

## **Sustain Collaborative Initiative through Early Childhood Education University Students' Self-Reported Perceptions**

**Dr. Maram. F. Al- Momani, Ph.D. Ed.**

Lecturer

Al-Balqaa Applied University

Jordan

### **Abstract**

*This study describes and explores how early childhood education university students perceived their experiences of participating in a pilot collaborative initiative for improving kindergarten enrollment. The collaborative program initiated to improve kindergarten enrollment by neighborhood children, and to develop the early childhood education university students' knowledge and skills. Mixed method approach was used in the present study. Moreover, a convenience sample of early childhood education university students of those who practiced to fulfill the requirement of field training course objectives - a required last-semester early childhood education university program course- participated in the pilot initiative for improving kindergarten enrollment. Critical self-reflection on assumptions, and critical discourse were utilized to collect the qualitative data. The quantitative data, on the other hand, was collected using self report reaction index. Also, internal and external strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that impact the program were analyzed and SWOT analysis framework was utilized. On the whole, the entire early childhood education university students participating in the initiative program was highly positive about their experiences.*

**Keywords:** kindergarten enrollment - collaborative initiative for improving kindergarten enrollment, early childhood education university students – field training course, Critical self-reflection on assumptions , and critical discourse, SWOT technique.

### **1. Introduction**

Early childhood education university students practiced to fulfill the requirement of field training course objectives took part in a collaborative initiative for improving kindergarten enrollment. The initiative mainly aimed to improve the enrollment of neighborhood children to kindergarten, and to enrich the early childhood education university students' academic experiences and facilitate their achievement of the field training course objectives. The first aim of this program was addressed by Al-Momani M & Al-Momani R (2015). They mainly observed that the first – day attendance increased as many as 90% of the kindergarten – eligible children in the neighborhoods and the positive feedback received from participants, both the early childhood education students and the mothers of kindergarten children provided evidence that the initiative met the purpose which it was planned for (Al-Momani M & Al-Momani R, 2015).

This highlighted the importance to continue the program, and the need to explore the early childhood university students' perception of the program which might aid in the clarification of strengths, weaknesses, and possibility of modification required to enrich the pilot improving kindergarten enrollment initiative program. Therefore, this study was carried out to describe and explore how the early childhood education university students perceived their experiences of participating in the improving kindergarten enrollment initiative program as expressed through their own self reported perceptions. The undergraduate early childhood education university students' curriculum is covered over a four-year period. Field training course is the final undergraduate course, where the early childhood education student's practice forty full school days. The field training course objectives of the early childhood education curriculum require students by the end of the field training to be able to: collaborate with teachers and school administrators in the delivery of quality teaching practices, accept personal responsibility for teaching – learning process, and serve as a change agent with children, families, community, and colleagues to meet the changing teaching -learning needs.

The major hypothesis of the study is that the collaborative initiative program will help participating students to successfully attain the field training course objectives as expressed by them. Based on this hypothesis, the present study attempts to answer the following questions; What are the factors which facilitate or hinder the initiative program as perceived by the early childhood education students?, and would early childhood education university students participated in the improving kindergarten enrollment initiative program express their willingness to continue the program activities in their future work?. Improving kindergarten enrollment collaborative program was guided by the work of Epstein et. al.(2002). Particularly, Epstein et. al. (2002) identified six types of involvement for creating school, family, and community partnerships. They are: parenting, volunteering, communicating, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community. The six types of involvement as proposed by Epstein (2002) are initiated in collaboration between the academic, school teachers, administrators, and families with emphasize on the children's mothers or the child's first care giver to improve the enrollment of neighborhood children to kindergarten (Epstein et. al. 2002). The operational definition of the types of involvement is shown in Table 1.

