



Importance and Types of Parental Involvement in Education

Josephine Oranga , Audrey Matere , Eliud Nyakundi

Kisii University, Kenya

Email: josephineoranga@kisiuniveristy.ac.ke

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Abstract

Studies indicate that parental participation and involvement in education has a positive influence on a child's academic outcomes. This article, thus, explores the significance, types and components of parental involvement in education in an effort to enlighten stakeholders on the role of parents in their children's education. Accordingly, the benefits of parental involvement in education include: fewer behavioral problems amongst learners, better school attendance, increased academic achievement, better adaptation at school, better acquisition and demonstration of social skills, development of a strong feeling of self-worth and the development of a lifelong love for learning. Additionally, parental involvement helps build suitable school environments for children to thrive in and also helps cultivate good relations between teachers and parents. Consequently, the components and types of parental involvement in education include: volunteering at school, guiding home-based learning, constant communication with the school, participating in school decision-making processes, provision of learning resources, creation of safe home environments for children (environments that encourage learning at home) and modelling/encouraging good behavior. This article paid close attention to these components in an attempt to enlighten on parental participation in education with reference to Joyce Epstein's parental involvement framework.

Subject Areas

Sociology of Education

Keywords

Benefits, Importance, Types, Parental Involvement, Education

1. Introduction

A parent is one who gives birth, nurtures or raises a child. Consequently, a parent is a man or woman who takes on all the parental responsibilities towards a child. This could also be a stepmother, an adoptive father, or a child's relative (Virasiri, Yunibhand, Chaiwawat, 2011) [1].

On the other hand parenting refers to raising children from infancy to adulthood, in an environment of nurturance (Virasiri, Yunibhand, Chaiwawat, 2011) [1]. Similarly Epstein (2010) [2], contends that parenting is the rearing of children and in particular the care, guidance and love given by a parent to a child. Accordingly, parenting is the single largest variable implicated in children's education, substance misuse, truancy, school disruption, under-achievement in class and juvenile crime.

As a result, parents have an important role to play in the upbringing and modelling of their children's behaviour as children stay at home with the parents much longer than at school and also due to the fact that children have more in-family interaction than schooling (Epstein, 2010) [2].

2. Significance and Importance of Parental Involvement in Education

A growing body of research suggests that when parents collaborate with the school effectively, students learning outcomes improve (Meadan, *et al.* 2014 [3], Fan & Chen, 2001 [4]). Dixon (2008) [5], describes parental involvement in education as a combination of commitment and active participation on the part of the parent to the school and to the student. Accordingly, parental involvement, in almost any form, produces positive measurable gains in students' achievement.

Furthermore, numerous studies indicate that the more parents participate in their children's education in a sustained manner, at every level, including in advocacy, decision making, school fundraising, volunteering, acting as para-professionals and as home teachers, the more students' achievement improves (Sakaue, Wokadala & Ogawa, 2023) [6]. Similarly, Reinke (2013) [7] contends that parental involvement helps meet parental information needs concerning their children's education, meet parents' emotional needs, use parents as change agents and becomes a source of information regarding the student at school. Accordingly, parents who avail books and other learning resources, make time to read for their children, guide television watching, take trips with their children, provide stimulating experiences and monitor behavior contribute to their children's academic achievement. Consequently, parents should complement teachers' efforts by exposing the children to practical learning environments like visiting museums, game parks or agricultural production or manufacturing firms as this would enrich learning and provide vivid education experiences for children (Griffin & Steen 2010) [8]. Hence, in order to provide suitable education, the involvement of parents both at school and at home is imperative.

Similarly, Fan and Chen (2001) [4] contend that parental involvement has a

positive influence on students' academic performance and is also an important ingredient for the remedy of many problems in education. Moreover, according to the authors, one fundamental way in which parents can transmit the cultural value of education is by becoming involved in their children's schooling.

Fan and Chen (2001) [4] further indicate that parental involvement in education rotates around three main constructs, these are: supervision, communication and parental expectation.

