Factors Affecting Parental Involvement in Education: The Analysis of Literature

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What does parental involvement mean?

There is no exact and common definition of parental involvement in the literature. For example, to LaRocque et al. (2011, p.116) parental involvement is 'the parents' or caregivers' investment in the education of their children'.Alternatively, Christenson et al. (1992) stated how parents play a role in their children's education, in both home-related and school-related. Parental involvement is parental intervention in their children's education in order to be able to obtain information about their children's academic growth, participation, when they define parental involvement (Crozier, 1999). "Family and community involvement frequently means helping reach goal defined by the schools (administrators and teachers) that reflect only school values and priorities" (Jordan et al., 2001, p10).

Barge and Loges (2003) identified that teachers', students' and parents' view and approach to parental involvement are different. They found that for parents parental involvement refers to:

- Regular supervision of students' homework by parents. Parents reported that it was essential to be sure that their children did their homework completely and to help them when needed.
- Developing individual relations with teachers. Parents thought that if they had adequate relationships with teachers and teachers saw that they paid attention to their children, the teachers' treatment of their children would be better.
- Taking advantage of extracurricular school programs. Particularly, parents who do not have enough ability to help their children with their homework or other curriculum related tasks state the importance of this involvement.
- Improving supportive collaboration within the community. According to the parents' reports, developing collaboration within the community plays an important role in students' educational achievement.

As Barge and Loges (2003) found, for students parental involvement means:

- •   Parental assistance with homework
- •   Stimulation from parents
- •   Communication between parents and school

Interestingly, students can distinguish whether or not authority is supportive by addressing and stating the importance of authority (Barge and Loges, 2003). When it comes to teachers' perception about parental involvement, in teachers' opinions, some forms of parental involvement- a) contact, b) taking part, c) parental monitoring, and d) discipline- are supportive, while some of them- a) negative contact, b) lack of encouragement, and c) lack of parenting abilities- are unhelpful.

The importance of parental involvement

Parental involvement plays an important role in students' education, and the advantages of it for students are numerous (Jeynes, 2003, 2007). For example, parental involvement has a positive influence on the students' academic success (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2003; Jordan et al., 2001; Gonzalez-piendaet al., 2002; Henderson &Mapp, 2002). In particular, parental involvement has more effect on students' test scores than GPA (grade point average) (Jeynes, 2003). According to Shaver and Walls (1998), students with high levels of parental involvement are better in reading and math than those with a low level of parental involvement. Furthermore, Gonzalez-peinda et al. (2002) identified that parental involvement makes a positive contribution to students' academic achievement by affecting their academic self-concept which is of considerable importance in academic success. Even Hara and Burke (1998) claimed that the key to improvement of children's academic accomplishment is boosted parental involvement. In contrast, Bobbett et al. (1995) found that the effect parental involvement has on students' academic achievement is not significant. Some researchers have even identified that when parents get involved with students' homework and communicate with school, it negatively affects the students' academic success by decreasing their test scores (Izzo et al., 1999; Shumow& Miller, 2001). In addition, Cooper et al. (2000) found that direct parental involvement particularly negatively affects the students' academic achievement.

Moreover, when parents get involved, they make a contribution to their children's emotional development and behaviour (Cai et al., 1997), well-being (Pelletier & Brent, 2002), social skills (Sanders, 1998; Henderson &Mapp, 2002) and even school attendance (Haynes et al., 1989). According to Desimone (1999), parents' participation in school activities may establish connections between teachers and parents that have a positive influence on teachers' impressions of and views about

students. In all cases, the importance of relationships between parents and school is inarguable because "the family is the most important and most enduring resource in a child's life" and "family-school partnerships produce impressive results for children and teachers" (Petr, 2003, p11).

However, the effects of not all forms of involvement are statistically significant (Jeynes, 2011). For example, Jeynes identified that conversations about school between students and their parents and parental participation at school events have a statistically considerable influence on the students' academic achievement, whereas the effect of checking the students' homework by parents is not statistically significant. On the other hand, according to Jeynes (2007), the effect of parents' participation at school events on students' academic achievement is less than parents' expectancies and parental styles. Interestingly, parental expectancies and discussion have more influence on middle-income students' academic achievement than on low-income students' academic achievement (Desimone, 1999). Furthermore, Desimone (1999) identified that talking with their mother or both parents (mother and father together) positively affects the students' academic success, but discussion with only their father can lead to a reduction in the students' test scores. Also, the research conducted by Bobbett et al. (1995) showed that the effects of parental involvement can be different based on the students' ages. They found that the influence parental involvement has on secondary or high school students' academic success is not measurable.