**Table (1) Six types of Involvement for Creating School, Family, and Community Partnerships (Operational Definitions)**

Involvement		
Involvement	Form	Resources
Parenting	Initiative assist families to understand: -Parenting skills. -Children growth and development. -Home conditions that support learning	-Mothers of neighborhood children -Researcher (Faculty member)
Volunteering	-School provided in place recruitment, training, and organizational processes for families that enable them to support children and school programs. Parents help and support school activities and functions	-School teachers & Administrators -Early childhood education university students
Communicating	-Two-way, frequent, systematic communication between home and school about school programs were provided.	-Community representatives.
Learning at home	-Information needed to create family learning environment where parents are supposed to support were established.	
Decision making	-Parents participated in governance and advocacy activities. School ensure that parents' voices are heard	
Collaborating with the community	-Schools collaboration with community representatives in ways that support students learning and school experiences were emphasized.	
Derived from (Epstein et. al. 2002).		

## 2. Theoretical Framework

Mezirow's (2003) critical theory of transformative adult learning and education was used to guide this phase of the initiative. Mezirow's theory asserts that the two major elements of transformative learning are critical reflection, or critical self-reflection on assumptions, and critical discourse. The learner validates a best judgment, and as much as the individual become more reflective and critical, the person will be more open to the perspectives of others and be less defensive and more accepting of new ideas (Mezirow, 2003). Kitchenham, A. (2008) advocated the effectiveness of early childhood programs growth using reflective thinking. Although, Khales, B & Meier, D (2013) believes that teachers should be capable of thinking systematically about their practices. This usually requires a lot of courage to criticize their own practices, and to listen to the advice of their fellow teachers or supervisors (Khales, B & Meier, D, 2013).

Consistent with critical theory of transformative adult learning, the ultimate goal of this study is to describe and explore how the participants perceived their experiences of participating in the pilot program as expressed through their self-reported perceptions. In order to facilitate the participant's abilities in utilizing reflection as a strategy, and to help the students to debrief their view and concerns, team reflection was used. Team reflection was guided by the team leader which was one of the participants who was independently chosen by the group on daily base. Individual reflection on a daily base to allow for further reflection by each student's was required.

The team leader and an individual student were then asked to write a one or more pages on events or situations. Furthermore early childhood education university students were asked to express their perceptions of the usefulness of the initiative for them and others.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1 Study hypotheses**

Although the main purpose of the improving kindergarten enrollment initiative was to improve the children enrollment to kindergarten, the specific objectives of this study were to describe and explore how the participants perceived their experiences of participating in the initiative program as expressed through their self-reported perceptions, as well as the degree to which the program would meet with positive reactions from the participant students, and help participants successfully achieve the field training course objectives. Therefore, this study hypothesized that:

1. Strengths, weaknesses of, opportunities, and threats for the collaborative improving kindergarten enrollment initiative pilot program as perceived by the participants will be explored through the analysis of the participants' reflexive journaling manuscripts.
2. Early childhood education university students will show positive reactions toward the initiative pilot program. This in turn will be indicated by a survey data completed by them in order to determine the usefulness of initiative program components in achieving their field training course objectives from their own perceptions.

#### **3.2 Study design**

Mixed method approach was selected including team and individual reflexive journal of the participants, and a student's survey to assess the students' perception of the usefulness of the initiative program components (Gay, L. R. et. al. 2008). Linder, S. M. et. al. (2016) highlighted the advantages of utilizing a mixed method approach and how it could accommodate the disadvantages of individual methods.

#### **3.3 Population**

The eligible population for this study was 7 early childhood education university students chosen from a class of the field training course in the selected school. Specifically, all the students were female. One faculty member (the researcher) was responsible for the students in fulfilling the course requirements.

#### **3.4 Sample**

Convenience sampling procedure was used to obtain the larger sample. Undergraduate early childhood education university students in their last pre-graduate semester in the selected school who had participated in the improving kindergarten enrollment initiative program were given the opportunity to reflect on the usefulness of the initiative program components, as an option to fulfill the requirements of their field training course objectives. A total of 5 out of 7 students completed the requirements of the eligible participant. All the participants were female students whose main age was 20 years ( $SD = 2.2$ ), and their academic average was 74% ( $SD = 6.6$ ).

#### **3.5 Setting**

The current study was applied in an elementary school started by kindergarten II up to 6th elementary class. The school is the only public elementary school that serves a local area located in the middle of Jordan. The area's total number of population according to the local governance estimation is 3500 of different age groups.

