

**A Survey To Determine Parents' Attitudes
Towards the Establishment of A Pre-School
in Progreso Village.**

Submitted to:

**Principal, Belize Teachers' Training
College in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for a Trained Certificate.**

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Chapter I Introduction

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Progreso is a village where mostly mestizos live and Spanish is the predominant language spoken. Presently there are two primary schools, one is under the Catholic management and the other is administered by the Adventist management. Because English is a major problem for children entering school, there is an urgent need for the establishment of an early stimulation program which would take the form of a pre-school. Establishing such institution would enhance children's social and emotional development and will facilitate motor and cognitive skills which would enable a smooth transition from home to pre-school centers to school.

The researcher became interested in the problem because she has experienced difficulties teaching children in the infant division and definitely believes that if those had attended a pre-school, learning would have been more meaningful for the children. Children's linguistic, mathematical and motor skills were not developed, therefore, the researcher had to teach children at a pre-school level instead. Blackstone's research in 1971 states that there was evidence of a realization that greater provision of education at the pre-school has a greater chance of developing and stimulating language and intellectual development thereby preventing later scholastic failure.

In Belize early childhood education was started as early as the 1940's. These programs were mainly designed to give children of those parents who could afford it, a head start in the academic subjects. Often children from as early as 2 years of age enrolled in these programs spending their day sitting passively trying to learn to read. Mrs. Priscilla Elliot and Mrs. Braddick were the first teachers who provided private nursery classes in the early part of this century. Mrs. Priscilla Elliot however, worked as a nanny for English Civil Servant, later expanding her program to include children of those Belizeans who could afford to pay for nursery school education. A pamphlet released by the Pre-School Unit states that in the 1950's many church state primary schools established kindergarten classes. It also states that in 1962 many nursery schools were forced to shut their doors because of the Education Ordinance which reinforced compulsory school age between 5 and 14 years. The Department of Education also demanded that the provision for teacher's salaries did not include kindergarten teachers.

One major goal of the pre-school is to provide developmental activities which prepares children ages 3 to 5 for formal school education. Here the child is better able to handle his or her physical, intellectual, social and emotional environment.

There are a number of training programs delivered by the Pre-School Unit personnel. The training is geared towards improving the level of competence of those in the field. Pre-school teachers receive basic training in Child Development and Behavior, Pre-School Education, Methodology, Techniques, mobilizing parents involvement in pre-school education and developing teaching/learning materials. The Belize Teachers College also offers an elective course for teachers desirous of pursuing studies in Early childhood Education which was introduced in 1980.

Statistics compiled in a pamphlet developed by the Pre-School Unit shows that in 1995 there were

115 pre-schools countrywide and are mostly located in the urban areas. This figure indicated that pre-schools are very limited in the villages and that there is an urgent need to develop more of these institutions which enhance children's learning.

Parents in Progreso have shown interest especially the young parents in the establishment of a pre-school in the village. Some have even gone to the extent of sending their children to pre-school in town since this is a vital facility that is nonexistent in the village.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

The researcher has observed that some children in the Orange Walk primary schools who attended pre-school are doing well in the infant classes. She believes that pre-school education contributes to the readiness for formal schooling of a child. Consequently children ages 5 to 6 who enter primary school in Progreso Village are not socially and emotionally ready. The teacher has to start teaching at a pre-school level instead of a primary level.

Many parents have approached teachers in the village requesting the establishment of a pre-school. Some reasons these parents have expressed are: that their children have expressed the desire to go to school, but are underage, the children are bored at home and a pre-school would be the perfect place to send them. These parents have realized the importance of sending their children to a pre-school since it enhances their communication skills and prepares them for future learning. Because of the interest parents have shown, the researcher has developed an interest as well to investigate parents' attitude towards the establishment of a pre-school in Progreso Village.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Through the study "A SURVEY TO DETERMINE THE ATTITUDES OF PARENTS TOWARDS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PRE-SCHOOL IN PROGRESO VILLAGE", the researcher hopes to get answers from the following questions:

1. Will parents see the need for the establishment of a pre-school?
2. Are parents and community willing to cooperate to make the center a functional one?
3. Are parents concerned for their children's education?
4. Is the community aware of the importance of education?
5. Are there sufficient children in order for the pre-school to be feasible?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

After completing the "SURVEY TO DETERMINE PARENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PRE-SCHOOL IN PROGRESO VILLAGE, it is hoped that it will be used by the Education Department to consider establishing a pre-school in the village. This survey will also enhance them in deciding if a pre-school would be feasible in the village.

The Pre-School Unit can also use this research as a record of some parent's attitudes towards pre-school. They can also keep this in mind when developing workshops for teachers and parents. The research will also sensitize the Pre-School Unit of the urgent need for a pre-school in the village.

Parents will be sensitized as to the importance of sending their children to pre-school. They will foresee how this will be of great benefit for their children's future learning, since pre-school should set a foundation to enhance their learning skills.

The community will also realize the importance of establishing a pre-school, since it is a head start towards the improvement of education in their community as a whole.

Other researchers doing similar research can use this paper as reference material.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. Pre-School: a center where the social and emotional development of a child is enhanced. It also facilitates their motor and cognitive skills.
2. Pre-School Child: is a child of ages 3 to 5

CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

Today's young children are in great need of teachers who are seriously committed to care for them. They need teachers who are knowledgeable of their development and to be able to apply that knowledge to improve their education.. We are living in a world that is getting complex day by day and as such children need teachers who can help them to make sense out of it.

A large percentage of the population in the world according to Krogh L.S. (1971) is comprised of young children. Unfortunately they do not have the power and need good teachers as their advocates to be recognized and valued for their uniqueness. Young children's cognitive, social and emotional and physical growth are very limited. There is a great need to understand the development they are facing. They need to be freed from limitations so that they can see the world in a different perspective.

One of the most difficult challenges in life is working effectively with young children. Studies have shown how teachers have managed to meet these challenges; however, there is no single method of how to go about meeting these challenges. Young children need knowledgeable early childhood educators to guide them in the most crucial period of their lives.

Children are unique individuals and as a result they all learn differently. Some learn simply by having the teacher share his/her knowledge to them. Others learn on their own or independently provided that they are guided during the process. And there are those who are innately good but are at risk of losing that goodness due to various influences in the environment in which they live. There are those children who are naturally ready to learn from their environment. The above views have been shared by adults at different times in history (Seefeldt, C, and Barbour N. 1990). The researcher agrees with the above statements since children are unique individuals and as such each one learns differently. It seemed that at certain points in history children's well being and educational needs were of great concern and at other times it was given little importance. Fortunately today child development and early education has been taken seriously and much research and thought has been put into it.

Our attitudes and beliefs are customs we have acquired from our ancestors. To become more aware of them, we have to learn more about their roots. In order to do this we must look back at history, for what we think today is part of our intellectual tradition. The early Greeks' views of infants and young children varied from state to state. Infanticide was a common practice especially where girls and infants with birth defects were concerned. As Mause de L.(1974) noted, "the further back in history one goes the lower the level of child care, and the more likely children are to be killed, abandoned, beaten, terrorized and sexually abused". The treatment that children received way back in one of the Greek states was to have education available for boys only which consisted of an intensive training to prepare them to become good warriors. In contrast girls were given training at home for domestic life. The researcher is totally against the early Greek views towards educating only infant boys and is sympathetic with the treatment children received at that point in time. The researcher believes that as human being everyone has a right to education be it male or female.

