
The New Workforce Generation: understanding the problems facing parental involvement in Jordanian kindergartens

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ABSTRACT This study aimed to investigate the problems facing parental involvement in Jordanian kindergartens from the parents' perspectives. A 36-item questionnaire that addressed five domains was designed by the researchers and distributed among the study participants. The study sample consisted of 297 parents of kindergarten children from various kindergartens in Amman. The results reveal that the main problem facing parental involvement was related to the kindergarten principals, followed by problems related to the kindergarten teachers, while the kindergarten facilities were the least serious problem. Also, the results indicate that there were statistically significant differences only with problems related to the kindergarten instructional program domain with regard to the parents' gender, while there were no differences attributed to the educational and economic levels of the parents. Based on these findings the researchers address a number of suggestions and recommendations for enhancing parental involvement in Jordanian kindergartens.

Introduction

Parental involvement in preschool education is essential for children's success in kindergartens. The evidence for the benefits of home-schooling as a result of parents being involved in their children's learning activities is overwhelming. The growing body of research studies has demonstrated that parents' involvement in their children's learning activities in kindergartens and in home-schooling situations positively affects their children's achievement in kindergarten (Hannon, 1995; Huss-Keeler, 1997; Bakker et al, 2007), boosts their academic self-confidence (Gonzalez-Pienda et al, 2002; Edwards, 2003; Hung, 2005), increases their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and directs them towards mastery goal orientation (Gonzalez-DeHass et al, 2005), facilitates their literacy development (Saracho, 1997; Berger, 1998) and positively influences children's later school competence as their parents' instruction is likely to remain deeply rooted in their memories even after they leave school (Miedel & Reynolds, 2000).

In recent years, the Jordanian government has paid great attention to preschool education and home-schooling. In July 2003, the Ministry of Education in coordination with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) launched Jordan's Education Reform for the Knowledge Economy (ERfKE) program. In addition to achieving other objectives, the education reform project resulted in launching the Parental Involvement Initiative, which fundamentally aspires to change

the relationship between parents and the educational system, with children as the main beneficiaries (Kaga, 2007). The Ministry of Education-USAID Parental Involvement Initiative aims to empower Jordanian parents to actively get involved in the education of their preschool children in kindergartens. The initiative seeks to acquaint kindergarten parents with teaching methods, how to get involved in kindergarten activities and how to take responsibility for the education of their children in kindergartens. The initiative's agenda has been circulated among all Jordanian private and public kindergartens in the hope of encouraging parents to get involved in the education of their preschool children (Kaga, 2007).

In recent years, Jordan, with the generous assistance of international organizations such as UNICEF, UNESCO and USAID, has achieved remarkable strides in the field of early childhood education (ECE). The government's five-year ERfKE program (2003-08) has paid much attention to developing kindergarten education in the kingdom and has placed it at the forefront of the education system. A report conducted by UNESCO in early July 2007 revealed that the gross enrolment rate of children in kindergartens was 37.9% in the academic year 2004/05, of whom 95% attended private kindergartens and 5% attended public or government-run kindergartens. The report also indicated that the percentage of children in preschool education in Jordan is higher than the average for the Arab states (16%), higher than the world average (37%), but far below the average for developed countries (77%) (UNESCO, 2007). However, an earlier report conducted by UNICEF in 2000 revealed that the gross enrolment rate of children in Jordanian kindergartens was 28.5% of the country's preschool population (UNICEF, 2000). The UNESCO report has shown that the gross enrolment rate of kindergarten children is increasing rapidly.

Significance of the Current Study

Parents' involvement in developing their children's learning can be either school-based or home-based (Hannon, 1995). Children need their parents to be involved not only in their home-based learning activities, but also in kindergarten-based learning activities, in which they should assume a teaching role in their children's learning. Preventing parents from undertaking this role could negatively affect the home-kindergarten relationship and, thus, children's development and learning as well.

During the last two decades, social life in Jordan has witnessed radical changes as a result of the increase in the number of working women, and this has led to an increasing demand for kindergartens. Jordanian citizens have come to realize that education is important for their children. Thus, they have started sending their children to kindergartens with the aim of ensuring their children will be more successful at school than their counterparts who have not received a preschool education. Despite this increased awareness of the importance of preschool education, parental involvement in kindergarten programs is still quite limited. There is a lack of research addressing parental involvement in kindergartens (Owdeh et al, 1987; Al-Sourour, 1999). It seems that the status of parental involvement in Jordanian kindergarten programs has not been considered and no clear answer is available to the reasons behind excluding the involvement of parents in kindergarten programs.

