth--psychological development

- \_\_\_ 23. Which one of the following do you believe to be the problem of children attending preschool?
- \_\_\_ 1. Transportation (to and from the school)
  - \_\_\_ 2. Immaturity of the child--regarding separation from the mother
  - \_\_\_ 3. Finance
- \_\_\_ 24. Check five areas you consider most important for teachers to assist young children in learning.
- \_\_\_ 1. Help children to feel good about themselves
  - \_\_\_ 2. Art activities ศิลปกรรม เพื่อเด็กใช้มือให้ชำนาญ เกิดความคิดสร้างสรรค์
  - \_\_\_ 3. Music activities เพื่อให้เด็กแสดงออกถึงความรู้สึก
  - \_\_\_ 4. Principles of good health
  - \_\_\_ 5. Science
  - \_\_\_ 6. Physical development of their bodies
  - \_\_\_ 7. Good nutrition
  - \_\_\_ 8. Play activities (outdoor and indoor)
  - \_\_\_ 9. Fostering creativity ส่งเสริมให้เกิดความคิดสร้างสรรค์
  - \_\_\_ 10. Cooperation
  - \_\_\_ 11. Self-discipline
  - \_\_\_ 12. Seeing each person as having dignity and worth การให้เกียรติต่อผู้อื่น
  - \_\_\_ 13. Self-respect
  - \_\_\_ 14. Loyalty
  - \_\_\_ 15. Honesty and integrity
  - \_\_\_ 16. Determination and perseverance มีกำลังจิตใจที่แน่นอน

- \_\_\_25. Check five of the following area you think teachers of young children most often fail to help children learn. (See above for Thai explanations of these terms.)
- \_\_\_1. Help children to feel good about themselves
  - \_\_\_2. Art activities
  - \_\_\_3. Music activities
  - \_\_\_4. Principles of good health
  - \_\_\_5. Science
  - \_\_\_6. Physical development of their body
  - \_\_\_7. Good nutrition
  - \_\_\_8. Play activities (outdoor and indoor)
  - \_\_\_9. Fostering creativity
  - \_\_\_10. Cooperation
  - \_\_\_11. Self-discipline
  - \_\_\_12. Seeing each person as having dignity and worth
  - \_\_\_13. Self-respect
  - \_\_\_14. Loyalty
  - \_\_\_15. Honesty and integrity
  - \_\_\_16. Determination and perseverance

Please rate on a five-point scale the degree to which you feel each of the following is important in an early childhood program. (Five represents most important and one represents the least degree of importance.)

- \_\_\_26. The preschool should be located in the same building that the elementary school is located.  
1 2 3 4 5
- \_\_\_27. The teachers of preschool children should make home visits.  
1 2 3 4 5

- \_\_\_ 28. Parents should be allowed to observe school activities any given time.  
1 2 3 4 5
- \_\_\_ 29. The school should provide a nutrition snack at midmorning or midafternoon.  
1 2 3 4 5
- \_\_\_ 30. A rest period should be provided for the children.  
1 2 3 4 5
- \_\_\_ 31. Teachers should have frequent conferences with the parents about their children.  
1 2 3 4 5
- \_\_\_ 32. The school should provide transportation for the children.  
1 2 3 4 5





# Oklahoma State University

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY RELATIONS  
AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

STILLWATER, OKLAHOMA 74074  
241 HOME ECONOMICS WEST  
(405) 624-5057

October 17, 1976

Dear Thai Friend:

You have been selected as a person who would be well qualified and willing to cooperate in my research project, which is concerned with the attitude of Thai subjects in the United States toward early childhood education programs.

If you would be kind enough to assist me in this research, you (or both husband and wife) are each asked to fill out the enclosed questionnaires. A stamped, addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience, or return to \_\_\_\_\_ . Please return the questionnaires to me at the earliest possible date. Please return them by no later than November 23, 1976.

As you answer the questions, please do not consult each other or compare answers. If, for some reason, one of you cannot assist with the research, we would greatly appreciate it if the other would send his or her questionnaires to me separately.

You are asked not to put your name on the questionnaire, and since you will not put your name on the questionnaire, you are encouraged to answer all the questions as honestly as possible.

If you would like a brief summary of the findings of this research study when it is completed, I will be happy to send it to you if you will send me a postal card or a request in a separate envelope giving your name and address. This summary should be available in the latter part of the Spring of 1977.

Your assistance with this research is greatly appreciated. It is through the participation of individuals such as you that I gain greater knowledge and understanding of Thai attitudes and values concerning early childhood education.

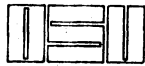
Sincerely yours,

*Yowamarl Ratanamarno*

Yowamarl Ratanamarno  
Graduate Student

*Frances Stromberg*

Frances Stromberg  
Professor



Oklahoma State University

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12 ตุลาคม 2519

เรียนเพื่อนเพื่อนที่รัก

ดิฉันกำลังทำวิทยานิพนธ์เกี่ยวกับทัศนคติของคนไทยในสหรัฐอเมริกาที่มีต่อการศึกษาระดับอนุบาลศึกษา (ATTITUDE OF THAI SUBJECTS IN THE UNITED STATES TOWARD EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS) ด้วยจดหมายของภาควิชาศึกษาดังนี้ เมื่อแสดงความต้องการของคนไทยในการส่งบุตรธิดาเข้าศึกษาในระดับอนุบาลศึกษาในประเทศไทย

ดิฉันขอให้ท่านโปรดอ่านคำแนะนำโดยละเอียดก่อนตอบคำถาม ดังนี้ ก. สำหรับสามี-ภรรยา โปรดแยกตอบแบบสอบถามโดยมีต้องตัดลอกคำตอบของ แต่ละฝ่าย เพื่อข้อมูลที่ดีจะทำให้เห็นถึงทัศนคติและความต้องการอันแท้จริงของท่าน และเพื่อความเที่ยงตรงของวิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้ ข. ศัพท์ทางวิชาการได้แนบคำอธิบายเพื่อความสะดวกของท่านในการตอบแบบสอบถามมา ณ. ที่นี้ด้วย

หลังจากตอบแบบสอบถามเสร็จเรียบร้อยแล้ว โปรดส่งคืนที่คุณ \_\_\_\_\_ หรือส่งโดยตบถึรดิฉันตามที่ข่มหน้าของและคิดแสดมป้ใจ้เรียบท้อยแล้ว โปรดส่งแบบสอบถามคืนในวันที่ 20 ตุลาคม 2519 หรืออย่างช้าไม่เกินวันที่ 6 พฤศจิกายน 2519

ดิฉันขอขอบพระคุณที่ท่านได้ให้ความช่วยเหลือในครั้งนี้เป็นอย่างสูง

ขอแสดงความนับถือ

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