Plato (427?-347 B.C.) a Greek philosopher wrote his views about early childhood education. He suggested that, "from birth to age six learning should be informal, for knowledge which is acquired under compulsion obtains no hold on the mind. So do not use compulsion but let early education be a sort of amusement". In other words good health and good social habits were to be taught by attentive parents. The researcher agrees with Plato to a certain extent. Yes children should not be taught knowledge under compulsion. But apart from teaching children good health and social habits, children can also be taught to develop their motor skills.

Aristotle (384-322) also believed that early education was important and was thought of as the first writer to recognize the educational importance of individual differences. He argued that children are very talented and possess skills which definitely need to be enhanced. The researcher agrees with this statement. On the contrary the early Romans restricted the education to the basic necessities of life which were: fighting, farming swimming and riding. Quintilian (ad 35-97) an influential Greco-Roman thinker born in Spain but educated in Rome felt that, "in order to produce young adults of good character, education must begin at the age of one. Responsible parents and tutors, as well as carefully chosen companions were important because they set examples for impressionable youngsters". Quintilian emphasized that what the child learned while young and still at home would have life long implications. He made several recommendations to make lessons more lively and interesting along with motivation in the form of praise and to avoid corporal punishment. In order for the academic subjects to be balanced he stated that, "physical education would level it off and consequently promote good health". The researcher agrees with Quintilian's statement and also believes that present day teachers should avoid corporal punishment since there are other forms that children can be punished for unwanted behavior.

In his book School of Infancies Comenius Amos J. (1633) who was responsible for pulling out education including early childhood said, "Too much sitting still or slowly walking about on the part of a child is not a good sign to be always running or doing something is a sure sign of a sound body and vigorous intellect". He supports that children need to have hands on experiences made for learning to be meaningful. The researcher agrees with the above statement because hands on activities makes learning more meaningful. Today in Belize, The Belize Teachers' Training College advocates for these types of activities. Teachers are expected to create child centered lessons.

John Locke (1632-1704) an English philosopher was brought up in a puritan family, but his adult thinking was more influenced by the scientific revolution. Locke's ideas on early childhood represented new ways of looking at children and formed the basis for much of what we think today. He believed that infants are born with great potential for learning. Their minds, he said might be received as white paper or an empty slate, what they become as adults is then defined by their total education. Cleverly and Philips (1986) also believed that, "all the men we meet nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not by their education". In other words education is what makes man to act a certain way.

Pestalozzi J H (1746-1827) another philosopher believed that poor children have as much rights to education as their wealthier classmates. In the classroom Pestalozzi geared experiences so that they go from the concrete to the abstract. For younger children there were manipulative materials that gave children their first understanding of form language and number. The order he said would be to "steadily increase the range of their practical experiences from confusion and indefiniteness".

After the concrete lesson was clear the teacher would “supply them with words going a little further in preparation for the future”, Pestalozzi (1912). Much of what Pestalozzi did and recommended still influences what we do with young children today. He developed activities and materials that encouraged children to learn from the concrete to the abstract. If one were to observe a child in a pre-school (3 to 5 years) and later on in a standard three class (8 to 10 years) one would see the stages developing in the learning process. For example a four year old who shares cookies equally among a group can later on transfer that knowledge to pencil and paper problems provided they have something concrete to understand. For example when a child is asked to share 20 sweets among 4 of them.

Froebel F (1782-1852) an influential educator was concerned for children’s moral spiritual, physical and intellectual growth. It is this that led him to focus on their developmental needs just prior to entering school. Froebel shared Pestalozzi’s horror of what happened to five year olds who for the first time in their lives go to school. In his mind Froebel saw a house which would be attended by 3 to 5 year olds. He named it kinder (child) garten (garden). Today we know this institution as pre-school. In order for this pre-school to be successful Froebel knew that special teacher training would be needed as well as concrete materials developed appropriate to children’s interest. The idea still remains that children at an early age that is prior to entering primary school learn best through some form of play. The feeling that playing and working outdoors can lead to creativity and good health are practiced by today’s early childhood centers. In Belize this is also practiced in the various pre-schools country wide.

According to Dewey John (1859-1952) a well known philosopher, “children learn by doing and that participation in democratic decision making whether in or out of school develops rational problems solving abilities and social skills”. Dewey believed that learning by doing was important not just for pre-school children but for older students as well. The academic subjects needed to be taught in a way that children would be involved thus be more meaningful to them.

Montessori Maria (1870-1952) identified that bright and outgoing children were not developing as they should. This was as a result of what she believed to be a lack of adequate and proper sensory stimulation. Montessori (1870-1952) set out to create a set of materials based on a philosophy that has ever since molded the nature of pre-school education worldwide. In essence, Montessori also documented that “children preferred work to play if only they were given the right sort of materials in the right environment”. Work in this sense would involve a wide range of materials which would enable children to refine their skills and hence explore their environment. Some of the materials such as building blocks and number rods would help to prepare the child for academic subjects. While others such as brooms and dusters would allow children to explore the adult world on a child’s perspective. Montessori Maria (1870-1952) main ideas focus on children learning in a child centered environment where children regard work with things and materials as play and is essentially satisfying since it helps fulfil the needs of the children growing intelligence and sensory skills. Although in some ways the complete Montessori system may now seem a little rigid in places, there is no doubt that it has done a great deal in working towards a genuinely child-centered education.

Dewey(1859-1952) Froebel (1782-1852) Pestalozzi (1746-1827) and Montessori 1870-1952 are proponents of integrated experimental learning as being a key to early care and education. Early childhood entails the development of social competence which deals with developing children’s physical, social, emotional creative and cognitive skills.

The researcher believes that pre-schools are crucial and indispensable institutions that promote healthy development of a child. Indeed evidence is growing in many countries that young children who do not participate in these programs are likely to experience difficulty in school later on.

Chapter III Research Design

This study is a survey to determine parents' attitudes towards the establishment of a pre-school in Progreso Village. The instrument that was used is a questionnaire. Parents were selected randomly to conduct the questionnaire. The questionnaire was personally delivered to the parents by the researcher. At the delivery of the questionnaires the researcher personally explained to the sample the purpose of the survey and the steps to follow in completing the questionnaire. The questionnaire was made up of two sections. Section I was designed to gather biographical information such as: gender, age, educational status, occupation, number of children of pre-school age and marital status. Section II consisted of 18 items of which some were negative and positive statements. The statements focused mainly on the views, attitudes, cooperation and finance of parents towards the establishment of a pre-school. The data collected was analyzed and interpreted through the use of graphs, tables and descriptive analysis by the researcher. This thorough analysis indicated the parents' responses showing their attitudes towards the establishment of a pre-school in Progreso Village. The data that was analyzed and interpreted helped the researcher in formulating the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

THE SAMPLE

The population for this study consisted of 50 parents who live in Progreso Village. Some of them were male some were female and had children of pre-school age. Their ages ranged from 15 to 49 years and were either single, married, separated or common law. Their first spoken language is Spanish and their occupation ranged from teacher, driver, domestic, laborer, farmer to mechanic. The names of these 50 parents were written on pieces of paper and placed in a box. Thirty names were then randomly selected and served as the sample.

INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION

A questionnaire was used to gather information for the study. The questionnaires consisted of 24 questions. Section I consisted of 6 items designed to gather biographical information such as gender, age, occupation, educational background, number of children of pre-school age in the family and marital status. Section II contained 18 statements relevant to pre-school activities. Of the 18 statements 13 were positive statements and 5 were negative statements. The purpose of the positive and negative statements was to find out the attitudes of parents towards the establishment of a pre-school. These statements contained issues such as: parents' knowledge on the role of pre-school education and parents' attitudes towards pre-school.