In view of the paucity of studies on parental involvement in Jordanian kindergartens, this study is the first to try to explore the problems facing parental involvement from the viewpoints of Jordanian kindergarteners' parents. This study focused on the problems facing kindergarten-based activities in which parents could participate in their children's learning. This could encourage other researchers to conduct further studies in this field in Jordan and other countries in the world. Additionally, this study hopes to provide valuable information for decision makers and assist them in making changes in the involvement of parents in Jordanian kindergarten programs.

Theoretical Framework

Parents' regular participation in their preschool children's learning in kindergarten programs contributes immensely to developing their children's learning abilities, boosting their academic self-confidence, and improving the relationship between the parents and the kindergarten teachers who teach their children (Lynch et al, 2006). Moreover, children of home-schooling parents show more

positive attitudes towards kindergartens and learning than children of non-involved parents (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007). Research suggests that parental involvement is useful for students of all ages in general and for preschoolers in particular. Parental involvement in kindergarten education not only enhances children's cognitive abilities and school achievement, but it also develops their social awareness, boosts their emotional involvement in school life and helps modify their undesirable literacy behaviors (Allen & Daly, 2002; Lynch et al, 2006). Scott (2002) states that: 'It is important for children to feel that parents and teachers are working together for their benefit. Children are often proud that parents are involved in the school'.

The benefits of parental involvement are not limited to the children. It has positive effects on parents' attitudes towards kindergartens and on their abilities to help their children learn. Parental involvement restores confidence among parents in their children's schooling. Moreover, it helps the home-kindergarten relationship to be as effective as possible in its efforts to help children succeed in their learning (Morrow, 2004). Successful kindergartens are the ones that encourage more parental involvement in the implementation of their instructional programs and strive to strengthen the ties between parents and teachers (Epstein, 1995; Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007).

There are different ways to involve parents in developing their children's learning. First, there is involvement in kindergarten activities, which means parental participation in educational activities both at kindergarten and at home. Second, there is cognitive-intellectual involvement, which entails parents coordinating and participating in their children's learning activities. Third, parental involvement includes the parents' awareness of what is going on with their children at school (Crolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994).

The question that should now be raised is: 'How can we make parental involvement happen?' Recently, researchers have called our attention to the nature of the teacher-parent relationship, in which parents and teachers should see each other as partners in developing children's learning. Hence, it should be the educators' responsibility, particularly teachers of young children, to help parents undertake this responsibility so that they can play their role in a successful way (Moles, 1993; Hannon, 1998; Wright Springate & Stegelin, 2005).

Despite all the interest in involving parents in kindergarten programs, we have to face the fact that not all parents are actively involved in the kindergarten setting. Based on literature written in this area, a number of researchers have found that there are many problems which could influence parental involvement. One of these problems facing parental involvement is a shortage of time. Researchers have found that parents have little time to take part in preschool activities (Cuckle, 1996). Parents need to work outside the home to meet life's challenging financial needs. Moreover, poverty and illiteracy are considered barriers to parental involvement (Christie et al, 1997). Additionally, a reason why parents are not engaged with their children's learning activities may be due to their low income (Huss-Keeler, 1997; Hung, 2005; Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007; Suizzo & Stapleton, 2007).

The kindergarten staff, including principals and teachers, may also play a role in excluding parental involvement by denying parents access to the classroom and dissuading them from taking on a teaching role with their children. Hannon (1998) points out that a number of teachers fear that if parents become involved they will do more harm than good and it is safer to distance them from teaching their children. In their study, Hannon & James (1990) found that preschool teachers felt that parental involvement in preschool education could have negative effects on children's learning development as parents use inappropriate methods in teaching children.

Hoover-Dempsey et al (2002) point out that teachers who feel uncertain of their skills in dealing with traditional families may struggle even more as they consider trying to work productively with families perceived as different from envisioned norms on a number of levels.

