

Level of Parental Involvement and Its Implications for Improving Students' Learning in Secondary Schools of Sidama Zone, Ethiopia

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Abstract: This Study Tried To Investigate The Level Of Parental Involvement And Its Implications For Improving Students' Learning In Secondary Schools. The Study Employed Descriptive Survey Design, The Sampling Techniques Used Included Availability And Simple Random Sampling. The Sample Consisted Of Teachers, Principals, Vice-Principals, Students And Pta Members Of Secondary Schools In Sidama Zone And Education Office Experts. The Data Gathering Tools Employed Were Questionnaire And Interview. The Data Gathered Through Closed-Ended Questionnaire Was Analyzed Using Percentage, Frequency, Standard Deviation, P-Test And Mean Score While The Data Gathered Through Interview And Open-Ended Questions Were Narrated Qualitatively. The Study Indicated That The Level Of Parental Involvement In Their Children's Education In The Study Area Was Low And It Was Not Contributing Much For Improving Students' Learning. Barriers Such As, Lack Of Awareness, Shortage Of Time And The Load Of Work Affected Parental Involvement In Secondary Schools. Improving Level Of Parental Involvement In The Schools Requires The Coordinated Efforts Of The School Leaders, Education Office Experts And Other Stakeholders In Sidama Zone.

Keywords - Parental Involvement, Secondary Schools, Students' Learning

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I. INTRODUCTION

Involvement Of Parents In Education Of Their Children Is Likely To Positively Impact Educational Achievement (Cutler, 2000). Parents Can Help Their Children In Many Ways. Among These Important Activities Are Assisting Children With Their Reading, Home Works And Monitoring Their Progress Regularly (Chang, Park, Singh & Sung, (2009). In Schools Where Involvement Of Parents Is Below Expected Level, Achievement Level Of Most Learners Is Likely To Be Negatively Affected (Agostino, Hedges & Borman, 2001).

Research In The Area Of Parental Involvement Indicates That There Is Strong Link Between Parents' Involvement In The Education Of Their Children And The Chances Of Success For Those Children (Griffith, 2005). Greater Attainment Of Goals Are Well-Known When Parent Involvement Is Vigorous. When Parents Exert Efforts With Their Children Regarding Their Education At Home, And When They Engage In School Affairs That Are Likely To Affect The Success Of Their Children, Educational Outcomes Will Be Better.

The Broader Literature Also Informs That The Ultimate Objective Of Parental Involvement In Education Of Their Children Is To Maximize Students' Achievement Levels By Improving The Way Curriculum Is Taught To Children And By Creating A Conducive Atmosphere For Learning. This Will Happen To A Greater Extent If There Is Increased Participation Of The Parents In Their Children's Learning At Home And School.

Participation Of Parents And The Whole Family In Education Of Children And School Affairs Begins With The Founding Of A Positive Relationship Between The School And The Parents/The Family Using Various Communication Channels (Dawit, 2015; Makoelle, 2011; Pollock & Winton 2012). Besides, A Good Communication Strategy Helps The Schools To Keep In Touch With The Parents As Well As The Broader Community (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002).

Research Clearly Connects Family And Community Involvement To Student Success And Shows That Active, Meaningful Engagement From Parents And Others Helps Schools Boost Student Achievement And Produce Graduates Who Are Prepared To Be Productive, Globally-Competitive Citizens. Parent Involvement Has Been Shown To Be An Important Factor That Optimistically Manipulates Children's Education. Evidence Shows That Greater Number Of Schools Are Looking For Ways To Maximize Parental Involvement..

In Poorly Performing Schools, Parents Are Usually Requested To Come To The School When A Breach Rules And Regulations Of The School Is Committed By Their Children (Dawit, 2015). Such Participation By Parents Of The Children May Help Schools To Solve The Discipline Problems (Robert, 2010). However, It Does Not Result In Long Lasting Effect Related To Performance Of The Children In Their Education.

