

# **EXPECTED CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND ACTUAL OCCURRENCE IN CHILDREN: PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL ASPECTS, IN A SELECTED KINDERGARTEN IN NONTHABURI**

Ploenpis Kowae  
Graduate School of Education  
Assumption University of Thailand

## **Background of the Study**

One must consider children as important human resources and future leaders of the country. Fifteen years from now, these children are going to be active adults who will be responsible citizens in society. Are they being prepared to be good citizens of the country? There is a Thai proverb that says, "We can bend the branch of the tree only when it is young?" If the tree grows older, the branch will break if you bend it. This Thai proverb has the same meaning, as "It's hard to teach old dogs new tricks." You cannot teach old dogs new tricks." This brings one to the realization and urgency that personal, social and emotional skills should be reinforced during the early ages of childhood development.

Early childhood, from birth through age 5, is a critical time for children to develop the physical, cognitive, emotional, and social skills that provide the foundation for lifelong healthy development. The early childhood setting offers an ideal opportunity for young children to develop personal, social and emotional skills with peers and adults. As with any skill, it is through practice in real situations that children develop competence in adult and peer interaction. The many naturally occurring opportunities of day-to-day life allow children to be sympathetic and helpful to peers (Honig, 1982). These social skills include many strategies children learn to help them initiate and continue social interactions, to negotiate, and to settle conflicts (Smith, 1982).

As reported by the Ministry of Education, the educational system according to the National Scheme of Education provides opportunity for individuals to develop themselves in accordance with their ages. As per a release on 20<sup>th</sup> of January 2000, Ministry of Education issued a set of pre-school educational policies that by the end of children's education in the kindergarten, children should: know what is right and wrong; be willing to share and take turns with others; be able to relate to others; be curious and able to explore; be able to listen and speak with understanding; be comfortable and happy with themselves; have developed physical co-ordination and healthy habits as well as love their families, friends, teachers and school. From the report, the emphasis for preschool education is on social skills and attitudes rather than on academic skills. This reveals to one that personal, social and emotional skills and expression/communication are very important. Teachers should devote more of their time to help preschool children acquire a positive disposition, which will prepare them for future learning.

Anvida Kindergarten has been opened for admission since May 2005 with the mission to nurture and develop children of ages 2-5 to be competent learners, effective communicators and to adjust well in their community. The school believes that personal, social and emotional development in preschoolers will bring about the children's character development by providing great value for current and future success in endeavors. Therefore, personal, social and emotional aspects are integrated across the whole curriculum and are an integral part of all teaching and learning. Many research findings have shown the importance of children becoming: independent, developing a sense of personal control; of becoming emotionally capable, having empathy and being able to live and learn with others; and of developing positive attitudes or dispositions to learning.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Asian education methods have valued academic development while damaging other aspects of children's growth, which hampers rather than helps them to live and achieve in society (Winter S., 1998). Many early childhood educators and parents in Thailand still put more emphasis on academic attainment with little attention being placed on personal, social and emotional development. Even though the Thai Government has set up a set of early childhood policies with the emphasis on character development, it is inescapable that cognitive domains are considered to be of prime importance. Do early childhood educators, policy