#### **3.6 Data Collection**

##### **3.6.1 Qualitative data collection**

Qualitative data were collected through team and individual reflexive journal manuscripts of the participants. Team reflection was guided by the team leader on daily base. The team leader was one of the participants independently chosen by the group. Individual reflection on a daily base to allow for further reflection by each student was also required. Team leaders and each student were asked to write a one or more pages on the discussed situation. Participants' reflection – on – action was guided by group of questions formed by Miller, M (2011) to discuss what happened in an event or situation interchange. The mentioned multiple points of view and ways of knowing helps them to quickly assess potential new behaviors to guide future interactions.

### 3. 6. 2 Quantitative data collection

Quantitative data collected through survey using Students Satisfaction Index. The index which was developed by the researcher includes 10- items prepared to determine the student's perception of the usefulness of the program. Each student was asked to put on a continuum varies from 0-100% students opinion and view on the usefulness of the program to the participants in achieving the field training course objectives. Each question evaluates the participant satisfaction of one of the initiative program components which were planned to cover one of the six types of involvement for creating school, family, and community partnerships. Index was pilot-tested for clarity of presentation and content among a random population of early childhood education university students not participating in the initiative program (See Table 2) for Students Satisfaction Index.

**Table (2) Participants' Opinion and View on the Usefulness of Each of the Initiative Program Component in Achieving their Advanced Nursing Course Objectives**

	Program component	Usefulness rate %
1	Orientation to the initiative project including purpose, procedure and expected outcomes	100%
2	Reflection as teaching learning strategy	100%
3	Participating in the home visit and related activities	50%
4	Brochure	
	- Introduction	95%
	-information regarding the importance of the kindergarten phase to children	95%
	- kindergarten registration guidelines	95%
	- community resources list	95%
5	Attending the annual school week	100%
6	Interacting with the children and their mothers	100%
7	Program Coordinator Approach	95%
<i>Note: If you please, any comments to be included in the reflection manuscripts</i>		

### 3.7 Procedure

After the initiative program had reviewed and approved by the selected School Review Board. The director of the school was informed of the initiative program. Kindergarten school teacher was then assigned by the school director to be our liaison with the neighborhood children mothers, school staffs, and community representatives. Collaboration with the initiative program was one mean of fulfilling the school, school director and kindergarten teacher roles, which served as an incentive for participation. Participation of the early childhood education university students in the initiative program was one mean of fulfilling the field training course objectives. All school staff and potential participants were informed, oriented, and asked to facilitate the initiative program through their day-to-day assigned work. Potential participants were assured that they could withdraw without prejudice at any time. Participants' confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by assigning pseudonyms A, B, C, D and.....H. To reduce the risk of coercion, there was no independent observer, and the faculty member was not involved in reflective sessions. Faculty member (the researcher) discussed with the participants the types of involvement for creating school, family, and community partnerships prior to the implementation of the initiative program, and trained the participants on the process of reflection and the different instructional strategies which could be used to develop reflectivity as critical incident technique, reflective journaling, and storytelling. In addition, guided reflection exercises (Miller, M. 2011), and reflective writing were practiced by the participants. The chosen team leader, toward the end of each day in a scheduled meeting, with the team members discussed what happened with each team member in reflective strategy, bringing together multiple points of view and set behaviors to guide future interaction.

Participants were asked to consider strengths, weaknesses of, and opportunities and threats for the initiative program. Team reflection was guided by group of questions: What do I value in terms of independence and interdependence? , How do my values influence my responses to this event?, In what ways are my choices influenced by the expectations of services and initiative coordinators? (Miller, M. 2011). Students were asked to write on a daily base individually a one or more pages reflecting on event's reflected on by the team. Participant was asked to consider strengths, weaknesses of, and opportunities and threats for the kindergarten enrollment initiative program.

Particularly, student's reflective writing was guided by the same mentioned group of questions derived from the work of Miller (Miller, M. 2011). Team and individual reflection as a choice for collecting qualitative data was driven by issues and concerns raised by authors about the extent to which reflective discussions and reflective writing should be shared. Some authors discussed the pervasive exercise of power that may be inherent within shared reflection, and the importance of confidentiality and safe environment in relation to reflection (Khaless, B & Meier, D, 2013). So, the individual reflective journal was excluded from the field training course assessment and students were permitted to deliver the individual reflective journals with harmonic pseudonym.

