ERD 2017

Education, Reflection, Development, Fifth Edition

ON PARENTS AND TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL

Ronit Malka Maimon (a)*, Musata Dacia Bocos (b)
*Corresponding author

(a) Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, ronitmay@zahav.net.il
(b) Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, Educational Sciences Department

Abstract

The research sought to examine parents and teachers' attitudes to parental involvement and find whether there are differences between parents and teachers regarding the issue, and if there are such differences, what are they? The research also sought an optimal way to develop parents' involvement in schools. The research tools are a validated, previously used closed-ended questionnaire (Friedman & Fisher, 2003) which was previously used to evaluate parents' and teachers' attitudes and in-depth semi-structured interviews with a small sample of 10 teachers and parents with the aim of reinforcing the findings obtained from analysis of the questionnaire.

It was found that according to the questionnaire, there are no significant differences between teachers and parents, which was quite surprising. According to the interviews, it appears that both parents and teachers regard parental involvement in the same way. According to both groups, parental involvement is a must, important for the school and its progress and for the children of the involved parents. Parental involvement can be an empowering process for each of the participants. Nevertheless, it appears that the relationship is delicate, fragile and may be emotionally complex. That is why it is important to find an optimal way for building a partnership, which offers an overview of the concepts and views proposed by parents alongside those raised by teachers, and in between them the optimal way of creating the partnership.

Keywords: Involvement, Attitudes, Teachers, Parents, Parental Involvement.

1. Introduction

Parental involvement in education is a dynamic process that has accelerated in recent years. It is a universal process and many researchers in diverse countries confirm this fact. The concepts involvement, intervention and collaboration serve to describe the character and nature of relationships between parents and school. Many studies have found a correlation between parental involvement and teaching quality, which indicates that parental involvement in their children's education contributes to an improvement in pupils' relationships with school, and between pupils and teachers, as well as improvements in achievements.

In the past, it was customary to examine schools as containing only two variables: on the one hand, teachers, school administration and pupils, and on the other, school climate. The parental-school link is one of the factors that usually were not taken into account as a factor influencing school climate and culture. Moreover, little has been said about the correlation between parental involvement in schools and the nature of their education.

Many studies have addressed the question whether one can tell the difference between involvement, intervention and collaboration, and what the different models of parents-teachers' cooperation actually are (Stein & Harpaz, 1995). Interaction between these three variables is an inseparable part of understanding the culture, atmosphere, climate and character of education that differentiates one school from another. This understanding may contribute to optimal collaboration between all school partners, and ultimately improve school climate, culture and educational practice.

There is a growing recognition among most experts that parental involvement is broad and significant, helps improve schools' quality and positively influences pupils' achievements. This recognition is also growing among parents. Even teachers and principals, who on the surface are less interested in this involvement, understand that it is impossible to ignore this process, and one has to join in with it despite all the difficulties it involves, and even at the expense of their power and autonomy in the system. Even heads of education systems are changing their relationship to this phenomenon and more actively encourage parental involvement in education.

Understanding parents and teachers' attitudes to structuring the collaboration between them and parents' involvement, the entailing difficulties and ways of coping with them is what may contribute to knowledge. This understanding will lead to better coping with difficulties and problems. This research is innovative in that it compared parents' attitudes to parental involvement to those of teachers. Furthermore, the research may contribute to school principals, management, teachers and parents, as parental involvement's influence on all participants has not been studied before. As such the contribution to knowledge may be universal.

This contribution to knowledge can help the Ministry of Education's policy makers and educators to construct better parental intervention programs.

2. Problem Statement

Parental involvement in educational systems is an accelerating social process in recent yours both globally and in Israel. In the Israeli education system, there have been changes and permutations since the

state's establishment. In fact, the education system is in a constant state of flux, starting with the perception that schools are bureaucratic institutions subject to central government instructions (Noy, 1999), continuing with the absence of parental involvement and perceptions of the home as a discriminatory environment (Peres & Pasternak, 1993) and ending with a change starting in the 1970s, when school received greater autonomy and unique schools were established. During this period a generation of parents born in Israel emerged, who were educated against a similar background to school teachers, in the same youth movements and served together in the army. These parents understood that they have something to contribute to their children and realized their rights to make demands on and criticize the education system. What is the definition of parental involvement in schools? Everyone discusses growing parental involvement in the Israeli education system, but it seems that the concept has not been sufficiently defined. Various researchers, despite using the same term, do not necessarily mean the same phenomena.