Policy Documents In Ethiopian Context Indicate That The Education System Is Facing Critical Problems Related To Quality Of Education Due To Poor Infrastructure And Low Participation Level Of Parents As Well As The Broader Community (Moe, 2008; Moe, 2007). Experiences Also Shows That Schools Need Proper Parental Support To Make The Students In The Schools Achieve To The Maximum Of Their Potential. In Most Public Schools Participation Of Parents Seems Be Below The Expected Level And It Is Limited To Sending Of Their Children To School (Moe, 2007).

According To Sidama Zone Educational Department Annual Report Of 2016/17 Academic Year, The Zone Ranked Among The Lowest Zones As Most Of The Students Scored Less Than Expected In Grade 10 And 12 National Examinations. It Was Reported That Following Low Achievement Of Students The Community/Society Has Expressed Its Complaints And Dissatisfaction On The Underperformance Of The Schools In The Zone In Different Conferences And Meetings. It Has Also Been Reported That Lack Of Proper Participation Of Parents Is Also A Cause For Low Level Performance Of Students. By Taking Into Account The Role Parents Can Play In Improving Achievement Level Of Their Children, It Has Become Important To Conduct Research On The Extent Of Parental Involvement In Education Of Their Children And Barriers Affecting Their Involvement It The Study Area.

Research Questions

1. To What Extent Are Parents Getting Involved In Their Children's Learning In Secondary Schools Of Sidama Zone?
2. What Are Barriers To Parental Involvement In Sidama Zone Secondary Schools?

II. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This Study Employed Descriptive Survey Design Because The Study Aimed At Collecting Information From Respondents Regarding Their Opinions About Parental Involvement In Improving Students' Learning. The Participants In The Study Were Teachers, Principals, Pta Members, Students In Six Secondary Schools And Education Officer Experts In The Zone. The Sample Size For This Study Was 12 Principals, 24 Vice Principals, 243 Teachers, 12 Pta Members, 341 Students And 12 Woreda Education Officers Selected By Availability Sampling And Simple Random Sampling Technique Respectively. Questionnaires With Five Point Scale(Strongly Agree To Strongly Disagree)And Open-Ended Items And Interview Were Used To Get Necessary Data From The Participants. Cronbach's Alpha For Pilot Test Was Calculated And Reliability Of 0.87 For Teachers' Questionnaire And 0.9 For Students' Questionnaires Indicated That The Questionnaire Was Reliable. Data Analysis Was Analyzed Using Descriptive And Inferential Statistics These Included Mean, Standard Deviation, Percentage And P-Test.

III. RESULTS

The Extent Of Parental Involvement In Secondary Schools

Active Involvement Of Parents Is Believed To Contribute Positively To Success Of Students. Parents, Therefore, Are Expected To Work Actively And In Collaboration With The School Community(Teachers, Principals, Education And Training Board, Education Offices) So As To Enhance The Learning Of Their Children (Yan & Lin, 2005). They Are Expected To Engage In School Affairs Such By Contributing Necessary Resources And Participating In Decision Making. Besides, They Are Supposed To Support Their Children In Various Ways. The Data Below Shows The Extent Of Parents Involvement In Their Children's Education In Sidama Zone Schools.

Table 1: Teachers And Students' Response On The Extent Of Parental Involvement

No	Items	Respondents		Scale					Descriptive		P-Value
		Teachers=243	Students=341	Sa	A	U	D	Sd	Mean	Sd	
1	Parents Are Engaged In Communication Activities With	Teachers	F	33	26	23	70	91	2.90	1.14	-1.34
			%	11.3	8.9	7.9	24.1	31.3			
		Students	F	55	39	39	56	152	3.00	1.11	0.04

