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PARENT-TEACHER EXPECTATIONS:
PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS AND TEACHER-PUPIL INTERACTIONS WITH NEW ENTRANTS IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA

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of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Education
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ABSTRACT

The concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy used by Merton (1948) to explain large scale social and economic phenomena, such as prejudice in everyday life and the causes of bank failures, has been introduced into classroom research by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) in terms of teacher-expectation studies.

This thesis reports a naturalistic study concerning teacher-pupil interactions in the classroom and parent-child relationships in the home arising from parent and teacher expectations of the children's ability, in the context of Malaysia - a non-Western culture. It was expected that the quality and quantity of teacher-pupil interactions in the classroom, and parent-child relationships in the home would be related to parent and teacher expectations of the children's ability. The general propositions guiding this study are given as a research model outlined below:

i) Early in the child's life, even before he enters school, his parents have formed their expectations concerning the child's ability.

ii) Parent expectations are translated into self-fulfilling prophecies. The quality of parent-child relationships may be determined by the parents' expectations of the child's ability.

iii) When the child enters school, teachers also form their expectations regarding the child's ability. Perhaps because both parents and teachers are influenced by overt child behaviours, in most cases the expectations teachers hold towards the child would match the

expectation held by the parents.

iv) Teacher expectations are also translated into self-fulfilling prophecies. Thus teachers begin to treat each child differently in accordance with their expectation of the child's ability.

v) Finally, the cycle of self-fulfilling prophecies operates so that the more able child finds support to develop his talents both at home and at school, while the less able child is constantly reminded of his weaknesses.

The results from 30 hours of classroom observation of teacher-pupil interaction with 48 new entrants classified by their teachers (N = 4) as 'highs' (N = 24) and 'lows' (N = 24) [using teacher-pupil observation schedules based on Brophy and Good (1969) and Ashcroft (1972)] support the hypothesis that teachers treat pupils differently according to teacher expectations concerning the pupils' ability.

The results from individual home interviews with parents of the same children [using standardized interview schedules based on Marjoribanks (1971)] also support the hypothesis that parents treat children differently according to parent expectations concerning the children's ability (high, medium or low).

It is suggested that there exists a supportive network of expectations between the parents and the teachers. It is further suggested that closer attention be given to this network of expectations between home and school, and not expectations of each in isolation to explain the relative performance of children at school.

The implications of the above results for Malaysia, in particular, is that current emphasis on educational improvement should also focus on the interpersonal factors arising from teacher and parent expectations of the children, and their consequences.

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