Original Research Article

Ensuring academic achievement through the influence of parental involvements in facilitating effective learning: A case of Arusha urban Primary Schools, Tanzania

Joshua M. Kuboja

Department of Curriculum and Teaching- University of Arusha, P. o. Box, 07, Usa-River, Arusha – Tanzania.

Author's Email: kuboja2000@yahoo.co.uk

The study focused on factors influencing parental involvement and its effects on pupils' academic achievement in Arusha urban council. The study employed descriptive survey design and it used questionnaire tool to collect data to inform the audience. The number of respondents was 120 who filled questionnaire and sampling technique was random oriented. The data obtained was organized and computed through SPSS programme. Descriptive statistical techniques like mean scores and standard deviation were ascertained in order to get results. It was noted that parents who had low level of education were less responsible for what is going on in schools. The findings showed that in most cases, great number of parents was not attending school meetings and other involvements like following consistence of their children in school, buying books and school uniforms. It was also found that most parents feel uncomfortable to face the school administration to discuss their children progress due to low self-esteem syndrome. It is recommended that school administrators improve parent-teacher forum where parents can feel welcome and their views accommodated.

Key words: Parental involvement, low self-esteem, school administration, academic achievement

INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement in facilitating effective learning in public primary schools has attracted many educators and researchers in the field of education in the world. For instance, Epstein (2002) had argued that, no school improvement has been created without parental involvement which strengthened parents, teachers, administrators and students' partnerships which end into benefiting students, improving schools, assisting teachers and strengthening families.

Historically, parental involvement emerged as compensation programme since 1960's and 1970's in United State of America (USA) and Europe as among other programmes aiming at encouraging minority low income parents to prepare their children for more successful schools and prevent education delays for children who are at risk (Bakker et al., 2007). It was just an appeal to support lower school children achievers through parents' intervention. For instance, in USA, during 1967 parental involvement was established as the programme for low income kindergarten and first graders students to sustain compulsory education programmes. Its execution manifested positive results by equipping parents with skills

on how to help their children with home works for enhancement of education progress. Being potential in education, attempt to increase parental involvement in school had long made improvement.

The Salamanca Conference on Special Education held in Spain 1994 discussed that, parents should be encouraged to participate in educational activities at home and schools for the purpose of supervising and supporting their children learning. Similarly, the government should promote parental involvement through policy statements that allow formulation of parent–school association with the intention of enhancing their children's education. The argument draws strong support on how parents are vital in their children schooling in the way of demanding policy which will act upon constraints that limit parents in monitoring children education in public primary schools. This would strengthen efforts towards achieving quality education for all (EFA) (UNESCO, 2003).This explains how families and parental involvement is highly required, the World Education Forum Conference of 2000 held in Dakar, Senegal discussed what the roles that governments should play in enhancing partnership with all education stakeholders including parents. This should go beyond not only in financing education and cost sharing but also should build in whole education process and learning for seeking quality education for all(UNESCO, 2000).

Parental involvement in education has also attracted many scholars in relation to its contribution to students' progress. For example, in Nigeria, Eze (2015) commented that, parents are the first teacher at home and potential in early literacy skills acquisition of their children. Also he insisted that, higher academic progress can be achieved if parents become more conscious and have positive attitude toward learning as well as high performance of pupils. Studies from South Africa (Clark, 2007) also showed that, the parents who perform actively in homework and study programme of their children contribute to their good performance. There are schools Acts that create parents as active partners in schools governance; even though low attendance in parents meetings, lack involvement in fundraising projects and reluctance in paying other materials apart from school fees in public primary schools like school uniforms, books, and other learning materials are the evidence of low parental involvement.

Parental willingness to be involved in pupils' homework is high with expectation of fostering pupils learning and supplementing teachers efforts yet it is originated by number of factors. Equally, parental involvement is assumed to be more mothers' responsibility than fathers' responsibility. Education policy and various programmes in Tanzania have shown great concern on the roles that are played by various education stakeholders including parents. For instance, Education and Training Policy in Tanzania (1995) recognizes the roles of parents in education through decentralization, in which parents are involved in education process by financing education through cost sharing and put emphases on providing education through partnership with community (URT,

2001). Experiences from schools indicate parents were doing less to fulfill their responsibilities in facilitating effective learning like buying books, schools uniforms and food for their children, attending parents-teacher meeting, contacting to school about students' academic progress and attendance which is contrary to the expected aim of the policy.