Hannon (1998) assumes that there are unintended practices employed by teachers that exclude parents, such as lack of information about the school's program, dissuading parents from taking on a teaching role with their children and, if parents do help in the classroom, steering them away from direct participation in classroom activities (for example, to washing paint pots or baking) and away from working with their own children. When interviewing 60 teachers about their attitudes towards parental involvement in early reading instruction, Linek et al (1997) found that teachers' perceptions of the role of parents in literacy education seemed to restrict involvement and limit dialogue between parents and teachers.

Parental exclusion or involvement in kindergarten programs is not just a matter of the principal's or teachers' beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. Parents have responsibility too and could exclude themselves by not being sufficiently confident to begin or create an opportunity for involvement (Hannon, 1995). A number of parents cannot always attend school meetings, particularly teacher–parent meetings (Christie et al, 1997). Another significant reason for non-involvement is that a number of parents may not understand that they can play a critical role in their child's learning development (Christie et al, 1997). Parents may not feel welcomed at school. Moreover, a lack of understanding of traditional families on the part of the school system may be one of the reasons for the lack of parental involvement in school activities (Huss-Keeler, 1997). Leitch & Tangri (1988) rank the lack of planning and mutual understanding between teachers and parents as the greatest barrier to home–school collaboration.

Parental exclusion is also due to the fact that many parents do not have a great deal of interest in the school or their children's education (Hannon, 1995). In other cases, for those parents who as teenagers may have dropped out of school early, they do not advocate cooperation with schools (Morrow, 2004). The parents may be illiterate or have poor literacy skills (Christie et al, 1997), or they may have language barriers when communicating with teachers. This could definitely make communication difficult as well as embarrassing for the parents.

The aforementioned problems could negatively affect parental involvement and even make it impossible. Principals and teachers are viewed as important contributors to help parents understand their teaching roles in kindergartens. Campbell (1992, p. 3) states that: 'ultimate responsibility for creating harmony between the school and the home rests with the principal'. Without being encouraged and supported by the principal and teachers to be involved in the kindergartens activities and to understand their role, parents will find it very difficult to fulfill their expected role effectively.

Because of the importance of parental involvement to early childhood programs, parental involvement has been considered as a main part of early literacy programs (Hannon, 1998). Thus, educators and child advocates have changed their view of the involvement of parents from the notion of 'parent as helper' to 'parent as partner' by developing ways to share decision making with parents (Learning Point Associate: Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2006). It is important for kindergartens to emphasize that parents are partners of the kindergarten, and that their involvement is needed and highly valued.

Research Questions

The present study is an attempt to fill the gap in the existing literature by investigating the problems facing parental involvement in Jordanian kindergartens as perceived by parents of kindergarten children. More specifically, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What are the main problems facing parental involvement in Jordanian kindergartens from parents' perspectives?
2. Are there statistically significant differences among parents' perceptions of the problems facing their involvement in kindergarten programs that are attributed to the following variables: (a) gender, (b) educational level and (c) income level?

Limitations of the Study

The study is restricted by some limitations that hinder the generalization of its results. First, the study sample included home-schooling parents from only one city in Jordan (Amman). Second, the study utilized one instrument – mainly the questionnaire – whereas other instruments such as interviews and observation reports were not used. Third, the questionnaires were sent out to the preschoolers' parents by the kindergartens' staff and teachers via the children, and the researchers had no direct contact with these parents due to cultural considerations as it was very difficult for them to interview the parents in their own homes.

Methodology

Study Participants

The population of the study consisted of all the parents of kindergarten children enrolled in 561 private kindergartens in Amman (the capital and the largest city in Jordan). The study sample was randomly selected from 30 kindergartens, representing 5% of the kindergarten population. Ten children, five males and five females, were selected from each kindergarten and their parents were sent the questionnaire. Consequently, 297 parents were involved in the present study, 45 of whom were fathers, while 252 were mothers. With regard to their educational level, 24 parents were at primary level, 59 of them were of secondary level, and 90 of them were at college diploma level, while less than half of the sample were at university or postgraduate level ($n = 124$). Also, the parents came from diverse socio-economic backgrounds: the monthly income level of 117 of the parents was very limited (from 150 to 249 Jordanian dinars [JD]), the income level of 63 was limited (from 250 to 499 JD), 38 were of a medium income level (from 500 to 1000 JD) and the income level of 79 was high (more than 1000 JD).