The Likert Type Scale was used to determine parents' attitudes Each statement was followed with possible responses such as SD strongly disagree, D disagree, A agree, SA strongly agree. The respondents circled the letter of their choice after reading and comprehending each statement. The statements in the questionnaire were written in simple standard English to suit parents' reading ability and level of understanding.

METHOD OF COLLECTING DATA

The questionnaire was hand delivered to the parents at their respective homes in Progreso. The researcher dialogued with the parents to give further explanation of the questionnaire and addressed questions that parents expressed. The questionnaires were collected personally by the researcher a week later.

HOW DATA WAS ANALYZED

A thorough analysis of the data collected was carried out by the researcher. The data was presented on tables and bar graphs. Statements were analyzed separately. Responses obtained were tallied to get the frequency of responses.

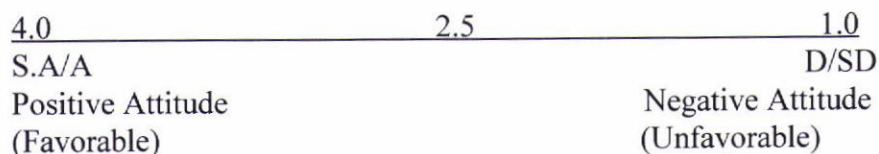
Section I of the questionnaire was analyzed on separate bar graphs to gather basic information about the respondents' background. The responses were tallied to obtain the frequency and corresponding percentages were calculated by multiplying the frequency of responses by 100 and dividing it into the total amount of respondents which was 30.

$$\text{Example: } \frac{N \times 100}{30} \quad N = \text{frequency of responses}$$

The biographical data was used to analyze the sample of parents background. Section II was designed to obtain information on parents attitudes towards the establishment of a pre-school in Progreso. This part used the Likert Type Scale. The choices for the responses were strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree. Each response was given a numerical value of 1 to 4 respectively. This section also contained positive and negative statements.

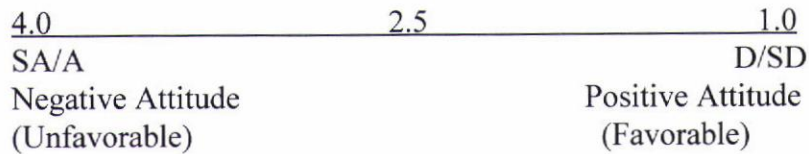
POSITIVE STATEMENTS

Positive statements gave a positive connotation of the attitude of parents towards the establishment of a pre-school. If the parents' responses to these statements are strongly agree or agree and the average score fell between 4.0 and 2.5, the median, then the attitudes were considered positive or favorable towards that aspect of pre-school. In contrast if the responses are strongly disagree or disagree and the average score of the responses fell between 2.5, the median and 1.0, then the attitudes were considered negative or unfavorable towards that aspect of pre-school. The diagram below illustrates it.



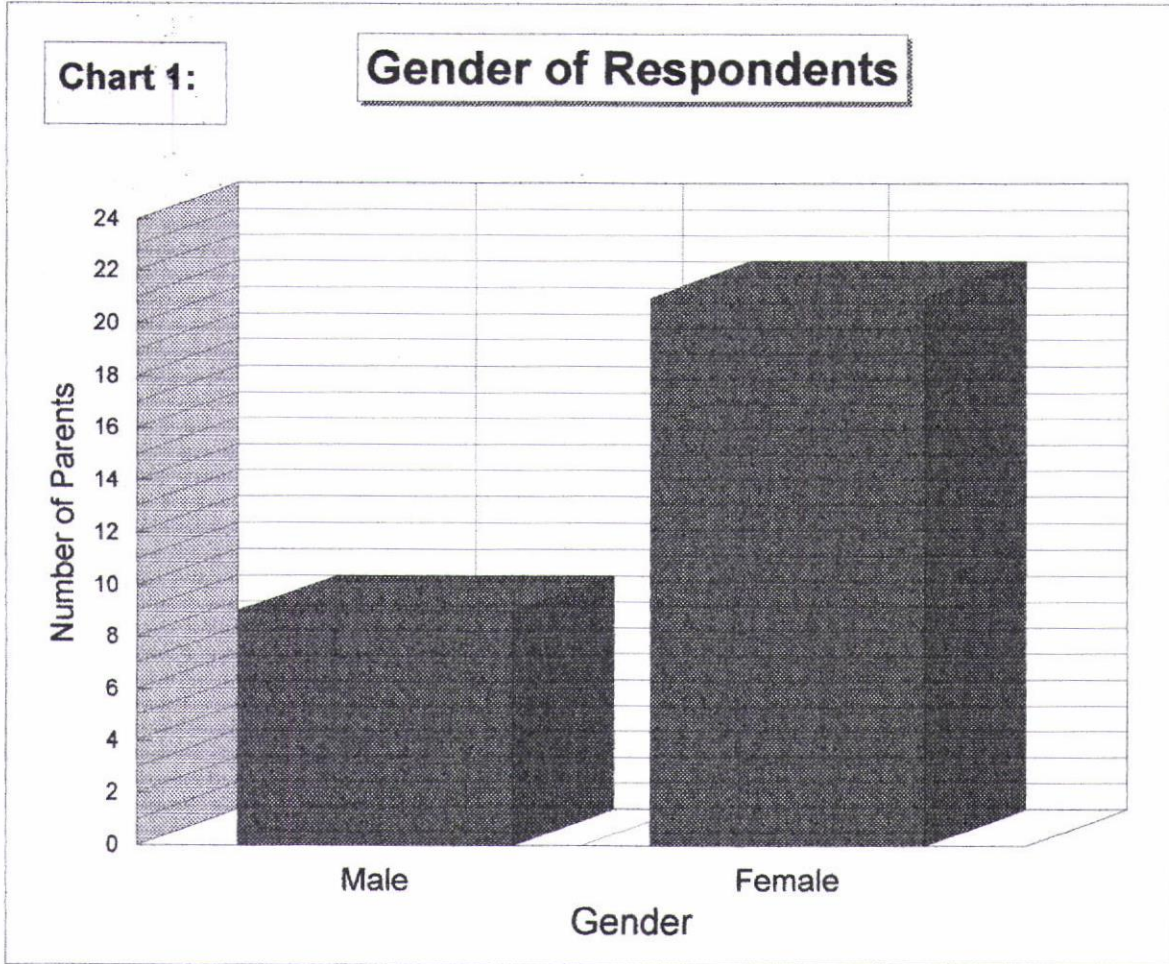
NEGATIVE STATEMENTS

Negative statements give negative connotations. If the parents' responses are strongly agree and agree and the average score fell between 4.0 and 2.5, the median, then this revealed an unfavorable or negative attitude towards that aspect of pre-school. In contrast, if the parents strongly disagree or disagree and the average score to the responses fell between 2.5 the median and 1.0, then the attitudes were considered positive or favorable towards that aspect of pre-school. The diagram below illustrates it.