### 3.8 Data analysis

Data collection and initial analysis were undertaken concurrently. Team and individual reflexive journaling were verbatim analyzed using thematic analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005. Krippendorff, 2013). On the same vein, conventional content analysis was used to analyze all reflexive journaling. The data were read, reread word by word with a focus on students' perceptions of strengths, weaknesses of, and opportunities and threats for the initiative program. Memos were written regarding first impressions and thoughts emerging from the data. Furthermore, initial themes were identified; organized and related codes were then classified under broader categories. These emergent categories were organized and coded in a template based on the study hypotheses (Patton, 2002; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). To promote consistency and resolve ambiguities and identify divergence and convergence of views, data were interpreted as a whole, and emergent themes in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the initiative program were discussed among the researcher and students (Creswell, J .W. 2014). Quantitative data collected through Students Satisfaction Index survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics (see Table 2).

## 4. Results

Initially 7 students participated in the collaborative improving kindergarten enrollment initiative pilot program. However 5 of these students completed the participation requirement with a response rate of 71%, the other two students choose to change to another project. A total of 180 reflective manuscripts were obtained, 30 of which were team reflection, and 150 were individual reflection manuscripts. The first hypothesis of this study was "Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the initiative pilot program as perceived by the participants will be explored through the analysis of the participants' team and individual reflexive journaling manuscripts". This hypothesis was addressed by analyzing the students' manuscripts utilizing SWOT technique (Riley J, 2012). SWOT is, primarily, a structured analytical technique used to support strategic decision for pilot projects, through identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of a project. Accordingly, strengths are characteristics of the project that give it an advantage over others. Weaknesses are characteristics that place the team at disadvantages relative to others. Opportunities are elements that the project exploits to its advantage. Threats are elements in the environment that could cause trouble for the project (Riley J, 2012). The findings from the participants' manuscripts revealed the following;

### Strengths of the initiative program as perceived by the early childhood education university students

Positive consideration of the orientation provided to the participants before their decision to participate in the initiative, exemplified from the following team quotation "*The orientation about the initiative and the reflection as a teaching learning strategy provided to us in advance facilitated our work*". Participants indicated the importance of meeting with the mothers of targeted children and how it improved the effectiveness of their work, this was exemplified in the following team quotation

*"Every event we found ourselves more and more oriented to the children and their mothers", "We realized how much more help we might provide to children and their mothers", "Following each gathering event with mothers of targeted children we know and know why the mothers did not admitted their kids to kindergarten"*.

They also reported the importance of the faculty member as a resource person who provided administrative guidance, knowledge, and motivation for them, as much as for the school teacher and administrators. This is exemplified by the following quotations: "*You are in position to give school administrators and school teacher guidance when ever they ask for*". "*You work as a key formant for us and for the school staff, what if you are absent or not their*".

Similarly, early childhood education university students indicated the importance of the support provided by the school staff especially the liaison teacher, particularly during neighborhood home visits. Participants also indicated the importance of good communication with the school staff, especially the kindergarten teacher.

Also the importance of good communications between the community representatives and the school staff which foster the collaboration was reported. As Team manuscripts reported: *“Our assigned school teacher encouraged our work with the initiative events.....more than once she acknowledged our participation in the initiative program , the school director too.....even they appreciate our faculty member effort ..... They repeat saying it is good of you and your faculty to initiate this program”*. Most early childhood education university students commented on the need to foster the initiative sustainability *“The initiative program is very important and it provides advantage for all the participants...”*. *“.....Really it is a beneficial program, please try your best to be continued”*. Constant communication with the faculty member, school teacher and mothers of targeted children with different backgrounds, and the initiative program in general with reflection as a new way of learning to the early childhood education university students were mentioned *“Reflection a process I started to use in most of life situations, challenges, and events”*... Also the importance of good communications and interactive events between the teams and the team members which foster the collaboration were reported *“ Meeting the mothers of targeted children and providing them with school brochure, orienting them to school facilities, attending with them the school annual week program, and interacting with them and their children . All those tasks help us to expand our communication with the children and their mothers. Also it improves our communication with the school staff and administrators even it improves our communication with each others”*.