Instrumentation

In order to investigate the main problems facing parental involvement in Jordanian kindergartens, a survey questionnaire was designed by the researchers. A comprehensive review of the literature concerning parental involvement in kindergartens worldwide was used as a corpus for the study and later as a source for designing the questionnaire. The final draft of the questionnaire consisted of 36 items rated on a five-point Likert-type scale (5 = to a very large extent, 4 = to a large extent, 3 = to some extent, 2 = to a small extent, 1 = not at all). The 36-item questionnaire consisted of five domains: seven items (1, 6, 10, 15, 21, 26, 30) assessing problems caused by kindergarten principals; 10 items (2, 7, 11, 16, 17, 22, 23, 27, 34, 35) assessing problems caused by kindergarten teachers; six items (3, 12, 18, 24, 28, 29) related to kindergarten facilities; five items (5, 9, 14, 20, 31) related to kindergartens' educational programs, and eight items (4, 8, 13, 19, 25, 32, 33, 36) assessing problems attributed to parents' beliefs. It is worth mentioning that most of the questionnaire items were deliberately related to teachers as previous literature on parental involvement has revealed that they are the cause of much of the parental exclusion in kindergartens worldwide (Hannon, 1995; Morrow, 2004).

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The initial draft of the study instrument was written in English. It was then translated into Arabic as the respondents were native speakers of Arabic and most of them did not have adequate knowledge of English. In order to ensure the validity of the questionnaire, only the Arabic version was handed out to a group of seven referees specializing in ECE at several Jordanian universities. Taking their comments into consideration, those changes deemed essential were made: some items were added and others removed. In order to estimate the reliability of the questionnaire, internal consistency measures were computed using the Cronbach's alpha method for each domain and for the total domains. Thus, the reliability coefficients were 0.81 for problems related to kindergarten principals, 0.89 for kindergarten teachers, 0.87 for kindergarten facilities, 0.71 for kindergarten programs, 0.88 for parents' beliefs and 0.73 for the total domains. These results meant that the reliability coefficients were satisfactory for the purpose of the study.

Before being distributed to the study sample, the instrument was piloted in four kindergartens chosen from the study population outside the original study sample. This was necessary since the research instrument had been translated into Arabic after initially being prepared in English. The questionnaire, which had been validated and reliability tested, was distributed to a group of 10 parents in the four kindergartens. The aim here was to have a preliminary judgment of the questionnaire items and to clarify their meaning, so that it would be possible to carry out necessary changes in order to make each item more effective. The participants were asked to respond to the questionnaire and to express their views, opinions and reactions. The length of time the participants were involved in responding to the questionnaire was tested as well.

Data Analysis

The survey questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The data collected were analyzed and then expressed through means and standard deviations. The t-test for the independent sample and the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used as the main statistical techniques in the study. The t-test was used to determine any statistically significant differences between parents' gender, whereas ANOVA was utilized to determine any statistically significant differences among parents with regard to their educational and economic levels.

Results

Results Pertaining to the First Research Question

The first research question addressed the main problems facing parental involvement in the activities of Jordanian kindergartens from parents' perspectives. In order to answer this research question, means, standard deviations and ranks were used.

As shown in Table I, the most serious problem kindergarteners' parents encountered while trying to get involved in the teaching of their children in kindergartens was the kindergarten's principal. This problem had the highest mean score (3.54), followed by problems created by kindergarten teachers, which ranked second with a mean score of 3.36. Next came problems related to the kindergarten's educational program and parents' beliefs, which had mean scores of 3.05 and 2.98 respectively. On the other hand, problems caused by lack of facilities and premises in kindergartens were ranked as the least serious problems that hindered parental involvement in kindergartens' educational activities with a mean score of 2.13.

Domain	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank
Problems related to kindergarten principals	3.54	0.73	1
Problems related to kindergarten teachers	3.36	0.61	2
Problems related to kindergarten program	3.05	0.67	3
Problems related to parents' beliefs	2.98	0.88	4
Problems related to kindergarten facilities	2.13	0.63	5
Totals	3.01	0.30	

Table I. The distribution of parents' responses to problems facing parental involvement in kindergarten programs in the study's domains.