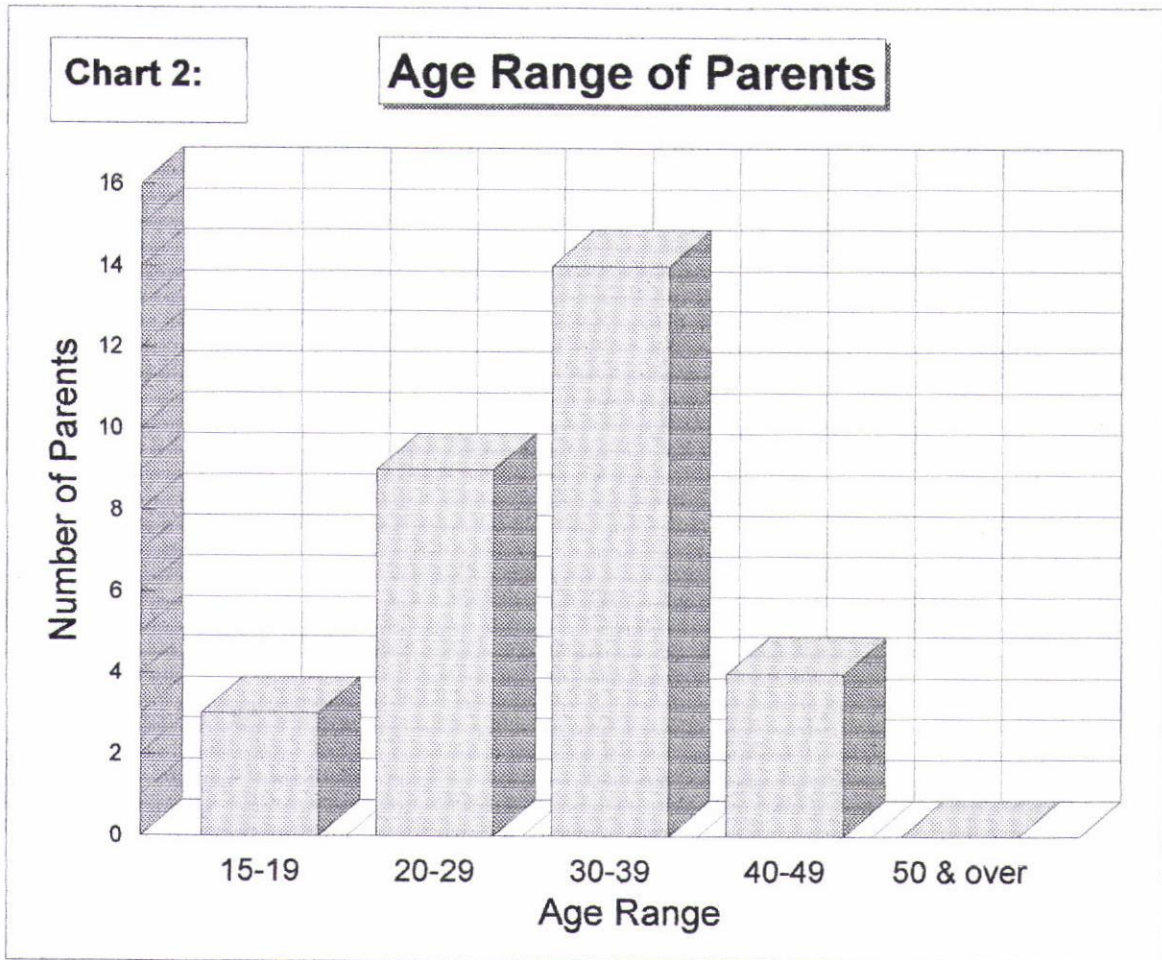


Chapter IV Presentation of Data Analysis

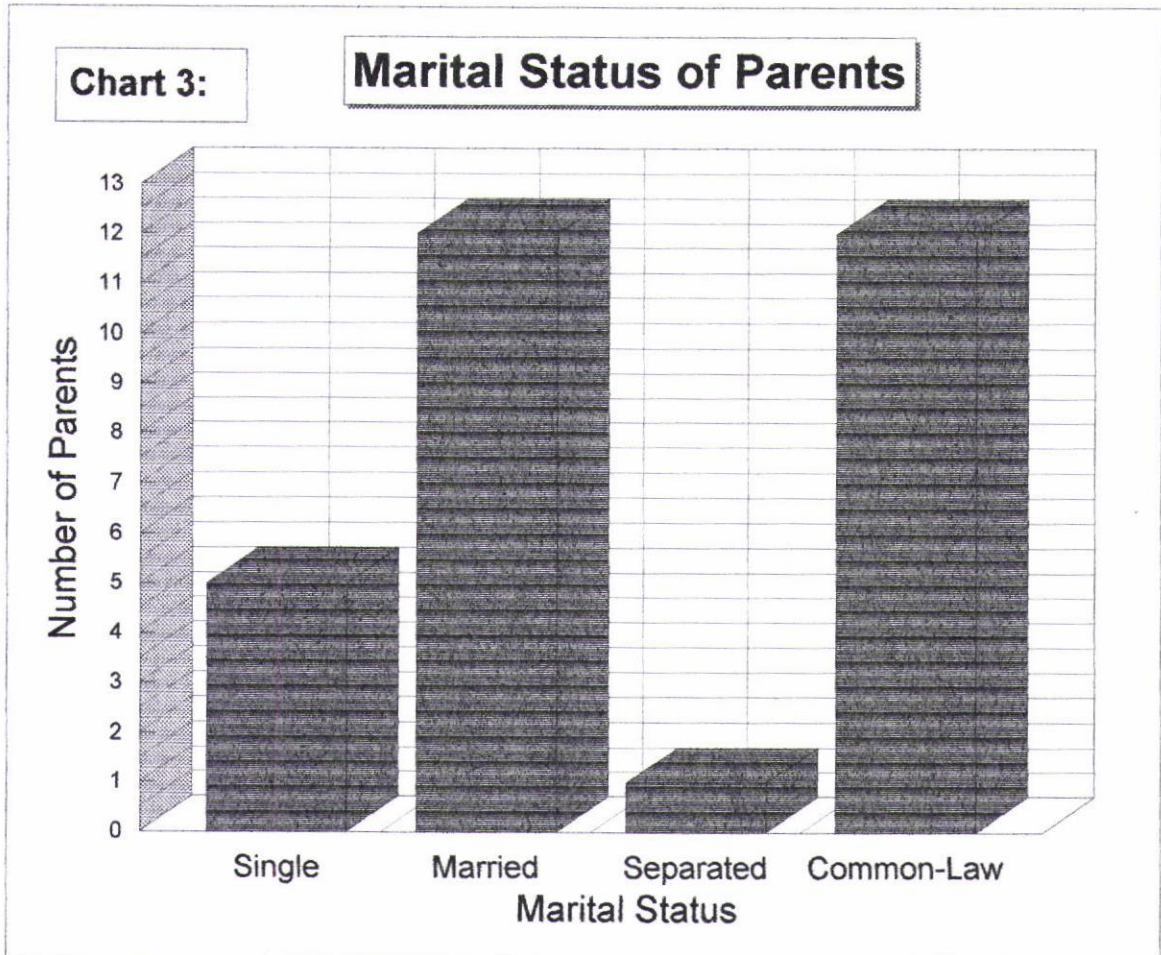
BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION



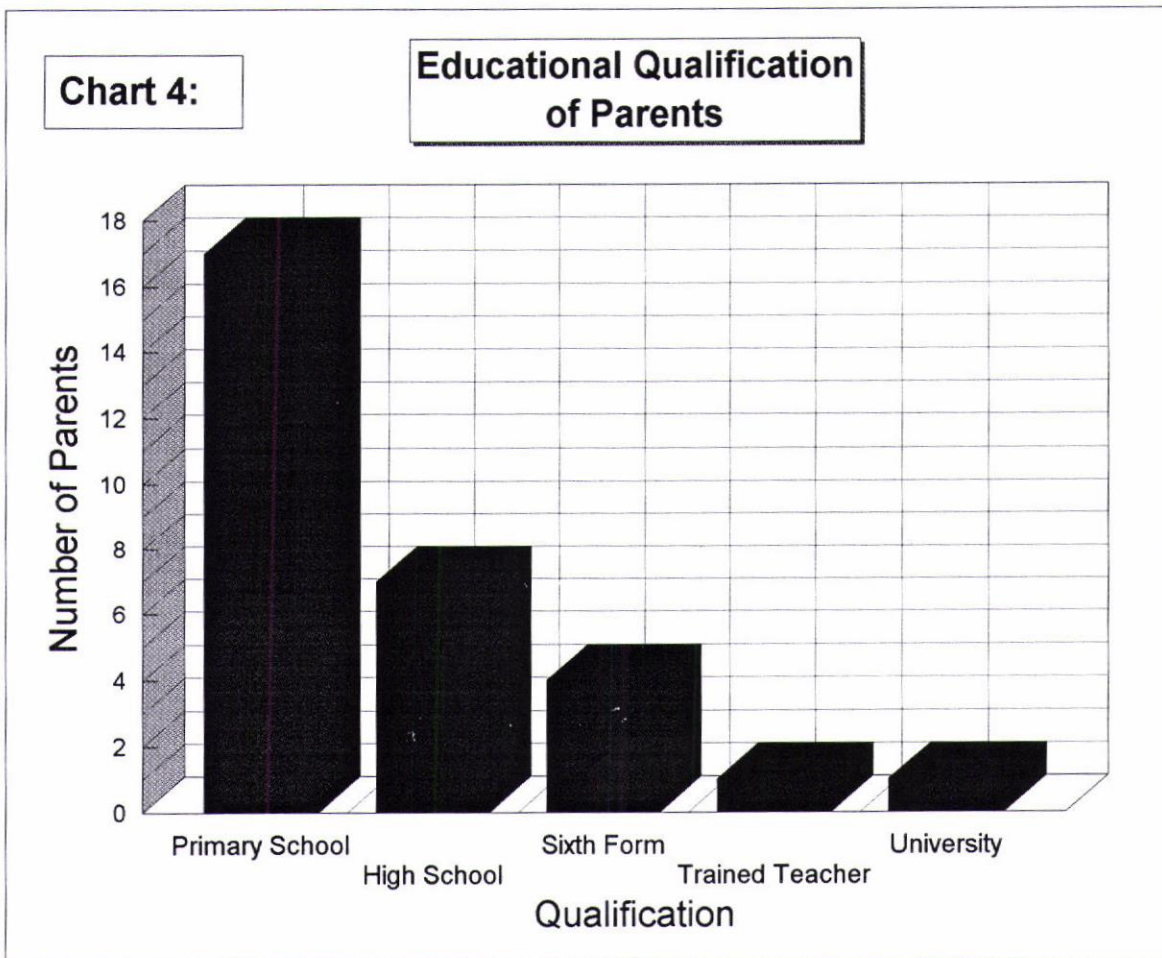
Graph 1 shows that 30% or 9 of the respondents were males while 70% or 21 of the respondents were females. This shows that the ratio of males to females in the sample was 13:7. There was a higher percentage of female parents than male parents.



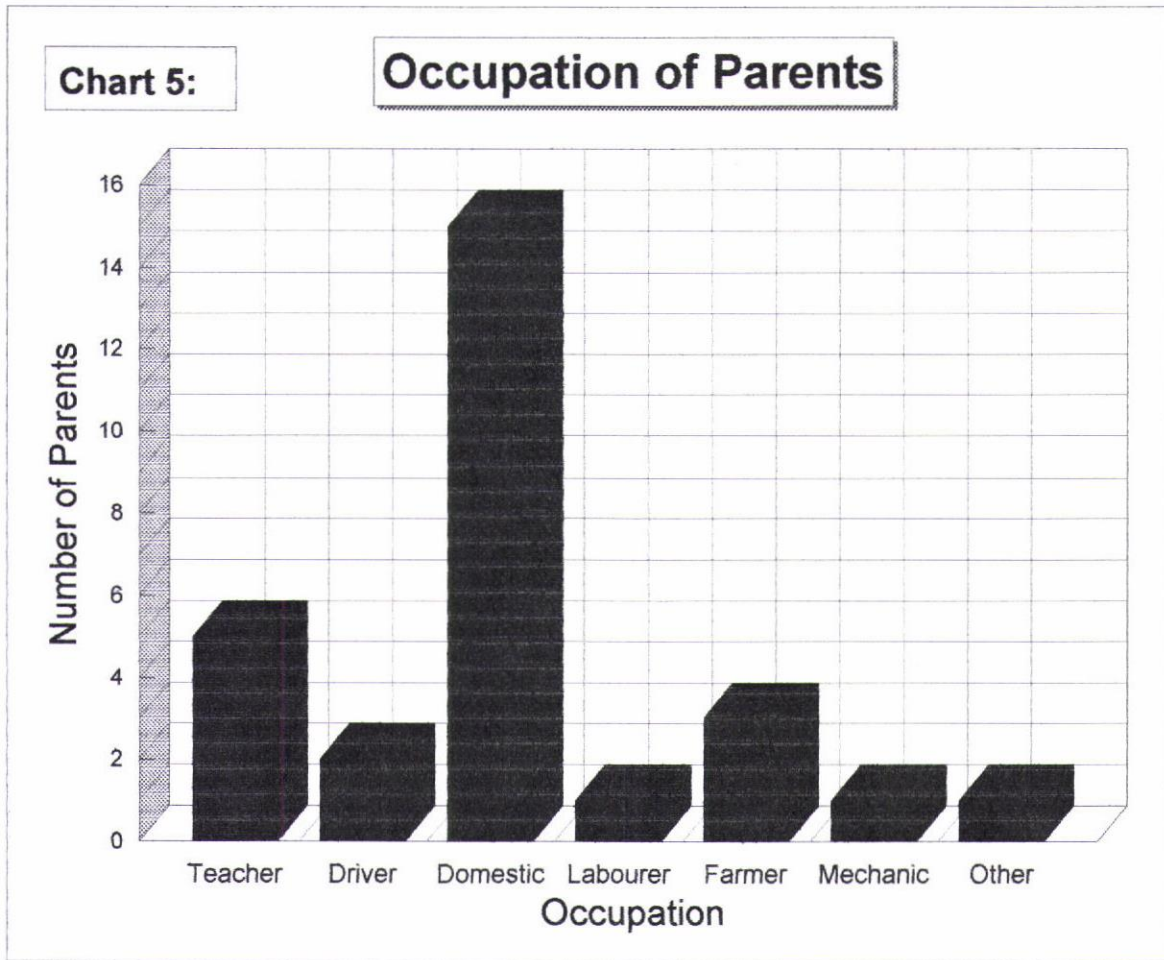
The graph shows that parents in the sample have an average range of 15-49 years. Three (3) parents are in the 15-19 years range, nine (9) parents are in the range of 20-29 years, fourteen (14) parents are in the range of 30-39 years, four (4) parents are in the range of 40-49 and more are in the range of 50 years and over.