	The School To Improve Students' Learning		%	16.1	11.4	11.4	16.4	44.6			
2	Parents Are Supporting Their Children At Home On Matters Related To Their Learning.	Teachers	F	30	33	22	39	119	3.04	1.07	0.59
			%	10.3	11.3	7.6	13.4	40.9			
		Students	F	32	35	63	77	134	2.97	1.09	-0.39
			%	9.4	10.3	18.5	22.6	39.3			
3	Parents Are Actively Participating In Decision-Making In The School.	Teachers	F	20	30	18	58	117	2.90	0.99	-1.55
			%	6.9	10.3	6.2	19.2	40.2			
		Students	F	43	30	29	81	158	2.88	1.02	-2.11
			%	12.6	8.8	7.5	23.8	46.3			

The Data In The Table Shows That The Level Of Parents Involvement In Communication Activities To Improve Students' Learning In The Secondary Schools Was Low As Only 24.27% Of The Teachers Replied Agree And 161(66.25%) Of The Teachers Said Disagree To The Item. Similar Responses Were Given By Students As Only 27.56% Agreed While 60.99% Of The Students Showed Disagreement To The Item. The Calculated Mean Value Of Teachers (2.90) And, That Of Students(3.00) Approximately Shows The Disagreement Of The Participants To The Item, And The Computed P-Test Value For Teachers -1.34 And For Students 0.04 Was Significant At P 0.00<0.05.

Regarding Whether Parents Were Engaging In Supporting Their Children's Learning At Home Or Not 25.92% And 19.64% Of The Teachers And Students Respectively Said Agree While 65.02% And 61.87% Of The Teachers And Students Respectively Showed Disagreement To The Item. The Mean Value 3.04 For Teachers And 2.97 For Students Approximates Disagree (3.00) And The Standard Deviation Of The Teachers (1.07) And The Students (1.09) Show That The Deviation Is Approximately The Same For Both Groups Of Respondents. The P-Test Value Of The Teachers And Students Implied That Parental Support To Their Children The Schools Was Below Expected.

Item 3 Was Asked To See Whether Parents Were Involved In Decision Making Processes In The School. The Data In The Table Reflected That Parents Were Not Actively Participating In Decision-Making Processes In The Schools. Though Making Evidence Based Decision Requires Certain Professional Skills (Davies, 2002), Parents Are Expected To Participate In Decisions That Affect The Learning Of Their Children In A Meaningful Way. Data From Interview Also Indicated That Parents' Involvement In Critical Decisions Was Non-Existent In The Study Area Except Some Discipline Matters.

Parental Involvement In Improving Students' Learning As Reported By Teachers

It Is Known That Involvement Of Parents Is Likely To Result In Increased Promotion Of Students From One Grade Level To The Other. It Helps To Minimize Level Of School Absenteeism And Drop-Out. The Teachers' Responses Have Been Assessed To See If Parents' Involvement In The Secondary Schools Was Contributing To Promotion Of Students, Decrease Of Drop-Out And Discipline Problems. The Data Is Presented As Follows.

Table 2: Teachers' Response On Contribution Of Parental Involvement

No	Items	Respondents		Scale					Descriptive	
				Sa	A	U	D	Sd	Mean	Sd
1	Parental Involvement Is Contributing For High Promotion Of Students In The School.	Teachers	F	38	28	38	39	110	2.49	1.11
			%	13.1	9.6	13.8	13.4	37.8		
2	Parental Involvement Is Helping To Reduce Students' Absenteeism From	Teachers	F	26	44	21	62	90	2.96	1.10
			%	8.9	15.1	7.2	21.3	31.9		

	School.										
3	Drop-Out Rate Is Minimized Due To Parental Involvement In The School.	Teachers	F	20	32	22	54	115	2.89	1.01	
			%	6.9	11.0	7.6	18.6	39.5			
4	Students' Behavior/Discipline Is Improving Because Parental Involvement In The School	Teachers	F	22	29	33	40	119	2.70	1.17	
			%	7.6	10.0	11.3	13.7	40.9			

More Than 50% Of The Teachers Showed Disagreement To The Contribution Of Parents To High Promotion Of Students In The Schools. It Means That Parents Of Children In Sidama Zone Schools Were Not Contributing Their Share To Minimize Educational Wastage By Helping Their Children Pass From One Grade Level To The Other. The Calculated Mean Values In The Table For Items 1, 2, 3, And 4 Are 2.49, 2.96, 2.89 And 2.7 Respectively Show That Teachers' Disagree To The Contribution Of Parents' Involvement To The Issues Raised In The Items.