According to Fan and Chen (2001), parental control is weakly related to pupils' academic success, while parental desire and hope for students' academic success is strongly related to students' academic success. They found that close parental control may even have a negative influence on students' academic achievement.

Finally, parental involvement plays an important role in general school culture. As Deal and Peterson (2009, p184-185) stated: "A school, by its essential nature, must be an open system with highly permeable boundaries" and "parts of the school culture must reach out and connect with parents".

Factors affecting parental involvement

According to literature related to parental involvement in education, factors influencing parental involvement can be divided into three groups:

- Parent related factors
- School related factors

- Student related factors

Parent related factors

Parental involvement can be affected by several socio-political factors, such as socioeconomic condition and parents' negative school experience (LaRocque et al., 2011). Studies have shown that one of the factors contributing to the level of parental involvement is parents' educational background (Pena, 2000; Lee &Bowen, 2006; Jordan et al., 2001; Potvin et al., 1999; Crozier, 1999; Baeck, 2010). For example, Lee and Bowen (2006) found that parents with 2-year or higher college degree have considerably more attendance in the activities or meetings organized at school, talk more often about educational issues with their children and expect their children to be more successful in their education. Conversely, parents whose educational levels are low may be less involved, because they do not feel self-confident enough to contact school staff (Lee &Bowen, 2006).However, Pena (2000) identified that parents with low levels of education more frequently volunteer in different types of activities at schools than those with high levels of education. The researcher stated that the problem for parents with low levels of education, as reported by the parents themselves, is that they cannot help their children with homework or other school-related issues, because their knowledge is limited. Interestingly, when it comes to parents with a university degree, they show lack of time as a main reason for notgetting involved (Baeck, 2010). This can be seen in Table 1 adopted from Baeck (2010, p558).

Table 1. Parents' responses to the question of why they do not want to take part in four different activities:

Type of acticities and parents' level of education	Reasons not to want to participate				
	Lack of time	Lack of knowledge	Not interested	Other	Total
Parents' Working Committee(a)[***]	**37.9**	**15.6**	**15**	**31.5**	**546**
Primary/lower secondary	23.9	33	11.4	31.8	88
Upper secondary	37.2	18	15.5	29.3	239
University/college	44.3	5.9	16	33.8	219
Total	**207**	**85**	**82**	**172**	**546**
Voluntary work(b)	**47.1**	**1.1**	**10.7**	**41**	**261**
Primary/lower secondary	34.1	2.3	9.1	54.5	44
Upper secondary	46.1	0.9	12.2	40.9	115
University/college	53.9	1	9.8	35.3	102
Total	**123**	**3**	**28**	**107**	**261**
School committee(C)[***]	**25.5**	**41.9**	**13.3**	**19.4**	**542**
Primary/lower secondary	12	66.3	10.9	10.9	92
Upper secondary	22	44.7	14.2	19.1	246

University/ College	35.8	27.5	13.2	23.5	204
Total	**138**	**227**	**72**	**105**	**542**
Parent representative(d)*	**41**	**5.3**	**14.7**	**39.1**	**361**
Primary/lower secondary	33.3	9.7	12.5	44.4	72
Upper secondary	39.4	6.9	17.5	36.2	160
University/ College	47.3	0.8	12.4	39.5	129
Total	**148**	**19**	**53**	**141**	**361**

Notes: Percentages in boldface indicate total percentages
*p<.05, ***p<.001
(a) Chi-square testchi=39.692, df=6, p=.000
(b) Chi-square testchi=6.394, df=6, p=.381
(c) Chi-square testchi=45.867, df=6, p=.039

According to Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1992), parents' beliefs about whether the effects of involvement will contribute to their children's academic achievement also influence their levels of involvement. Furthermore, parents' income levels also affect their levels of involvement (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). The researcher found that high-income parents take part more often in the activities organized by school than low-income parents. Furthermore, parents with high socio-economic status try more effectively to get involved than parents with low socio-economic status (Domina, 2005). In contrast, Shaver and Walls (1998) identified that parents' income level is not a contributing factor to their level of involvement.