Table II displays the items of the five domains in which parents were asked to report the extent to which they considered them as problems facing their involvement in kindergartens' educational programs. The table illustrates that the most serious problems were viewed as being those related to the kindergarten principals, where parents regarded traditional principals who refused to allow them to express their opinions about the kindergarten's educational program and the way their children learned as the biggest problem, with a mean of 4.09. With regard to the problems related to kindergarten teachers, the results show that the most serious problem for parents, with a mean of 4.25, was the teachers' fallacious belief that once parents take on a teaching role in the kindergarten, they do not teach their children in the 'right way'. Regarding kindergarten programs, the data indicate that the most serious problem for parents was the large number of children in each classroom, with a mean of 4.05.

Furthermore, the most serious problem related to the domain concerning parents' beliefs was that parents have no time to take part in kindergarten activities. Problems concerning the domain of kindergarten facilities were not very serious compared to others and they were ranked as being the least serious problems. The main problem listed in this domain was the belief that there was too little space in the classrooms, with a mean score of 3.06.

Parental Involvement in Jordanian Kindergartens

No.	Domain/Item	Rank	Mean	Standard deviation
<i>Domain 1. Problems related to kindergarten principals</i>				
1	Principals do not hold meetings with parents to explain the importance of their involvement in their children's learning.	2	3.87	0.83
2	Principals do not encourage parents to take part in kindergarten activities.	2	3.87	0.83
3	Principals do not allow parents to express their opinions about kindergarten programs and the way their children learn.	1	4.09	0.84
4	Principals do not cooperate with parents in helping them know how to teach their children at home.	5	3.37	1.03
5	Principals do not conduct parental involvement training workshops or seminars for caring parents.	6	2.75	1.37
6	Principals do not welcome parents in the kindergarten and do not listen to their opinions.	7	2.55	1.36
7	Principals show no interest in parents' suggestions and observations about the implementation of the kindergarten's instructional program.	4	3.76	1.01
<i>Domain 2. Problems related to kindergarten teachers</i>				
8	Teachers deny parents the opportunity to attend classes.	3	4.05	0.73
9	Teachers are not convinced of the benefits of parents' involvement in their children's learning.	5	3.35	0.55
10	Teachers underestimate the teaching methods parents use when teaching their children at home.	2	4.19	0.80
11	Teachers treat parents' estimations of their children's progress sceptically.	6	3.02	0.85
12	In conversation with parents, teachers use unexplained pedagogical terms.	10	2.51	1.00
13	Teachers consider parental involvement as interfering in their teaching practices.	8	2.71	0.97
14	Teachers lack intercommunication skills in dealing with parents.	9	2.65	0.98
15	Teachers dissuade parents from taking on a teaching role with their children at kindergarten.	3	4.05	0.73
16	Teachers believe that parents teach their children wrongly.	1	4.25	0.82
17	Teachers are not aware of the nature of the teaching role parents might assume in the kindergarten classroom.	7	2.84	1.07
<i>Domain 3. Problems related to kindergarten facilities</i>				
18	The kindergarten does not have enough space to accommodate parents visiting it.	3	1.93	0.66
19	The lack of space in the classrooms denies parents access to the classes.	1	3.06	1.20
20	The kindergarten has no conference room where meetings with parents could be regularly held.	2	2.26	0.84
21	The kindergarten does not issue a newsletter or brochure clarifying the importance of parental involvement.	3	1.93	0.66
22	The kindergarten lacks instructional aids that could be used for conducting training workshops for parents.	6	1.75	0.66
23	The kindergarten is a noisy environment for parents to visit.	5	1.87	0.60
<i>Domain 4. Problems related to kindergarten program</i>				
24	The preschool subjects taught in the kindergarten are difficult for children.	4	2.68	1.15
25	Kindergarten classrooms are overcrowded with children.	1	4.05	1.04
26	The kindergarten's schedule is overloaded	2	3.07	0.67
27	The daily kindergarten educational program is long.	5	2.46	1.12
28	The kindergarten program is restricted to academic skills.	3	3.02	0.91
<i>Domain 5. Problems related to parents' beliefs</i>				
29	Parents show no interest in getting involved in teaching their children in kindergarten.	8	2.00	0.94
30	Parents underestimate the importance of their role in being involved in the kindergarten's educational affairs.	7	2.20	0.90
31	Parents do not attend parent-teacher meetings in the kindergarten.	5	2.66	0.96
32	Parents have no time to take part in kindergarten activities.	1	3.81	1.22

33	Parents do not know how to get involved in the kindergarten program.	2	3.77	1.36
34	Parents lack the interpersonal skills needed for communicating with kindergarten principals and teachers.	6	2.54	1.11
35	Parents firmly believe that teachers hold full responsibility for their children's learning.	4	3.13	1.22
36	Parents are ignorant of the kindergarten's objectives, its mission and vision.	3	3.73	1.53

n = 297.