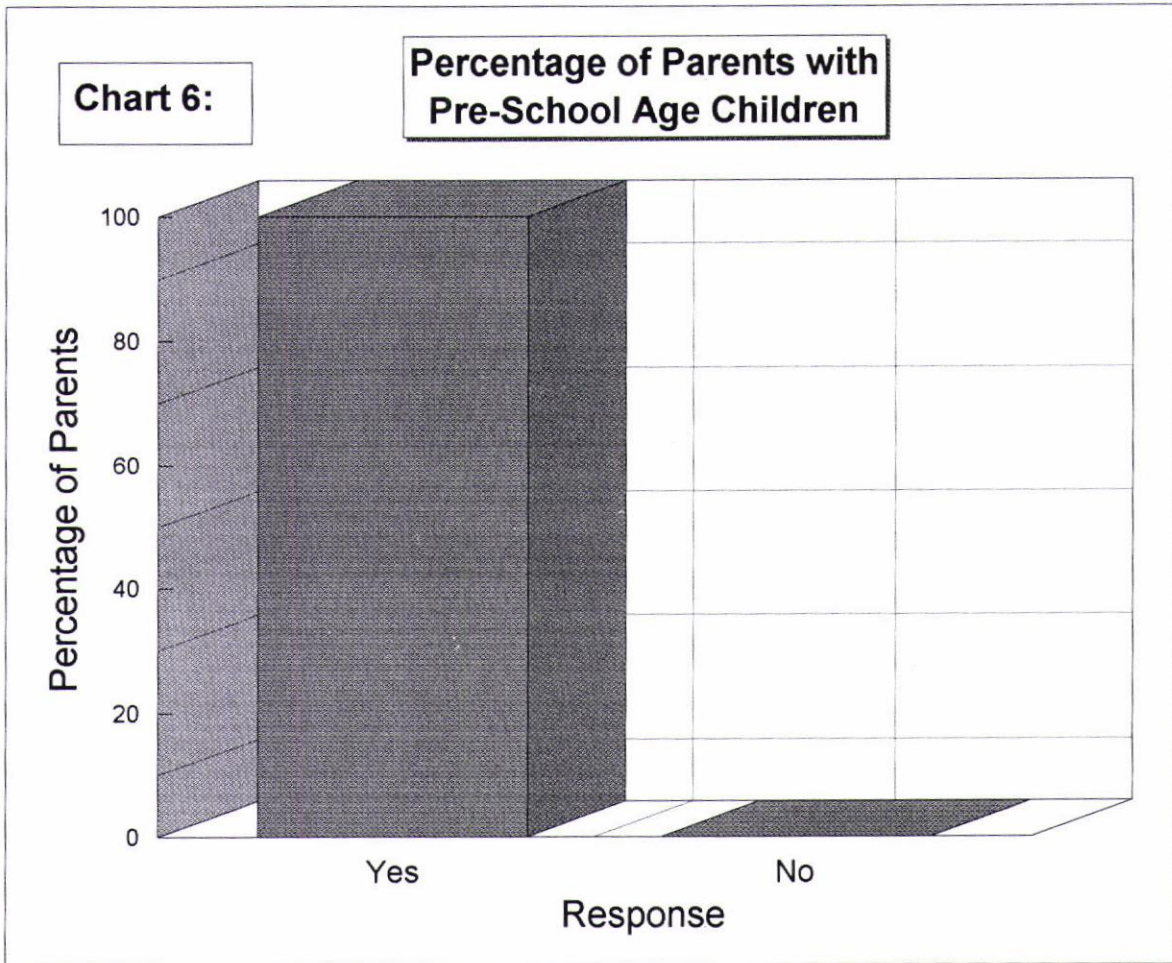
The graph shows that 16.7% or 5 of the parents are single, 40% or 12 of the parents are married, only 3.3% or 1 of the parents are separated and 40% or 12 of the parents are common law.



The bar graph indicates that the majority of parents possess a primary school certificate since 56.7% or 17 of the parents represented attended only primary school. Only 3.3% or 1 of the parents represented had a trained teachers' diploma while 23.3% or 7 of the parents had high school education. 3.3% or 1 parent had a University education and 13.3% or 4 parents had a sixth form education.



This bar graph shows that 16.7% or 5 of the parents were teachers, 6.7% or 2 of the parents were drivers, 50% or 15 parents were domestic, 3.3% or 1 of the parents was a laborer, 3.3% or 1 of the parents was a mechanic and 3.3% or 1 of the parents was classified as other.



This bar graph shows that 100% of the respondents who answered the questions, have children of pre-school age. This might be the reason why parents were interested in aspects concerning pre-school education.

Statement 1

There is an urgent need for a pre-school in Progreso

Table 1

	SD	D	A	SA	POS	NEG
No. of responses	0	0	21	9		
Percentage			70	30		
Points	1	2	3	4		
Total			63	36		
Total Points				99		
Average				3.3	✓	

Table 1 indicates that 21 respondents agreed with statement 1 and 9 strongly agreed. On the other hand none of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. The statement therefore obtained a total of 99 points and an average of 3.3 showing a positive response towards the statement. Table 1 also shows 63% agreeing and 36% strongly agreeing. This indicates that respondents feel that there is an urgent need for a pre-school in Progreso. It therefore reflects a positive attitude of parents towards the statement.

Statement 2

Children who attend pre-school waste their time.

Table 2

	SD	D	A	SA	POS	NEG
No. Of Respondents	10	19	1	0		
Percentage	33.3	63.4	3.3			
Points	1	2	3	4		
Total	10	38	3			
Total Points				51		
Average				1.7		✓

Table 2 indicates that 10 respondents strongly disagreed, 19 disagreed, 1 agreed and none strongly agreed. The statement obtained a total of 51 points and an average of 1.7 showing a negative response towards the statement. Table 2 also shows 96.7% disagreeing and 3.3% agreeing. This indicates that the respondents feel that children who attend pre-school do not waste their time. It therefore reflects a positive attitude of parents towards the statement. Children who attend pre-school according to Froebel do not waste their time since, “they develop their moral, spiritual, physical and intellectual growth.”

Statement 3

The only thing children do in a pre-school is play

Table 3

	SD	D	A	SA	POS	NEG
No. of Respondents	7	23				
Percentage	23.3	76.7				
Points	1	2	3	4		
Total	7	46				
Total Points				53		
Average				1.8		✓

Table 3 shows that 7 of the respondents strongly disagreed and 23 disagreed, while none of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. This statement received a total of 53 points and an average of 1.8 which reflects a negative response. The table also shows that 23.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed while 76.7% disagreed. This suggests that the mass of respondents have a positive attitude meaning that they feel that children do not only play in a pre-school.

Statement 4

I can teach my child everything that is taught in a pre-school.

Table 4

	SD	D	A	SA	POS	NEG
No. of Respondents	10	18	2	0		
Percentage	33.3	60	6.7			
Points	1	2	3	4		
Total	10	36	6			
Total Points				52		
Average				1.7		✓

Table 4 indicates that 10 of the respondents strongly disagreed and 18 disagreed while on the other hand, 2 agreed and none strongly agreed. This statement got a total of 52 points and earned an average of 1.7 signifying a negative response. The table also illustrated that 93.3% of the total respondents disagreed and 6.7% agreed. This suggests a positive attitude, indicating that most parents feel that they cannot teach everything to their child that is taught in a pre-school.

Statement 5

Teaching children to read and write should be the main objective of a pre-school.

Table 5

	SD	D	A	SA	POS	NEG
No. of Respondents		16	13	1		
Percentage		53.3	43.4	3.3		
Points	1	2	3	4		
Total		32	39	4		
Total Points				75		
Average				2.5	✓	

Table 5 indicates that none of the respondents strongly disagreed and 16 disagreed while on the other hand, 13 respondents agreed and 1 strongly agreed. This statement got a total of 75 points and earned average of 2.5 signifying a positive response. The table also illustrates that 53.3% of the total respondents disagreed and 46.6% agreed. This suggest a positive attitude, indicating that most of the respondents feel that teaching children to read and write should be the main objective of a pre-school.