### **Weaknesses of the initiative program as perceived by the early childhood education university students**

Participants' team manuscripts indicated that cultural values had limited their willing to implement home activities which required them to repeat the targeted families' home visits regardless of their feeling of its importance. This is exemplified by the following quotations:*“Implementing home planned activities is sometimes limited, because of the community representatives value and beliefs of the importance of respecting community cultural values of limiting females regardless of their purposes from recurrent home visits, as well as we are not allowed to visit the children at their homes without being supervised by school teacher accompanied by community representatives”*.

Participants also reported that the extra effort and load for them and their faculty was a result of the pilot project which only included them. As a result, to overcome this weakness they suggested expanding the initiative to include all university students regardless of their specialty, and to shift the coordination of the initiative program to the school teacher and director supported by all faculty members, in which all faculty members could serve as a resource person for the program. This is exemplified by the following quotation: *“We think the load which we feel some times is the result that we and our faculty the only included in the improving kindergarten enrollment initiative program, and we understand that because the initiative program still under study. If this to be continued include all university faculties and student training in the school, and shift the coordination of the initiative program to the school director supported by all faculty members were all faculty members could serve as a resource persons for the program”*.

Unclear communication especially from the team leader was reported as a weakness. It also limited the students effective work and was the reason that led some participants to drop out from the sample *“I'm satisfied of my participation in the initiative, but I'm not satisfied to work with this group of my colleagues.....I think if I'm allowed not to participate with the team reflection I will be more interested of my work in the initiative program”*. Furthermore, participants raised issues regarding the home visits activity, this is indicated in the following quotation: *“....I can never forget the road which we pass to reach the children...It was hard experience”*. *“It was a good idea to have the community representative during home visits”*.

### **Opportunities provided by the initiative program as perceived by the early childhood education university students**

Participants have explained that their participation in the initiative program has provided them with opportunities to practice their future roles independently which improves their autonomy and increases their feeling of individual responsibility. Participants reported positive consideration of the opportunities provided to them in attending the annual school week activities, *“The realization that I could assist myself in achieving my course objectives and the children and their mothers through school community interaction components created a confidence I have never had in myself”*. Similarly, participants positively appreciated the opportunities provided to them in practicing reflection and reflexive journaling. This is exemplified by the following quotation: *“Practicing reflection and writing reflexive journaling really revealed a way of thinking to us, which we have applied in many other situations”*. *“Reflection is a process I started to use in most situations of my life”*.

Participants appreciated the opportunities provided to them through the program component, in providing the kindergarten children with in-kind assistant. This is exemplified by the following quotations: *“Support the kindergarten children with those small effort tasks as taking care of them, while their mothers attending the annual school week activities. All those tasks help us to expand our communication with the children and their mothers and families. Also they improve our communication with the school teachers and administrators even they improve our communication with each others”*.

### **Threats that could cause trouble to the initiative program as perceived by the early childhood education university students**

The findings from the participants’ manuscripts revealed: Threats as unclear policies, rules and regulation for sustainability of the initiative program were expressed by the participants. Most participants commented on the need to foster the initiative sustainability *“The initiative program is very important and it provides advantage for all the participants, but what will happen when our training period completed”*. Students expressed fear that the initiative could stop when their training completed, and that a program supervised by the school administrators and school staff more likely to sustain, but this may make a need for setting a clear policies. *“Really it is a beneficial program, please try your best to be continued, but if the program going to be continued a need for ongoing coordination of the collaborative effort by the school administrators and staff”*.

Participants reported the need for greater clarity about the initiative program especially for the school teacher and the community representative. They also highlighted the need to structure the initiative program in the manner that best suits the initiative program sustainability. The following sentences exemplifies this *“The initiative plan and procedure was clear to the early childhood education university students, but not to the school teachers we heard more than one of the school teacher saying “.....I don’t see the point in initiating kindergarten enrollment initiative program while we have already kindergarten II class”*.