Table II. The distribution of parents' responses to problems facing their involvement in kindergarten programs in each item of the study's domains.

Results Pertaining to the Second Research Question

The second research question examined the statistically significant differences among parents in perceiving the main problems facing their involvement in kindergartens' educational programs. The following variables were investigated: (a) the parents' gender, (b) their educational level and (c) their economic level. In order to examine the differences among parents due to the gender variable, the t-test was utilized. Table III shows that there were statistically significant differences at $p < .05$ among parents in perceiving problems hindering their involvement in teaching their children in kindergartens due to the parents' gender. These differences were noticed only in the kindergarten program domain in favor of the mothers. Regarding the differences attributed to the educational level and economic level variables, the one-way ANOVA was utilized. The results of the one-way ANOVA show that there were no statistically significant differences at $p < .05$ among parents in perceiving problems facing their involvement in kindergartens' educational programs attributable to their economic or educational levels.

Domain	Gender	No.	Mean	Standard deviation	t	p
Kindergarten program	Fathers	45	2.8622	0.33527	-2.132	0.034*
	Mothers	252	3.0952	0.71866		

*Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Table III. The differences between parents in perceiving the problems facing parental involvement in kindergarten programs due to the parents' gender.

Discussion

This study was conducted to isolate the main problems facing parental involvement in kindergartens' educational programs as perceived by parents and to examine the statistically significant differences among parents in perceiving these problems that are attributable to their gender and educational and economic levels. The findings of the study indicate that the most serious problem for parents relates to the role and attitude of kindergarten principals, with a mean score of 3.54. This could be due to the fact that kindergarten principals in Jordan place little value on parental involvement in kindergarten programs as they have no convictions about the importance of parental involvement or they are not aware of the importance of parents being involved in their children's learning. This finding could also be attributed to the kindergarten principals' cultural misconceptions of the role parents can play in home-schooling their children. Such kindergarten principals, who often lack a theoretical background in ECE, believe that the role of the kindergarteners' parents is to pay their children's kindergarten fees and cater for their needs – mainly nutrition, clothing and general health – without being involved in their education. This is a major problem. Campbell (1992) points out that the principal has the ultimate responsibility for creating harmony between the school and the home. By preventing parents from taking on any teaching role in their kindergartens, such principals play a critical role in parental exclusion.

The second problem for parents related to the kindergarten teachers, with a mean score of 3.36. This result is similar to the findings of the majority of previous research in the area, indicating that parents feel that teachers regard them as lacking in knowledge about the various aspects of their child's education (Hannon & James, 1990; Cuckle, 1996; Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2002).

According to Cuckle (1996), exclusion of parents results in the false assumptions made by teachers about both parents' knowledge and behaviors. Parental exclusion by teachers could also be due to the fact that teachers may consider parental involvement as a kind of interference in their teaching practices; therefore they deny them the right to get involved in their children's learning. Another possible reason could be that most kindergarten teachers have cultural misconceptions about home-schooling and they underestimate parents' attempts to get involved in their children's learning. They believe that parents are not qualified enough to assume teaching roles in kindergartens (Al-Khateb, 1985). These cultural misconceptions are based on incorrect stereotypes of parents' ability to teach their children in kindergartens and the teachers' unawareness of the effectiveness of the new trends of home-schooling in helping kindergarteners learn better.

Problems related to the kindergarten's educational program were found to be ranked third by parents, with a mean score of 3.05. This is perhaps due to principals' underestimation of the importance of home-kindergarten cooperation in carrying out kindergartens' educational programs. Indeed, the programs in most Jordanian kindergartens place too much emphasis on academic skills and instructionally oriented activities and materials which reflect a traditional view of early childhood learning. Jordanian kindergartens are overcrowded. The large number of kindergarteners per class negatively affects the effective implementation of the teaching and learning process which is usually carried out utilizing the 'play preschool strategy'. What makes the situation worse is that kindergartens in Jordan lack school supervisors on the grounds that kindergarten education in the country is a non-compulsory stage of education and is still limited and viewed as ineffective (Al-Sourour, 1999).