Statement 6

A child learns best by playing.

Table 6

	SD	D	A	SA	POS	NEG
No. of Respondents	3	16	9	2		
Percentage	10	53.3	30	6.7		
Points	1	2	3	4		
Total	3	32	27	8		
Total Points				70		
Average				2.3		✓

Table 6 shows that 3 of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, 16 disagreed 9 agreed and 2 strongly agreed. This statement received 70 points and obtained an average of 2.3 which is a negative response. The table also shows that 63.3% disagreed and 36.7% agreed; thus indicating that most of the respondents have a negative attitude and feel that a child learns best by playing. This comes in agreement with Maria Montessori (1870-1952) who stated that, "children preferred work to play if only they were given the right sort of materials in the right environment."

Statement 7

A pre-school prepares children for formal education.

Table 7

	SD	D	A	SA	POS	NEG
No. of Respondents	0	1	22	7		
Percentage		3.3	73.4	23.3		
Points	1	2	3	4		
Total		2	66	28		
Total Points				96		
Average				3.2	✓	

Table 7 shows that none of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement and 1 disagreed while 22 respondents agreed and 7 strongly agreed giving the statement a total of 96 points and an average of 3.2 which is a positive response. The table also shows that 3.3% disagreed and 96.7% agreed. This means that the respondents have a positive attitude and feel that a pre-school prepares children for formal education. This seem to be in line of thinking with Quintilian who emphasized that, "what the child learned while young and still at home would have life long implications."

Statement 8

Children who attend pre-school learn to get along with others.

Table 8

	SD	D	A	SA	POS	NEG
No. of Respondents	0	1	20	9		
Percentage		3.3	66.7	30		
Points	1	2	3	4		
Total		2	60	36		
Total Points				98		
Average				3.2	✓	

Table 8 indicates that none of the respondents strongly disagreed and 1 disagreed with the statement while 20 respondents agreed and 9 strongly agreed giving the statement a total of 98 points and an average of 3.2 which is a positive response. The table also shows that 2% disagreed and 96% agreed, meaning that the respondents have a positive attitude and feel that children who attend pre-school learn to get along with others. This is supported by Dewey (1859-1952) who stated that schools develop rational problem solving abilities and social skills."

Statement 9

Pre-school children do better in primary school than those who do not attend pre-school.

Table 9

	SD	D	A	SA	POS	NEG
No. of Respondents	3	6	20	1		
Percentage	10	20	66.7	3.3		
Points	1	2	3	4		
Total	3	12	60	4		
Total Points				79		
Average				2.6	✓	

Table 9 indicates that 3 respondents strongly disagreed and 6 disagreed with the statements while 20 respondents agreed and 1 strongly agreed. The statement received a total of 79 points and obtained an average of 2.6 indicating a positive response. The table also shows that 30% disagreed and 70% agreed meaning that the respondents feel that pre-school children do better in primary school than those who do not attend pre-school. This shows a positive attitude.

Statement 10

If a pre-school is opened I will send my child.

Table 10

	SD	D	A	SA	POS	NEG
No. of Respondents	0	1	23	6		
Percentage		3.3	76.7	20		
Points	1	2	3	4		
Total		2	69	24		
Total Points				95		
Average				3.1	✓	

Table 10 indicates that none of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement and 1 disagreed, 23 agreed and 6 strongly agreed. This statement received 95 points and obtained an average of 3.1 which is a positive response. The table also shows that 3.3% disagreed with the statement and 96.7% agreed; thus indicating that most of the respondents have a positive attitude towards the statement. Most respondents agreed on sending their children to pre-school if one is opened.

Statement 11

I can afford to pay a contribution fee for my child to attend the pre-school.

Table 11

	SD	D	A	SA	POS	NEG
No. of Respondents	3	6	20	1		
Percentage	10	20	66.7	3.3		
Points	1	2	3	4		
Total	3	12	60	4		
Total Points				79		
Average				2.6	✓	

Table 11 shows that 3 of the respondents strongly disagreed and 6 disagreed. On the other hand, 20 of the respondents agreed and 1 strongly agreed. The statement obtained 7 points which gave an average of 2.6 indicating that the statement received a positive response. This shows that 30% disagreed with the statement and 70% agreed with the statement. This therefore suggest a positive attitude of respondents, meaning that most of them can afford to pay a contribution fee for their child to attend the pre-school.

Statement 12

I am willing to cooperate with the teacher in any activity concerning the pre-school.

Table 12

	SD	D	A	SA	POS	NEG
No. of Respondents	0	0	26	4		
Percentage			86.7	13.3		
Points	1	2	3	4		
Total			78	16		
Total Points				94		
Average				3.1	✓	

Table 12 indicates that none of the respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement. On the other hand 26 respondents agreed and 4 strongly agreed with the statement. The total points of 94 was obtained and the average earned was 3.1 signifying a positive response towards the statement. The table also shows that 100% of the respondents agreed. This implies that all respondents agreed with the statement and are willing to cooperate with the teacher in any activity concerning the pre-school.

Statement 13

A trained teacher is preferred to teach in a pre-school.

Table 13

	SD	D	A	SA	POS	NEG
No. of Respondents	0	0	18	12		
Percentage			60	40		
Points	1	2	3	4		
Total			54	48		
Total Points				102		
Average				3.4	✓	

Table 13 indicates that none of the respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statements. On the other hand, 18 respondents agreed and 12 strongly agreed with the statement. The statement obtained 102 points which gave an average of 3.4 indicating that the statement received a positive response. This shows that all respondents agreed with the statement. This therefore suggests a positive attitude of respondents, meaning that a trained teacher is preferred to teach in a pre-school. Froebel is in agreement with this statement when he says that, "special teacher training would be needed as well as concrete materials developed appropriate to children's interest.

Statement 14

Any teacher can teach in a pre-school.

Table 14

	SD	D	A	SA	POS	NEG
No. of Respondents	2	19	9	0		
Percentage	6.7	63.3	30			
Points	1	2	3	4		
Total	2	38	27			
Total Points				67		
Average				2.2		✓

Statement 14 indicates that 2 respondents strongly disagreed and 19 disagreed while 9 agreed and non strongly agreed. This statement got a total of 67 points and obtained an average of 2.2 indicating a negative response. the table shows that 70% disagreed and 30% agreed. This statement therefore has a positive attitude meaning that most respondents feel that not any teacher can teach in a pre-school.

Statement 15

Some qualities of a teacher are: loving, understanding and caring.

Table 15

	SD	D	A	SA	POS	NEG
No. of Respondents	0	0	18	12		
Percentage			60	40		
Points	1	2	3	4		
Total			54	48		
Total Points				102		
Average				3.4	✓	

Table 15 shows that none of the respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement while 18 agreed and 12 strongly agreed. The statement got a total of 102 points and obtained an average of 3.4 indicating a positive response. The table also shows that all respondents agreed. This shows that it has a positive attitude, indicating that most of the respondents feel that some qualities of a teacher are: loving, understanding and caring.

Statement 16

Parents should visit pre-schools regularly to check on their child's performance.