In addition, family structure also has an effect on parental involvement (Astone&McLanahan, 1991; Potvin et al., 1999; Jordan et al., 2001). For instance, Astone and Mclanahan (1991) found that children with a single parent or step parents are provided with less support and control in comparison to children who live in two-parent families. The interesting fact identified in this research is that single parents' children have a greater desire to talk to their parents. According to Potvin et al. (1999), the indirect influence of family structure on students' school success through parental assistance is impressive. Marital disruption in the family can lead to low levels of involvement by reducing the amount of time parents spend with children. This change is particularly typical for fathers, because the number of children who live with their mothers after divorce is significantly higher (Astone&Mclanahan, 1991). Furthermore, parenting style is another factor influencing the level of involvement (Cooper et al., 2000). Interestingly, Mapp (2002) identified that parents' own experience of parental involvement when they were school pupils also affects how they get involved.

Not only the child's gender, but also the parent's gender is a factor contributing to the level of involvement (Feuerstein, 2000). For example, mothers spend more time dealing with their children's homework than fathers (Jordan et al., 2001). Another reason why parents do not get involved is that they do not perceive their involvement as a parental duty (Deslandes& Bertrand, 2005); to some parents, it is the responsibility of school to educate students (Carrasquilo& London, 1993).

Finally, cultural differences, parents' own unsuccessful school experiences (Aronson, 1996) and lack of transportation (Pena, 2000) are also considered as influential factors.

School related factors

Another issue that has an influence on parental involvement is language (Aronson, 1996; LaRocque et al., 2011). The language used at schools can be very academic (LaRocque et al., 2011) and most school staff do not know how to contact parents with a different language background (Aronson, 1996). Even when parents and teachers do not have any problem in understanding each other, teachers' attitudes influence the level of involvement (Pena, 2000; Hornby &Lafaele, 2011). According to Mapp (2002), if parents trust the attitude of school staff, they are likely to get more involved because "every parent wants to trust the school and to be trusted" (Deal & Peterson, 2009, p189). Moreover, Pena (2000) identified that parents anticipate the most important stimulation from teachers, but sometimes they do not feel this stimulation. Comer and Haynes (1991) stated that teacher requests made within an adequate and attractive school environment have a noticeable effect on parents deciding to get involved. On the other hand, sometimes parents' roles in getting involved are unclear, and they may need clear explanations from teachers about what they are expected to do (LaRocque et al., 2011). Fields-Smith (2005) found that parents respond more frequently to teachers' demands that are well defined.

Moreover, many parents confront the reality of a confused academic curriculum that brings its own difficulties: '…parents do experience a significant degree of confusion about what their children are doing in school' (Crozier, 1999, p228).

Student related factors

Likewise, parents are likely to get involved if they comprehend that not only teachers, but also students expect them to get involved (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). Interestingly, students' calls for involvement can be prominent or allusive

depending on several factors, including their desire for freedom and their academic achievement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). Crozier (1999) identified that although parents frequently quote their children's claim for freedom as a reason not to get involved, most students value their parents' support and find it beneficial.

Interestingly, Hornby and Lafaele (2011) showed students' age as an issue affecting the level of parental involvement. They explain this in addressing the downward trend in parental involvement in upper grades. Even students' gender may be considered as a factor contributing to parental involvement (Deslandes&Potvin, 1999; Carter &Wojtkiewicz, 2000). Deslandes and Potvin (1999) found that male students' mothers contact teachers more frequently than female ones. Interestingly, according to Cooper et al. (2000), male students' parents' involvement levels are higher than females in elementary school, but in high school female students' parents' involvement levels are higher than males. Furthermore, according to Eccles and Harold (1996), parents of students with high achievement are more willing to take part in the activities organized by school than those of students with low achievement.

In conclusion, according to literature evaluated above, it is possible to say that the factors affecting the level of parental involvement are:

- Parents' educational background.
- Lack of knowledge about curriculum.
- Lack of time.
- Language
- School staff attitudes and environment.
- School demands (certain or uncertain for parents).
- Children's invitation.
- Teachers' invitation.
- Children's desire for independency.
- Parents' beliefs about their skill to develop learning.
- Parents' income level.
- Family structure.
- Parenting style.
- Parents' own parental involvement.
- Students' age.
- Students' gender.
- Parents' gender.
- Students' achievement level.
- Parents' beliefs about parental duty
- Culture.

- •   Parents' own negative school experience.
- •   Lack of transportation.

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Summary

Factors Affecting Parental Involvement in Education: The Analysis of Literature

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This study examines the factors affecting parental involvement by evaluating and analysing literature about parental involvement in education. It also answers the questions: a) What does parental involvement mean? and 2) Why is parental involvement important? In this article more than five hundreds literatures related to the factors affecting parental involvement were evaluated and analysed. The result of the analysis of literature showed that there are many factors influencing parental involvement or the level of parental involvement and these factors can be parent related, school related or student related.