Participants raised issues regarding the sustainability of the improving kindergarten enrollment initiative. Some teams’ manuscripts reported that sustainability of the initiative program depends on the collaboration and continuity of the daily follow up. Teams’ manuscripts quotations include: *“.....If this important initiative program has to sustain, it needs to be restructured, to be directed by the school director, at that time all early childhood education university students regardless of their faculty willing or availability will participate”*.

The second hypothesis of this study is that “Early childhood education university students will show positive reactions toward the kindergarten enrollment initiative program as indicated by a survey data completed by them in order to determine the usefulness of initiative program components in achieving their field training course objectives from their own perceptions”. This hypothesis was addressed by reviewing and summarizing participants' responses to students' satisfaction index survey. Overall, student ratings of the usefulness of the initiative program components were 90%. On average, 100% of the respondents provided rating of 90-100% across all items. Means were calculated for each item. Results presented in Table 2 show that orientation to the initiative project including purpose, procedure and expected outcomes provided by the researcher, reflection as teaching learning strategy, participating in the annual school week activities, interacting with children and taking care of the children while the mothers attending the annual school week activities were rated as the highest favorable part of the kindergarten enrollment initiative program with a rate of 100% by all of the respondents. The least favorable component of the program as rated by respondents with a mean of 50% was the home visit activity.

## **5. Discussion**

The results of this study were reached by analyzing the students’ satisfaction index, and the reflexive manuscripts utilizing SWOT technique. The mixed methods approach used in this study allowed a multifaceted view of the strengths, weaknesses of, opportunities, and threats for the collaborative initiative programs. The findings from the students’ satisfaction survey, and the reflexive journaling manuscripts indicated that establishing sustainable collaborative program for the purpose of improving kindergarten enrollment as perceived by the participants has much strength. Participants positively rated the effect of the initiative program components in facilitating their achievement of the field training course objectives, and it helped them to develop their individual roles. The average mean score for participants’ satisfaction index was (90%). The participation in the annual school week activities, interacting with children, and taking care of the children while the mothers attending the annual school week activities, were rated as the highest favorable part of the kindergarten enrollment initiative program with a rate of 100% by all of the respondents.

These findings are consistent with previous studies conducted by Hoover – Dempsey, K. V., et. al. (2005), who conclude that school-based family involvement activities, such as attending a school open day and attending a parent – teacher conference facilitate the collaboration between the school and the children families for the benefit of the children. Also the findings of this study support the findings of another study carried out by Sheldon, S. B. (2003). Sheldon emphasized the importance of school invitations to involve the children parents and the social networks as an important variable in improving the collaboration between schools and neighborhood children families. Participants reported the importance of the faculty member as a resource person who provided administrative guidance, knowledge, and motivation for them, as much as for the school staff. Similarly, they indicated the importance of the support provided by the school staff and community representatives, particularly during home visits activity. Also, participants indicated the importance of good communication from the school staff especially the kindergarten teacher. Moreover, the importances of good communications among the participants which foster the collaboration were reported.

The constant communication with the faculty member, school teacher and community representatives and neighbor hood families were appreciated and the initiative program in general with reflection in particular as a new way of learning to the early childhood education university students were mentioned. Positive consideration of the opportunities provided to participants as practicing their future roles independently, practicing reflection and reflexive journaling, interacting with the mothers of school age children. These findings are consistent with the findings which have been reported by (Khaless & Meier 2013). Khaless and Meier (2013) recommended that pre-service teachers engage in reflective activities not only to better learn new ideas, but also to sustain professional growth and motivating the pre – service teachers to carry their future role independently (Khaless & Meier 2013).

While collaborative initiative program has much strength, the findings illustrate that establishing collaborative programs between the university faculties and the school staff has some threats which could be taken as a challenge for promoting the sustainability of the program. One of the most recognized threats is unclear policies. These findings are consistent with the findings which have been reported by (Lisa et al 2011). Lisa et al (2011) highlighted the importance of clear policies and procedure in enhancing the transition to kindergarten programs. So, in order to sustain the initiative program, significant effort should be given to define the program policies, rules and regulation. Thus, to work on sustainability of this program and other collaborative community programs, much concern should be given to gain the participants including school staff, university students, and faculty members' willingness, and all to be directed by well defined policies and procedures, and supervised by the school director.