Several studies also suggest that parental support, involvement, encouragement and positive reinforcement are all well-linked to children's learning competence, healthy social relations, a strong feeling of self-worth and fewer behavioral problems (Griffin & Steen, 2010 [8]; Oranga, Obuba & Boinett, 2022) [9]. The studies also contend that parental involvement helps cultivate good relations between teachers and parents and also helps build a more suitable school environment for children to thrive in.

Additionally, parental engagement and collaboration ensures that parents help with continuity and practice at home of skills learnt at school (Oranga, Obuba, Sore & Boinett, 2022) [10]. Consequently the authors indicate that when parents are adequately involved in their children's education, they act as a source of information regarding students' progress and challenges that students' encounter at home, necessitating the need for parents to adequately participate in their children's education.

However, despite the numerous benefits that accrue from parental involvement and participation in education, a study by Fan and Chen (2001) [4] reveals that parents have lost the original teaching function, thereby impacting negatively on their children's schooling and learning. Accordingly, parents have become distant observers in their children's learning process, necessitating the need to explore the components of parental participation in education with the ultimate goal of enhancing parental involvement in education. The following section thus elaborates on the different components and ways through which parents can participate in their children's education as postulated by Epstein (2003 [11], 2011 [12], 2010 [2] & 2017 [13]).

3. Components of Parental Involvement in Education as Postulated by Joyce Epstein

Epstein (2011 [12]; 2010 [2]) indicates that there are many reasons for establishing partnerships between the school, family and community at large. Accordingly, the main reasons are enhancing learners' academic outcomes, enhancing school programmes and school climate, developing leadership and parental skills and helping parents and entire families to connect with others in the community and school. Hence the components of parental involvement, as derived from varied studies by Epstein (2003 [11], 2011 [12], 2010 [2] & 2017 [13]) are thus presented in **Figure 1**.

As shown in **Figure 1**, in accordance with Epstein (2011) [11], parental involvement in education should encompass volunteering, home based learning,

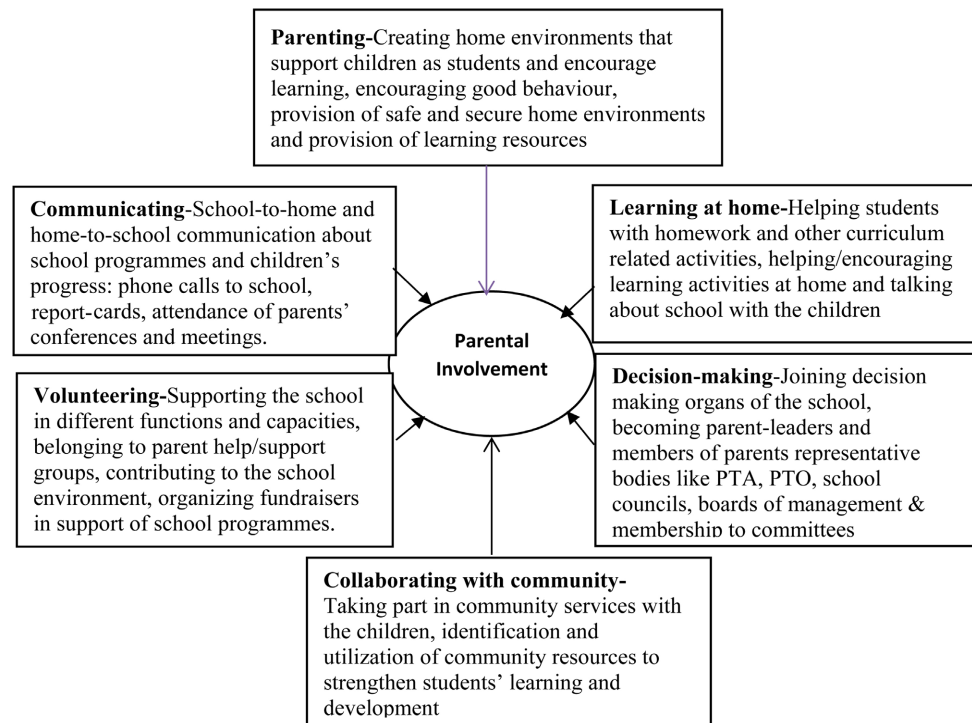


Figure 1. Diagrammatic summary of parental involvement components as postulated by Epstein (2003 [11], 2011 [12], 2010 [2] & 2017 [13]).