Primary Education Development Programme PEDP I and PEDP II acknowledges the roles of parents in education that are likely to cover education financing, participating in construction of school buildings and ensuring that children are enrolled in schools, attending classes and are retained in education system (URT, 2001; URT, 2010).Unfortunately, the role of parents in primary education to some extent is limited and much rested on financing and construction of school buildings which is not fully achieved, on the other hand parents' participation and commitment in their academic progress, such as knowing about their children attendance in school, helping with home works is constrained. Generally, some parents have little or no involvement in all levels of education.

For the case of African countries, parental involvement in education has also attracted many scholars in relation to its contribution to students' progress. For example, in Nigeria, Eze (2015) commented that, parents are the first teacher at home and potential in early literacy skills acquisition of their children. Also he insisted that, higher academic progress can be achieved if parents become more conscious and have positive attitude toward learning as well as high performance of pupils.

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In Tanzania, there has been poor involvement of parents and other family members in the students' school activities in facilitating effective learning due to low family income, low levels of education of the parents, lack of facilities in schools, lack of teachers, indiscipline and unfavorable home environments; this result into poor performance in some primary schools (Mihayo, 2004). Hence,the need to conduct an empirical investigation to determine factors that best influence parental involvement in facilitating effective learning in primary schools in Arusha city.

Parental Involvement

The parents and teachers are most influential from early period of schooling in child life. Parents normally start to possess education and teachers extend it   Sheldon (2009).The emphasize was on the importance of home cooperated with school and establish good financial

relationship with teachers. This means that, children intellectual potential for successes in school education depends in initial efforts of parents in cultivating this potential so as to prepare conducive learning environment.

The studies of educational performance particularly in developed countries invariably indicate that, learning occurs in the home is much more important than that which occur at school, Komba. (2010).The quality of education at home is typically reflected in the educational level of parents, their income level and other indicator of social economic status of the family. Parent or family input to education which include the level of both mother and father education exert a positive or negative and generally significant influence on student achievement.

Parental involvement in education has been a topic of interest for many years among those who are concerned with improving academic achievement for children (Jensen and Seltzer, 2000). After reviewing the literature, Patton (2004) indicates that student achievement is most commonly defined by report cards and grades, grade point averages, enrolment in advanced classes, attendance and staying in school, being promoted to the next grade, and improved behavior. Many researchers recognize the important role and strong positive bond between homes and schools play in the development and education of children (Sanders and Sheldon, 2009; Richardson, 2009; Sheldon, 2009).

The theories put forward have been supported, and reaffirmed, by numerous studies that have shown that, good cooperation between schools, homes and the communities can lead to academic achievement for students, as well as to reforms education. Research has also shown that successful students have strong academic support from their involved parents (Sheldon, 2009).

Furthermore, research on effective schools where those students are learning and achieving, have consistently shown that these schools, despite often working in low social and economic neighborhoods, have strong and positive school-home relationships (Sanders and Sheldon, 2009; Sheldon, 2009). More importantly, these effective schools have made a real effort in reaching out to their students' families in order to bring about liaison and cooperation.

The schools become successful when a strong and positive relationship among students, parents, teachers and the community has been established. All students are more likely to experience academic success if their home environments are supportive. The benefit for students of a strong relationship between schools and homes is based on the development of trust between parents and teachers. Most teachers would like to have the families of their students involved. The problem is that few of them knowhow to go about getting the parents to participate and be involved (Sanders and Sheldon, 2009).

Theoretical Literature Review

This study was influenced much by Epstein's Framework**.**

Epstein's Framework was framework containing six important factors. This framework was based on findings from many studies about what factors were most effective when it comes to children's education (Epstein, 2009). Those six factors were parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community.