Studies Indicate That The Longer Parents Involve Meaningfully In Their Children's Education That Their Children To Become Successful In School. However, The Data In The Above Table Seems Against The Premises Of This Statement As The Respondents Were Of The Opinion That Parents Were Not Contributing Significantly To The Improvement Of Their Children's Learning.

Regarding This, One Of The Participant Principals Had To Say:

Most Parents Show Resistance To Our Call For Participation In Their Children's Education. They Miss Regular Meetings Called By The School And Some Others Are Not Willing To Communicate With Teachers Regarding Education Of Their Children.

Thus, From The Preceding Quotation We Can Infer That Parents Were Unsupportive What The School Is Carrying Out To Facilitate Learning Of The Students In The Schools. This Might Seriously Affect The Performance Of The Students In The Schools In Particular And The School In General.

Similarly, During Interview Session, Significant Number Of Pta Members Explained That The Contribution Of Parents To Minimization Of Students' Absenteeism Was Becoming Low. One Of The School Pta Members Explained:

In The School Parents Are Not Actively Participating In Different Matters. There Is Lack Of Support To Students, And Parents Are Not Showing Willingness To Follow-Up Their Children. There Is Also Lack Of Commitment Among Parents As Well As The Community About What They Can Do To The Education Of Their Children. There Is Also Inefficient Performance By Pta Members In The School.

From The Quotation, It Is Possible To Say That Absence Of Training Programs For Pta Members, Lack Of Continuous Follow Up Of Students And Lack Of Commitment Detrimentially Affect The Performance Of The Schools As Well As The Students In The Schools.

Barriers To Parental Involvement In Secondary Schools

Barriers To Parental Involvement Are Those Hindrances/Obstacles That Make Parents Not Participate In Education Of Their Children As Well As School Affairs. The Following Table Presents Data Related To Barriers To Parental Involvement In Education And School Affairs.

Table 3: Barriers To Parental Involvement

No	Items	Teachers=243 Students=341		Scale					Mean	Sd	P-Value
				Sa 5	A 4	U 3	D 2	Sd 1			
1	Lack Of Awareness Of Parents To Be Involved In School Matters	Teachers	F	47	13	14	68	101	2.20	1.09	-
			%	19.3	5.3	5.7	27.9	41.5			
		Students	F	13	46	12	114	156	2.01	1.01	-
			%	3.8	13.4	3.5	33.4	45.7			

2	Lack Of School Programs Promote Active Involvement Of Parents	Teachers	F	47	21	20	63	92	2.75	1.18	-3.26
			%	19.3	8.6	8.3	25.9	37.8			
		Students	F	41	71	12	98	119	2.63	1.18	-5.72
			%	12.0	20.8	3.5	28.0	34.8			
3	Lack Of Support From School Leaders To Involve Parents In School Affairs	Teachers	F	27	47	9	70	90	2.61	1.10	-5.47
			%	11.1	19.3	3.7	28.8	37.0			
		Students	F	71	30	24	97	119	2.57	1.14	-6.86
			%	29.2	8.7	7.0	28.4	34.8			

Item 1 In The Above Table Asked Whether Lack Of Parents' Awareness Has Affected Their Participation In Their Children's Education And Those Affairs Of The School That Affect Learning Of Their Children. Approximately Twenty-Nine Percent And 22.9% Of The Teachers And Students Respectively Reflected Their Agreement To The Item While 69.5% Of Teachers And 79.1% Of The Students Of Disagreed To The Item. The Computed Mean Of The Teachers (2.20) And That Of The Students (2.01), On Average Approximates To Disagree (2.10) And The Average Standard Deviation Of Both The Teachers And The Students Was Calculated As 1.05 Showing Approximately Similar Deviation Within The Group.