Table 16

	SD	D	A	SA	POS	NEG
No. of Respondents	0	0	21	0		
Percentage			70	30		
Points	1	2	3	4		
Total			63	36		
Total Points				99		
Average				3.3	✓	

Table 16 shows that none of the respondents strongly disagreed, non disagreed while on the other hand 21 of the respondents agreed and 9 strongly agreed. This statement received a total of 99 points and obtained an average of 3.3 which indicates a positive response. the table also shows that 0% disagreed and 100% agreed signifying a positive attitude, meaning that all respondents feel that parents should visit pre-schools regularly to check on their child's performance.

Statement 17

Children should attend pre-school regularly.

Table 17

	SD	D	A	SA	POS	NEG
No. of Respondents	0	0	20	10		
Percentage			66.7	33.3		
Points	1	2	3	4		
Total			60	40		
Total Points				100		
Average				3.3	✓	

Table 17 indicates that none of the respondents strongly disagreed, non disagreed and 20 agreed, 10 strongly agreed with the statement. This statement received a total of 100 points and an average of 3.3 which reflects a positive response. The table also indicates that 0% of the respondents disagreed and 100% of the respondents agreed. This suggests that the mass of respondents have a positive attitude, meaning that they feel that children should attend pre-school regularly.

Statement 18

Children who attend pre-school should arrive at 8:30 am and leave at 11:30 am.

Table 18

	SD	D	A	SA	POS	NEG
No. of Respondents	0	0	25	5		
Percentage			83.3	16.7		
Points	1	2	3	4		
Total			75	20		
Total Points				95		
Average				3.1	✓	

Table 18 shows that none of the respondents strongly disagreed and none disagreed. On the other hand, 25 of the respondents agreed and 5 strongly agreed. this statement received a total of 95 points and an average of 3.1 which reflects a positive response. The table also shows that 0% of the respondents disagreed and 100% agreed. this suggests that all of the respondents have a positive attitude, meaning that they feel that children who attend pre-school should arrive at 8:30 am and leave at 11:30 am.

Chapter V Conclusion and Recommendations

Blackstone (1977) research stated that, "there was evidence of a realization that greater provision of education at the pre-school stage might make a contribution to children's intellectual as well as their social and emotional development. The researcher strongly believes that children who attend pre-school have a greater chance of developing and stimulating language and intellectual development there by preventing later scholastic failure. The researcher was very much interested in finding out parents' attitudes towards the establishment of a pre-school in the village of Progreso. It was amazing to discover that the mass sample of parents who were included in the research were very much interested in Early Childhood Education. Parents' interest was highlighted in their strong agreement made in the positive statements of the questionnaire. Similarly, the research also revealed that the parents appear to understand to a certain extent what Early Childhood Education entails. Based on this knowledge parents seemed to be confident enough in affirming what it is they want to see happening in their pre-school. The researcher recommends that parents be given a thorough explanation of what a Pre-school Program entails before implementing one. In doing this I strongly believe that this would strengthen the parents belief about the program and will serve to clear some misconceptions that they might have about the program.

Elkind (1986) stated that "some Early Childhood Programs gear their teaching toward formal academic instruction. This is based on misconception about early learning." Evidence has shown that children learn best by playing. In fact Maria Montessori (1870) advocated that "children prefer work to play if only they were given the right sort of materials in the right environment." This research revealed that parents want a pre-school program where children learn through playing. therefore the researcher recommends that in the event that a person or the Government plans to establish a pre-school, they must ensure that the play-way method is implemented in the program.

The research also revealed that parents have some sort of knowledge about pre-school. It is very crucial that parents be informed what really goes on in a pre-school. In so doing they will get a good grasp of what should be happening in a pre-school. Therefore, the researcher recommends that workshops be organized by the Pre-school Unit in order to inform parents about the characteristics of a good pre-school.

The researcher is totally convinced that parents value the importance of a pre-school and as such are willing to cooperate and contribute in any activity concerning the pre-school. Hence, the researcher recommends that immediate steps be taken by the Government along with parents to work together in the preliminary preparation to establish a pre-school in Progreso Village. The researcher also requests to parents who display interest in establishing the pre-school to seek help from Government through the village council and to organize a Parent Teacher Association to be able to carry on the project. The researcher also recommends to the Ministry of Education in the event that they plan to establish the pre-school to take primary consideration to the requirements requested by parents. For example, parents want a pre-school who will adopt the play-way method and teachers who are trained, affectionate toward children.

The researcher strongly believes that a pre-school in Progreso would certainly be feasible because all parents who were included in the research have children of pre-school age. Moreover, almost all of them affirmed that they can afford to pay a contribution fee for their child to attend the pre-school. Consequently, the researcher strongly believes that if a pre-school is opened in the village it will be a great step in molding a solid foundation in the education of Belizean children.

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Dear Parent,

The following questionnaire was designed to determine the parents' attitudes towards the establishment of a pre-school in Progreso Village, Corozal District.

I would be very grateful if you would complete this questionnaire as honestly as possible. I assure you that whatever information is acquired will be kept confidential and will be used for research purposes only.

Respectfully yours,

PUT A CHECK MARK IN THE APPROPRIATE BOX. PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1. SEX

Male Female

2. AGE RANGE

15-19 20-29 30-39 40-49 50 or over

3. MARITAL STATUS

Single Married Separated Common Law

4. EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Primary School High School Sixth Form
Trained Teacher University

5. OCCUPATION

Teacher Domestic Farmer Mechanic
Driver Labourer Other

6. AMOUNT OF CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY 5

7. AMOUNT OF CHILDREN OF PRE-SCHOOL AGE IN THE FAMILY 1

IN THE FOLLOWING SECTION FEEL FREE TO CIRCLE THE LETTER/S WHICH REPRESENTS HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT THE STATEMENT.

SA Strongly Agree

A Agree

SD Strongly Disagree

D Disagree

- | | | | | | |
|----|--|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 1. | There is an urgent need for a pre-school in Progresso. | SD | D | <u>A</u> | SA |
| 2. | Children who attend pre-school waste their time. | <u>SD</u> | D | A | SA |
| 3. | The only thing children do in a pre-school is play. | SD | <u>D</u> | A | SA |
| 4. | I can teach my child everything that is taught in a pre-school. | SD | <u>D</u> | A | SA |
| 5. | Teaching children to read and write should be the main objective of a pre-school. | SD | D | A | <u>SA</u> |
| 6. | A child learns best by playing. | <u>SD</u> | D | A | SA |
| 7. | A pre-school prepares children for formal education | <u>SD</u> | D | A | <u>SA</u> |
| 8. | Children who attend pre-school learn to get along with others. | SD | D | A | <u>SA</u> |
| 9. | Pre-school children do better in primary school than those who do not attend pre-school. | SD | D | A | <u>SA</u> |

- | | | | | | |
|-----|--|----|---|--------------|----|
| 10. | If a pre-school is opened I will send my child. | SD | A | D | SA |
| 11. | I can afford to pay a contribution fee for my child to attend the pre-school. | SD | A | D | SA |
| 12. | I am willing to co-operate with the teacher in any activity concerning the pre-school. | SD | A | D | SA |
| 13. | A trained teacher is preferred to teach in a pre-school. | SD | A | D | SA |
| 14. | Any teacher can teach in a pre-school. | SD | A | D | SA |
| 15. | Some qualities of a teacher are: loving, understanding, and caring. | SD | A | D | SA |
| 16. | Parents should visit pre-schools regularly to check on their child's performance. | SD | A | D | SA |
| 17. | Children should attend pre-school regularly. | SD | A | D | SA |
| 18. | Children who attend pre-school should arrive at 8:30 a.m. and leave at 11:30 a.m. | SD | A | D | SA |