In parenting, it insists families with parenting and child rearing skills, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions that support children as pupils. For example, parents play a key role in helping pupils to get to school on time every day. Schools can help families understand and carry out this parenting responsibility in a number of ways (Hellen, 2014).With this aspect, all families may establish home environments which were conducive to support children to learning at school.

Communicating refers to how best to design and conduct an effective two-way communication that was school to home and home to school, about school programmes and their children's progress. This would bridge the gap between parents and schools, which exist due to inadequate information between parents and teachers. It can be achieved through conferences with every parent at least once a year, with follow-ups as needed. Part of parents' names and contact to appear in students' admission forms, there should be special desk to ask parents to register again as the way to trap their commitment into serving the school. Volunteering: Parents need to be recruited and organized for help and support. It was believed that, most parents were professionals and others were businessmen while others were talented in various aspects, so they should be organized and start volunteering and help teachers in various aspects. This reduces the burden teachers experience when monitoring students' progress (Epstein, 2002).

Learning at home provides information and ideas to families about how to help pupils at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning. In practice, may seem difficult but provides workable sample practices. Clark, (2007) adds that these include provision of information for families on skills required for students in all subjects at each level/form; information on homework policies and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home; information on how to assist students to improve skills on various class and school assessments, provision of regular schedule of homework that requires students to discuss and interact with families on what they were learning in class; calendars with activities for parents and students at home, family mathematics, science, and reading activities at school, holiday learning packages or activities; family participation in setting student goals each year and in planning for high schools so as to keep them aware of future obligations and creating desire to see their children's future.

Decision making refers to including parents in school decisions and to developing parent leaders and representatives. Collaborating with the community pertains to identifying and integrating communities' services and

resources to support and strengthen schools, students, and their families. Each of these factors can lead to various results for students, parents, teaching practices and the school climate. In addition, each factor includes many different practices of partnership. Each factor poses challenges to involve all families and those challenges must be met. That is why Epstein (2009) considers it to be important for each school to choose what factors are believed to be most likely to assist the school in reaching its goals for academic success, and to develop a climate of alliance between homes and the schools. Even though the main focus of these six factors is to promote academic achievements, they also contribute to various results for both parents and teachers (Bakker et al., 2007).

When looked critically the model had practical applicability in guiding how the parents should play their roles in guiding the students learning to realize good academic achievement. For example function of the communication. It is now apparent that those schools which strengthen the commutation between the teachers and the parents they are able to communicate on the factors that may impede the pupils' education development and the early intervention may beset by parents at home like finding addition time for the students to take remedial studies during school holidays. But this can only be informed through the school report to the parents. This has to mean that the schools which fail to provide comprehensive report to the parents are hindering the student performance because the parents cannot know what measures they should take about their sons and daughters on learning.

Research questions

1.   What is the demographic profile of respondents categorized according to gender, age and level of education?
2.   To what extent do teacher-parent communications impact on the effectiveness of pupils' learning?
3.   To what extent does parental involvement in schools improve pupils' academic achievements?

METHODOLOGY

The study employed descriptive survey research design. Cooper and Crosner, (2007) consider survey as popular as they allow the collection of a large amount of data from a sizeable population in a highly economical way. Usually obtained by using a questionnaire administered to a sample, these data are standardized, allowing easy comparison. With this regard a sample of parents was determined to participate in the study. According to Patall et al. (2008)"surveys are concerned with conditions or relationships that exist, opinions that are held, processes that are going on, effects that are evident or trends that are developing". Cooper and Crosner, (2007) further consider survey to be characterized by the study of relationships

among variables in already existing units. No attempt is made to randomly assign individual groups and groups to treatment. Siniscalco and Auriat (2012) argue that survey studies can result in useful descriptions of the current state of affairs in a situation and have often been used as the basis for introducing- changes, especially when the state of affairs that is described is considered unacceptable.

Population

The targeted populationin this study includes total parents from three public primary schools whereby the first school had 150 parents, the second had 126 and the third school had 200.So the researcher decided to use at least forty parents from each school. Their involvement in this study based on the fact that they were expected to provide data in terms of their experience and views on the extent to which their involvements in school academic performance refers.