communicating with the school, participating in school decision making and creation of safe home environments that also encourage learning, modelling good behavior and provision of learning resources. On the other hand, volunteering includes: supporting schools during different functions/capacities, belonging to parent help/support groups, contributing to the environment and organizing fundraisers in support of school programmes. Accordingly, communicating involves: school-to-home or home-to-school communication (about school programmes and children's progress), phone calls, report cards, attendance of parents' conferences and meetings and talking about school with the children.

Furthermore, Epstein (2011 [12], 2010 [2]), suggests that parents should join decision making organs of the schools, becoming parents' leaders and members of parents' representative bodies like parents' teachers' associations/organisations (PTA/O), school councils, committees and boards of management. Additionally, the author advocates for parental collaboration and engagement in the community that involves participation in community services with the children and identification and utilization of community resources to strengthen students' learning and development. This article paid attention to these components in an attempt to establish the significance and importance of parental involvement in education. Further elaborations on the components are thus provided in the subsequent sections of this article.

3.1. Parenting

This type of involvement influences a child's learning and development at home.

This includes all that parents engage in to raise healthy, happy children who become capable at school (Sakaue, *et al.*, 2023 [6]; Oranga & Guangying, 2019 [14]). Accordingly, parents should strive to offer positive and secure home environments. Furthermore, according to Epstein (2010 [2]), parenting involves nurturing and instilling positive attributes and values in learners. Schools may offer support and assistance to parents to ensure that they create positive home environments that enable students to thrive and grow. This would eventually result in enhanced school outcomes for the children.

3.2. Home-School Communication

When parents, schools and communities communicate effectively the parents get to understand what is expected of the students and how to help and support their social and academic development at home (Herman, *et al.*, 2012 [15]). Further, a two-way communication between the school and the home is vital to student's success (Haisraeli, & Fogiel-Bijaoui, 2023 [16]). Teachers and school support staff are required to communicate regularly with parents about students via email, class letters, telephone and newsletters. Communicating involves school-to-home/home-to-school communication about school programmes and children's needs and achievements.

Parents also require the opportunity to communicate their concerns and worries with the educators. Epstein (2010) [2] recommends that families with language barriers should have translation assistance provided to them as effective communication ensures that everyone understands school policies and decisions adequately, ultimately leading to maximum cooperation between teachers and parents which subsequently leads to good educational outcomes (Epstein, 2010 [2]).

3.3. Volunteering

This is the third component of Epstein's parental participation framework. Accordingly, parental volunteering could help children to become aware of their many deep-seated talents, skills and occupations. Parent volunteers could help teach children different cultures and traditions through organized school exhibitions, oral history storytelling events and cultural fairs. Moreover, teachers might also solicit parental' voluntary help with special projects in the classrooms, class field trips or other relevant roles. Volunteering should encompass: supporting schools during different functions/capacities, belonging to parents' help/support groups, contributing to the environment and organizing fundraisers in support of school programmes. According to Epstein (2011) [12], parents can be a strong gold mine of skills and talents, which can be of tremendous help in the process of teaching young learners. Bringing parents into the school environment could consequently help students learn how to communicate and interact with adults and may give students a more one-on-one interaction and attention and help build their confidence while also stimulating the children's cognitive abilities. This, accordingly, would lead to enhanced learning outcomes.

3.4. Home Learning

According to Epstein's framework, when parents are provided with knowledge ideas and skills to help children learn at home, they are better able to aid teachers in the teaching process. Epstein (2010) [2] suggest that schools could set up a regular schedule of homework requiring students and parents to discuss what students are learning in class. Subsequently, parents could be provided with specific examples and activities that they could engage in with the learners at home to aid their learning and development processes. Accordingly, such materials would need to be presented in an easy and understandable format and in the parents' native language. Educators could also make home visits to show parents how to engage with children in learning activities. According to Epstein (2011) [12], hosting a parents' seminar or workshop at the school may also prove useful for educating parents about how they can be of help with school matters.