Next, problems related to parents' beliefs about education were regarded as being problematic, with a mean score of 2.98. This result is similar to the findings of Cuckle (1996). This could be related to parents feeling inadequate about educational issues. Moreover, some parents have misconceptions about the kindergarten's primary objectives. This may be due to the lack of cooperation between the home and kindergarten. Therefore, kindergartens should always encourage parents to take part in teaching their children. According to Moyer et al (1987), parental involvement is vital for the parents' thorough understanding of the aims of the kindergarten. Another possible reason could be due to the fact that parents trust teachers' teaching methods since they consider the teacher as a qualified person who has received teacher education at university. This justification is supported by Cuckle's (1996) work, which found that parents indicated that the main teaching in the kindergarten should be the responsibility of the kindergarten itself, which employs competent and highly qualified teachers. Indeed, parental involvement is a new field in the education system in Jordan, and both parents and teachers do not yet know their roles regarding parental involvement.

The least serious problem facing parental involvement as perceived by parents was related to kindergarten facilities, with a mean score of 2.13. This problem, however, has not been considered as a serious problem because the vast majority of kindergartens in Jordan are run by the private sector, in which adequate funding is available to provide more facilities. There were no statistically significant differences amongst all the domain of the student except of the kindergarten program domain in favor of the mothers.

This finding is to be expected as women in Jordanian society are more likely to have responsibility for taking care of their young children's health and education. Moreover, the mother is considered to be the person who usually contacts the kindergarten and inquires about her child's learning.

The results of the one-way ANOVA reveal that there were no statistically significant differences among parents in perceiving problems facing their involvement in teaching their kindergarten children that are attributable to their educational and economic levels. This means that parents, regardless of their socio-economic background and educational level, share the same views towards the problems facing their involvement in teaching their children in kindergartens. This could be attributed to the fact that most parents firmly believe that kindergartens deny them the opportunity to take responsibility for their children's learning. This could also be due to the fact that kindergarten principals and teachers underestimate parents' teaching practices because the parents have not been trained to be teachers.

Conclusions

The findings of this study indicate that parents of kindergarten children encounter a number of serious problems that hinder their actual involvement in taking on a teaching role in their children's kindergartens. These problems have been classified into different domains of varied seriousness. Suggestions have been made on how such issues might have risen with a view to enhancing parental involvement in Jordanian kindergartens. Many Jordanian parents are more than willing to get involved in kindergarten instructional programs and they are ready to do the best they can to do so. However, they simply do not know how to be involved and unfortunately receive no encouragement and support from kindergartens' principals and teachers to fulfill their aspirations. Kindergarten principals and teachers should bear the responsibility for inviting parents to participate in their children's learning activities. Also, they should exert tremendous efforts to engage parents in an educational partnership by providing various opportunities for parental involvement.

In order to encourage more parental involvement in Jordanian kindergartens, there is an urgent need to foster and enhance the mutual understanding and trust between kindergarten teachers and parents, since only effective cooperation between them can help children learn better. However, parents need to be trained in how to get involved in teaching their children in kindergartens and, by the same token, kindergarten teachers should be trained in how to involve the kindergarteners' parents in teaching their children (Morrow, 2004). Furthermore, Jordanian universities and colleges which grant a Bachelor's degree in ECE should offer courses for kindergarten trainee teachers on the home-kindergarten relationship, parental involvement and effective kindergarten teaching methods that can be used by parents in teaching their children in kindergartens. Indeed, parental involvement is a new field in the Jordanian education system, and both parents and teachers do not yet know their roles regarding this new trend. Hence, it is necessary to provide both parents and teachers with orientation and training.

It could be concluded that in the face of such problems, parents of kindergarten children have no chance of being involved in kindergartens. This would negatively affect the development of children's learning. The closeness and mutual trust between parents on the one hand and principals and teachers on the other are important for encouraging parents to get involved in their children's learning. It is even imperative for kindergarten teachers to identify the teaching role parents should assume from the very beginning of the school year. They should make it clear for them that their involvement is highly valuable and even necessary for their children's active learning and natural development. Instead of underestimating their teaching methods, teachers should appreciate parents for their willingness to spare no effort in teaching their children in kindergartens.

The study encourages parents to take an interest in their kindergarten children's learning and take responsibility, along with the kindergarten teachers, for the success of their children's learning.

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