## **6. Conclusion**

The work of this study was mainly based on the assumption that “the collaborative improving kindergarten enrollment program initiated by the faculty member will facilitate the collaboration between the academic and school staffs in order to improve the kindergarten enrollment of the neighborhood children and to develop the early childhood education university students' knowledge and skills”. Therefore, this paper provides some insights into strengths, opportunities that could promote the ongoing sustainability of the collaborative university - school - community partnerships.

These results could benefit others trying to achieve similar outcomes within their workplaces even at the international level. Several weaknesses and threats to the collaborative university - school - community partnerships initiative programs have been identified. Hence, continued support for collaborative programs, coordination and logistic issues need to be addressed. This study had a number of strengths; the most important of which is the use of a mixed method approach, and the evaluation that was developed alongside the implementation of the collaborative university - school - community partnerships program. This helped to ensure that the findings would be meaningful and representative of the participants' perception. On the other hand, the limitations of the study include the small sample, the purposive convenience sample selection, and the self report surveys which could prohibit the generalization of the study findings.

The result of this study illustrates the need to examine carefully the factors which influence the kindergarten enrollment of the targeted children. Improving kindergarten enrollment need to be addressed by school teachers and school administrators, and supported by school – community effort. Lastly, faculty members in colleges need to consider ways in which they might contribute to cause positive change in their communities.



## 7. Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank the school staff, the kindergarten teachers, and the early childhood education university students for their participation and collaboration in the initiative program.

## References

- Al-Momani, M., & Al- Momani, R.(2015). The Effectiveness of a Collaborative Initiative for Improving Kindergarten Enrollment. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 5 (5), 129 – 135.
- Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* . (4<sup>th</sup> edition). Thousand Oakes. CA: Sage Publications.
- Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G., Simon, B. S., Salinas, K. C., Jansorn, N. R., & Van Voorhis, R. L. (2002). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action*. (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Gay, L. R., Mills, G.,& Airasian, P. ( 2008). *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Applications*.(9<sup>th</sup> edition). Pearson Education.
- Hanson, H., Salmoni, A., & Volpe, R. (2009). Defining program sustainability: differing views of stakeholders. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 100, 304-309.
- Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Walker, J. M. T., Sandler, H. M., Whetsel, D., Green, C. L., Wilkins, A. S. & Closson, K.E. (2005). Why do Parents Become Involved? Research Findings and Implications. *Elementary School Journal*, 106, 105-130.
- Hsieh, H. F., Shannon, S. E. (2005) Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Journal of Quality Health Research*, 15 (9), 1277-1288.
- Khles, B. & Meier, D . (2013). Toward a New way of Learning Promoting Inquiry and Reflection in Palestinian Early Childhood Teacher Education, *The New Educator Journal* , 9 (4), 287 – 303.
- Kitchenham, A. (2008) The Evolution of John Mezirow,s Transformative Learning Theory. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 6, 104.
- Krippendorff, K. (2013). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*. (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Linder, S. M. Rember, K. Simpson, A. & Deanna Ramey, M.(2016). A mixed – methods investigation of early childhood professional development for providers and recipients in the United States. *Journal of Professional Development in Education*, 42 (1), 123 – 149.
- Lisa J. B, Rebecca D. D, & Kenneth A. D. (2011). Enhancing the Transition to Kindergarten Trial to Test the Efficacy of the " Stars" Summer Kindergarten Orientation Program. *Early Child Res Q*, 26 (2), 247–254.
- Mezirow, J. (2003) Transformative learning as discourse. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 1(1), 58-63.
- Miller, M. (2011). Critical Reflection. *Journal of Gowrie Australia*, 45, 4-6.
- Patton, M. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*: Sage, Thousand Oaks.
- Riley j, (2012), SWOT analysis Last updated: Sunday 23 September (2012). [online] Available: [http://www.tutor2u.net/business/strategy/SWOT\\_analysis.htm](http://www.tutor2u.net/business/strategy/SWOT_analysis.htm).(September 23, 2012).
- Sheldon, S. B.(2003). Linking School-Family-Community Partnerships in Urban Elementary Schools to Student Achievement on State Tests. *The Urban Review*. 2003, 35, 149-165.