According to Epstein (2010 [2], 2017 [12]), educators can help parents learn how to supervise homework, communicate their expectations for homework and support kids as they work on school work at home. Studies have always linked improved school scores to a more positive attitude towards homework and subsequently linked a positive attitude towards homework to an effective home-learning environment. Parents thus are expected to provide suitable and effective learning environments for their children at home, in a bid to improve their children's learning outcomes.

3.5. Decision-Making

Under this component, parents should participate in making important decisions in the school through membership in school decision making organs like Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs) or school board of governors or management (BOG/Ms). Accordingly, by including parents in school decision-making organs, parent-friendly programmes would be developed. Consequently, children benefit from a reduction in behavioral issues and increase in school attendance. This ultimately leads to a more suitable and effective learning environment at school. Moreover, according to Epstein, newsletters could be used to keep parents updated and informed about changes and upcoming school events.

Furthermore, Epstein (2011) [12] suggests that questionnaires may be employed to rate parental satisfaction with school programmes and activities as questionnaires allow anonymity that is needed by parents in order to voice their opinions or suggestions for improvement in the school. Apparently, parental involvement in school decision-making activities may aid in achieving goals that help boost students' academic outcomes. Additionally, parental organizations may spearhead fundraisings and contributions that may eventually benefit the school and the students at large (Epstein, 2010) [2]. Thus, Epstein (2011) [12], suggests that parents join decision making organs of the schools, becoming parents' leaders and members of parents' representative bodies like parents' teachers' associations/organisations (PTA/O), school councils, committees and boards

of management.

3.6. Collaborating with Community

This is the last component of the framework. Accordingly, schools can work cooperatively with parents and communities for activities that strengthen, enhance and develop learners. This is because integration of resources and services from the community into learning programmes may help strengthen students' learning and development.

Under this component, parents should help link and expose their children to the community and community recreational resources, cultural and athletic programmes as these provide important learning opportunities for their children. Consequently, students receive exposure to different experiences and opportunities, which assist with making choices in future educational opportunities and careers. Hence, parents should help with identification and utilization of community resources to strengthen students' learning and development (Epstein, 2017) [13].

4. Application of Epstein's Theory

This framework could assist educators to develop and enhance school/parent partnerships, ultimately increasing the role that parents play in the education of their children at school, family and community level. Epstein's framework, strives to bring school, parents and community together in a positive manner. The structure also acts as a guide to educating and supporting parents in an effort to enhance their involvement in their children's education. This framework ultimately helps to establish strategies of enhancing parental involvement in education. Epstein's theory may also guide in the development of a parent's education programme that may enlighten parents on their role in their children's education. Furthermore, Epstein's framework is comprehensive and touches almost all areas of learning.

5. Critique of Epstein's Framework

Evidently, Epstein's comprehensive parental involvement framework makes a lot more sense to parents in developed countries as opposed to those in developing ones as parents in developing countries, are yet to embrace the very basic aspects of parental involvement in their children's education like paying of school fees. However, it could be adopted as a guideline for a comprehensive parental involvement strategy/policy as it covers vital dimensions of parental participation and engagement in education.

To implement the parents' involvement framework as postulated by Epstein (2010) [2]) in developing countries, a lot of effort and financial resources would be required. The framework too does not recognise the fact that school factors like teachers' attitude, lack of proper teacher-training/in-service also form a barrier to parental participation in education. The framework also does not bring to

the fore parental involvement issues that focus on learners with disabilities but generalises all learners yet learners with disabilities have unique needs that may not be catered for adequately by a generalised framework.

6. Conclusion

Schools should work towards implementing parental participation and engagement activities and programmes that involve all parents. Furthermore, administrators and educators should provide an inviting environment in order to make the school less intimidating to parents that have previously had negative school experiences. Additionally, teachers should strive to make/establish contact with parents throughout the school year and not just when problems arise as this would strengthen home-school relations and parental participation and involvement in their children's education.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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