Noy (1999) argued that there are two concepts defining the links with schools: involvement and collaboration, in her opinion collaboration is a more specific concept relating to taking planned responsibility for certain aspects of school to which parents have agreed such as: various aid actions, collecting money, school improvements, baking cakes, field trips, organized participation in parents' meetings, parties and organized visits. In contrast, involvement is a comprehensive concept expressing the link between parents and schools, which is expressed when parents want to be involved in policy determination and decision-making processes, or to be part of educational action itself. This involvement is perceived by schools as intervention. Chrispeels (1991) pointed out that diverse school role-holders have different perceptions of this concept. Teachers see parental involvement as helping schools by sending their children to school on time, attending parent meetings, helping with homework and fulfilling teachers' requests on different matters. Parents see involvement as receiving ongoing information about their children's progress, being openly and enthusiastically received in schools and classrooms, and receiving information on how they can help their children progress. For many years, parents have even asked to influence diverse areas of schools (Brandeis, 1996). As a school principal, I definitely agree with researchers that parents and teachers perceive the concept of parental involvement differently.

Epstein (2011) argued that schools that nurture successful pupils are those that are pleasant to all, encourage collaboration and create positive results among pupils. In her opinion, when home complements school will result in school being like family and family being school. This situation will create dialogue between these two homes and organizations, whose roles are parallel and complementary, and they will speak the same language. Global village culture has penetrated every aspect of daily life. Therefore, today we have to relate differently to parents and their involvement. Parents are not alone; they are part of the comprehensive and complementary system in educating learners. Part of my credo as a principle is the belief that school be family and family be school and in my ongoing work, I always try to create a situation in which a school I manage is pleasant for all and encourage parental involvement in various ways, but it must be pointed out that it is not an easy task.

In Friedman and Fisher's (2009) research, they pointed out that as of the beginning of the 1990's attempts have been made to link parental involvement to reasons leading to this involvement. A number of researchers have emphasized factors leading to growing involvement in the western world, including increased level of parents' education, growing democratization processes, cuts to education systems

alongside those such as multiple educational frameworks, pupils' competitiveness, ambitiousness and criticism (Goldberger, 1996).

In recent years, the U.S.A. had especially emphasized legislation, making parental involvement in their children's education a national priority (Baker, Soden & Laura, 1998). School districts are re-examining their policies for parental involvement with the aim of creating new and creative ways of strengthening this relationship. Research literature of recent years has a special place for the proven correlation between increased levels of achievement and parental involvement, and it has been found that the higher parental involvement is, so too are pupils' learning achievements (Jesse, 2001; Vassallo, 2000).

3. Research Questions

Do parents and teachers have similar/different attitudes towards parental involvement? Which are these similarities/differences?

4. Purpose of the Study

This research proposes a different approach to the issue of parental involvement. This approach is neither dichotomy based nor determines good or bad, but rather suggests a model that regards reported involvement as a phenomenon that needs to be studied and coped with. The characteristics of the approachhave to be adjusted to the wishes of partners/participants. The research topic, 'involvement' can be referred to as 'a culture of involvement', and like any culture, this one consists of multiple concepts and views.

5. Research Methods

The research paradigm - mixed methods research is congruent with the research questions and hypotheses, consists of two stages.

1.The first quantitative stage – Friedman and Fisher's (2003) questionnaire was distributed to 80 parents at different ages and 78 elementary, junior high and high school teachers at different levels of seniority. 25 of the teachers teach at the elementary school of which this researcher is a principal. Data analysis at this stage was statistical and allowed for generalization from the sample to the population.

2.In the second stage, 10 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with five parents and five teachers. The original questionnaire consisted of two parts: reciprocal school-parents' relationships, and the way parents actively behave in their relationship with school. In this research, only the first part was used.

Qualitative content analysis of the interviews, which sought to identify the reasons for the attitudes expressed from the questionnaires, was conducted in the second research stage and enabled understanding of attitudes, perceptions, thoughts and emotions as expressed in the interviews (Tzabar Ben-Yehoshua, 2016; Bryman, 2004; Creswell, 2013).

6. Findings

In the first stage of analyzing data collected from the closed questionnaires, it should be noted parents and teachers' attitudes are presented as an average score of all the questions. Therefore, a t-test of independent samples was conducted to compare parents and teachers. The results were insignificant. No difference was found in the parental attitudes' score (M-=4.27, S.D. =0.48) and teachers' attitudes' score (M=4.17; S.D. = 0.51): t(156) = 1.314, p=0.191 >0.05 (Maimon, 2017).

The hypothesis maintaining that there would be a difference between parents' and teachers' attitudes to parental involvement in school was refuted. Surprisingly, no differences were found between teachers' and parents' attitudes to the issue of parental involvement in school.