Sample Size

The study was conducted in three selected public primary schools out of 47 public Primary schools at Arusha city council. Respondents included 120 parents or guardians' .Total sample was 120 respondents. A sample is a small group of people that represent characteristic of the target population. There is no fixed number or percentage of subject that determines the size of an adequate sample, instead it may depend upon the nature of population of interest and the data to be gathered and analyzed (Best & Khan 2006). At least, the sample size was taken up to one third of the total population. Table 1 below indicates the number of schools, population and sample of the study.

Sampling Techniques

The random sampling technique was used due to nature of the study whereby parents were randomly selected to provide reliable information to the researcher. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) define sampling as the process of selecting a number of individuals in such a way that they represent the large group of which they were selected (Parents who were involved in the study were important because they were the ones who were taking care of their children at home and who help them in doing homework as well as follow up on their academic progress). Therefore the researcher decided to use 120 parents by considering that each school provided at least 40 volunteered parents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1.Profile of respondents

What is the demographic profile of parents categorized according to age, gender and level of education?
   The response to this research question is found in Table 2. The table contains the summary of descriptive statistics

Table 1: Summary on Population and Sample of the Study

	Category	Population	Sample
1	School A	150	40
2	School B	126	40
3	School C	200	40
Total		**476**	**120**

Table 2: Demographic profile of respondents (N=120)

Demographic profile	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender of parents	Male	57	47.5
	Female	63	52.5
Age of parents	20-30	32	26.7
	31-40	55	45.8
	41-above	33	27.5
Level of Education	Primary	59	49.2
	Secondary	41	34.1
	Diploma	12	10.0
	Degree	08	06.7
Total		120	100.0

on parents' age, gender and level of education.

Table 2 above indicates that a total number of 57 (47.5%) male and 63(52.5) female parents participated in the study. The data revealed that female parents have the majority compared to male parents. The findings of this study are similar to that of Kim (2002) who found that majority of the respondents in her study area were females. These suggest that female parents are more likely to be involved in Children learning activities in school than male parents.

In the same vein, a study conducted in South Africa by Clark (2007) about parental participation in children school affairs turned out to be female on the front line and their counterpart male involved minimally. The reasons accounted for this disparity were found to be that male travel a lot and most likely are not staying home regularly due to economic pressure and some spend much time in alcoholism. It was also found that most children had only single parent: most likely-mother.

According to the revelation of this study, most parents fall under the age of 31-40 years (45.8%). This is the age mostly advised to have children as they are mature enough to handle family responsibilities including the affairs of their children education. Such findings are supported by a study conducted in Nigeria where parents' age ranging 35-45 were found to be more responsible than their counterparts' age lower and above the mean (Sheldon, 2009).

In regard to education level majority of parents (49.2%) have attained primary education while only 10% of the total respondents had reached a level of first degree. This situation is alarming due to the fact that unless the population is well educated, the value of education becomes meaningless even to their children. From his study, Rothestein (2004) found out that the level of education

among the respondents was relatively low compared to the rest medium and high. A further study conducted in Tanzania suggested that in order to have an educated society, adult education must be made a priority (Kingaru, 2014).

Research Question 2. Teacher parent- communication

To what extent do teacher-parent communications impact on the effectiveness of pupils' learning?

The questionnaire required the respondents to answer by circling one of the four options that best described how effective teacher-parent communication can bring tangible results in children academic performance. The guide to such questions were 1 (Strongly Agree), 2 (Agree), 3 (Disagree), 4 (Strongly disagree). The scale used to determine the mean was:

1.00-1.49 strongly agree
1.50-2.49 agree
2.50-3.49 disagree
3.50-4.49 strongly disagree

To ascertain the responses of this question, descriptive statistics was used to determine the overall mean score and standard deviation for each category. The results in Table 3 were compared and analyzed accordingly.