From The Above Explanation And Analysis One Can Easily See That Lack Of Awareness Is Not Considered As A Barrier. Rather, It Is Lack Of Commitment That Is Resulting In Lack Of Involvement As The Extract From The Qualitative Data Indicated:

Parents Of The Children In The School Show Carelessness, And They Are Not Committed Though They Were Aware Of What They Can Do To The Education Of Their Children. They Are Not Volunteer To Take Part In The Affairs Of The School. They Simply Consider That Teachers And Principals Are Responsible To Make Their Children Successful.

Similarly, One Of The Education Office Experts Argued:

Parents Simply Count What Is Done And Not Done Activities In The School, But They Do Not Give Support To Teachers And Principals In The Schools On How To Enhance Academic Achievement Of Students In The School,There Are A Lot Of Limitations Related To Involvement Of Parents. The Education Level Of Parents Is Also Low To Help Students At Home With Their Learning. Besides, Shortage Of Time And Distance From School Are Factors Affecting Involvement Of Parents.

Yet, The Data In The Above Table On Items 2 And 3 Clearly Show That There Were No Problems Related To Availability Of School Programs To Promote Active Involvement Of Parents, And School Leaders Are Also Providing Support To Increase Involvement Of Parents.

IV. DISCUSSION (CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS)

The Study Shows That (As Greater Number Of Students And Teachers Confirmed) Parents In The Study Area Were Not Discussing Matters Related To Academic Achievement With Their Children. Significant Number Of Students Responses Showed That Their Parents Are Not Actively Involved In Improving Their Learning. However, Studies Indicate That Children Whose Parents Are Involved In Their Education Are More Motivated To Learn (Adeyemi, 2005), And Motivated Students Tend To Be More Active In Class, More Worried About Homework, And More Successful Academically(Agostino, Hedges & Borman, 2001). In This Regard It Seems That Students In Sidama Zone Are At Disadvantage As Their Parents Are Concerned With The Education Of Their Children.

As The Findings Indicated, The Mere Contribution Of Financial And Material Resources Alone May Not Enhance Achievement Level Of The Students In The Study Area If The Students Are Getting Additional Support From Their Parents. It Was Also Noted That Low Level Of Parents Participation In School Affairs Is Likely To Contribute For Increased Drop-Out As Well As Discipline Problems In The Schools (Bryan, 2005). The Results Indicated That Extent Of Parental Contribution In Improving Students' Learning Was Poor, And The Students Were Not Privileged In This Regard (Baeck, 2010). Findings Also Showed That The Extent Of Parents' Partaking In The Schools In Resource Mobilization Was Insufficient To Improve Students' Learning.

The Study Shows That The Highest Number Of Students And Teachers Agreed That There Are Certain Barriers Affecting Parental Involvement In Their Children's Learning. These Included Lack Of Parents Commitment, Shortage Of Time And Distance From The Schools. Similar Findings Were Reported By Chang, Park, Singh, & Sung, (2009) And Cripp And Zyromski (2010). Due To The Barriers Listed Above, There Was Substandard And Weak Involvement Of Parents In Improving Students' Learning In The Study Area. This Was Aggravated By Low Level Of Parents' Education To Contribute To Their Children's Learning. To Improve

Parental And Community Participation In Secondary Schools, The School Leaders, Education Officers And Other Concerned Stakeholders Are Expected To Work Together And Enhance Commitment Level Of Parents Make Them Contribute To The Education Of Their Children.

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