From Table 3, the overall mean for the communication factors falls between second scale (1.50-2.49 agree) that means most parents have agreed to have good communication with the teachers. Majority of parents have agree with mean 1.65 and 1.63 respectively for the parents to have contacts with school administration and parents always go to school to solve problem of their children with teachers . The study found out that Communication is a crucial factor to be considered as a way of involving parents

Table 3: Descriptive analysis on the Importance of parent-teacher communication on students' academic achievement

Parent-teacher Communication	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am aware of the school regulations	120	1.65	1.22
I always contact with school administration	120	1.65	.82
I always attend to the school meetings	120	1.53	.72
I always go to solve my children problem with teachers	120	1.63	.81
Teachers always tell me about my child's behavior and performance	120	1.57	.79
I can easily talk to teachers	120	1.48	.89
Valid N (listwise)	120		

Notes: Overall Mean = 1.65; SD = 0.89

Table 4: Descriptive analysis on the contribution of parental involvement on students' academic achievement

Parental involvement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I always meet teachers to discuss my children' progress	120	2.10	1.09
I always make follow up on academic performance of my children	120	1.73	.92
I know all the subjects my child is being taught at school	120	1.78	.95
I am able to fulfill all the school requirements for my children	120	1.85	.97
I know school remedial classes and agree to pay all cost concerning remedial classes	120	1.77	.93
My low income hinders my participation in school affairs	120	1.91	.86
Valid N (listwise)	120		

Notes: Overall Mean = 1.86; SD =0.95

in their children affairs. The findings give the conclusion that in order for the pupils to have effective learning there must be good teachers-parents communication. Fisher's (1994) found that the majority of parents trust the school to meet the needs of their children, but will contact the school if a problem arises. That means there must be a good relationship between teachers and parents.

Kapinga (2014) revealed that an overwhelming majority (75.3%) parent of the respondents consulted with teachers about their children's academic performance as compared to (24.7%) of them who were least consultative for inquiring about their children's academic activities. Means Frequency of parents' consultation with teachers was considered very important element in their children's academic activities. This might have positive effect on children's academic activities and performance.

Ndani (2007), found that invitation for participation in pre-school activities by teachers and school management raises community participation. This suggests that raising teachers' invitation for parental involvement increases parents' involvement in children's reading development. The increase in involvement is probably because when teachers invite parents to be involved in children's reading, the parents believe that their contribution is valued and that the school acknowledges their contribution.

Research Question 3.**Parental involvement**

To what extent does parental involvement in schools improve pupils' academic achievements?
The scale used to determine the mean was:

1.00-1.49 strongly agree
1.50-2.49 agree
2.50-3.49 disagree
3.50-4.49 strongly disagree

Table 4 above indicates that from the overall mean of 1.86 and standard deviation of 0.95 most parents are in agreement that parental involvement is the factor to be considered in pupils' academic performance. Most parents agreed also that they know school regulations, children's subjects and paying costs like remedial classes. Regardless some of them having low income they are trying to play their part. Findings of this study indicate that there is a close relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement. If parents are involved in school affairs like academic meetings and school boards, itwill help them monitor their children progress well.

Researchers have shown repeatedly that parent involvement is a key factor in students' success. James (2014) revealed that, it is the most important factor in determining a pupil's success in school and in their future. Parents are the prime educators until the child attends nursery or starts school and remain a major influence on their children's learning through school and beyond. There is no clear line to show where the parents' input stops and the teachers' input begins.

Jayness (2007) revealed that Pepin Elementary School has created an organization dedicated to improve parent involvement and parent-school relationships. A family resource room has been set up with a library of books, videos, and other valuable resources to help the families of Pepin Elementary pupils understand and develop

important relationships which may aid their children's development.

Conclusion

In an effort to increase student achievement through parental involvement, schools have to develop more effective ways to communicate and reach out to parents who are unable, unwilling or even reluctant due to cultural and social capital barriers. Schools must recognize the valuable contribution and resources that parents can offerto schools. As Burns suggests, parents' involvement is about parents helping their children at home and the school assisting and supporting the parents' efforts. School must understand that lack of participation by parents does not necessary mean that parents are neglecting their responsibilities. They simply may not have time, resources, or may not know how to help out. Parents may not feel welcomed at school; they feel that what they have to offer is unimportant and unappreciated. Also parents may not believe that they have any knowledge that school is interesting in knowing. Schools must play part to initiate the move.

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