Table 01. Questions that yielded a difference was found between parents' and teachers' attitudes (Maimon, 2017)

Question	Average		Standard Deviation		T value	Level of Significance
	Parent	**Teacher**	**Parent**	**Teacher**		
1. It is very important that parents be aware of all pupils' discipline problems and violence in the school	4.13	3.51	1.17	1.28	3.14	0.002
2. It is very important that parents get the results of feedback provided at school	4.23	3.81	1.11	1.14	2.33	0.021
3. It is very important the parents be aware of problems in violence in their child's class	4.80	4.37	0.49	0.84	3.91	0.000
4. It is very important that parents be aware of disrespect towards teachers in their child's class	4.65	4.33	0.62	0.80	2.78	0.006
5. It is very important for parents to acknowledge teachers' behavior in class (way of speaking, relationship with pupils etc.)	4.83	4.40	0.41	0.92	3.76	0.000
6. It is very important for parents to be aware of the relationship between the teacher and their child	4.93	4.71	0.31	0.65	2.72	0.008

In the second stage, according to the analysis of the interviews, it appears that both parents and teachers see parental involvement in the same way. According to both groups, parental involvement is really necessary in order for school and for their children's success, as this involvement is empowering for all participants in the educational process. Regarding initiating involvement, the nature of involvement and how it is managed at school, there is also agreement between parents and teachers. Both groups understand

that because school is teachers' workplace and despite the fact that the subject of discussion is children for whom parents want the best, they should trust and make a place for professionals to deal with education as they see fit. Therefore, parents should operate according to the instructions of school management or teachers and to take part, primarily, in organizational activities.

There is also agreement between parents and teachers on the issue of pedagogy that it is the domain of teachers alone. However, here it appears that there is a bias in how teachers perceive parents, when teachers think that parents do not always know their place and fear for their status in front of parents, whilst parents fear that they are well aware of the prohibition of invading this area defined by them as teachers' autonomy. It appears that the gaps between the two sides' attitudes are not as wide as felt by both sides.

In conclusion, the findings are summarized below:

1. No significant differences were found between parents' and teachers' attitudes.

2. Attitudes to and perceptions of awareness of specific issues and their significance are more significant among parents.

3. Teachers' views of parents' involvement are dual regarding the nature of involvement.

4. Teachers entrust parents with the task of assisting and accompanying learning and social activities.

5. Teachers consider pare, and as damage to their involvement in pedagogy as an invasion of their professional territory, causing damage to their status and authority with their pupils.

6. The most welcome aspect of parental involvement is in the organizational aspect.

7. Parents believe that it is their role to be involved in their children's education.

8. Parents believe their involvement depends on the schools' willingness to involve them in various school activities.

9. Parents are unanimous regarding pedagogy as the professional domain of teachers.

10. There is parents-teachers' consensus about the need for parental involvement despite the duality in teachers' views thereof.

11. Good working and interpersonal relationships based on trust, responsibility and patience are constitute the grounds for producing optimal parental involvement.

12. Teachers understand the significance of parental involvement and their participation in various school activities despite the ambivalent feelings they have about it.

13. Conflicts develop because boundaries for parental involvement are not set, because of inadequate or insufficient routine communication channels and the differences in views regarding the importance of parental involvement.

14. Parents agree their involvement should be managed by agreements, rules and cooperation of school.

15. Parents are willing to wait until their involvement is invited because they understand there is a thin line between involvement and interference, and that this involvement might still be interpreted by teachers as invasive.

7. Conclusion

This world of multiple concepts is a world of parents-school partnership, which can benefit all participants, be neutral with no benefits to either party, harmful to one side or to both. Like in any partnership, partners must know each other, bridge between their beliefs and world of concepts, and between cultures, which are not always identical. Therefore, the OPIM (Optimal Parental Involvement Model) model is proposed, offering an overview of both parents' and teachers' concepts and attitudes, and between them the optimal way of creating the partnership.

References

Baker, A.J., Soden, L. & Laura, M. (1998). The challenge of parent involvement research. (ERIC/CUV Digest Number 134. ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, New York, NY).

Brandes, A. (Ed.) (1996). The Third Leap – Reforms and Changes in the Education Ssystem in the 1990's. Jerusalem: Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport. (In Hebrew)

Bryman, A. (2004). Social Research Methods. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Chrispeels, J.H. (1991). District Leadership in Parents Involvement: Policies and Actions in San Diego. PHI Delta Kappan, 72, (5), (PP.367-371).

Creswell, J. W. (2013). Research Design, Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches. Forth Edition. SAGA Publication, Inc.

Epstein, J. L. (2011). School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Preparing Educators and Improving Schools (Second Edition). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Friedman, I. Fisher, I. (2003). Parents and School: Attitudes and Level of Involvement (In Hebrew)

Friedman, I. and Fisher, I. (2009). Parents and School - Interaction and Involvement. Dapim, 47 pp. 11 – 37. (In Hebrew)

Goldberger, D. (1996). Involvement and Participation in Modern society. In: Chinuch Hityashvuti, 29, pp. 38 – 48. (In Hebrew)

Jess, D. (2001). Increasing parental involvement: A key to student achievement. Retrieved April, 7, 2008, from http://www.mcrel.org

Maimon, R. (2017). Attitudes of Teachers and Parents Concerning Parental Involvement and Partnership in School – A Case Study. PhD Dissertation, Cluj-Napoca, UBB University.

Noy, B. (1999). School, the parents' home and their relationship. In: Peled, A. (Ed.) In E. Peled (Ed.). The Jubilee Volume of Israeli Education. Tel-Aviv: Ministry of Defense Publishing Company. (In Hebrew)

Peres, Y. and Pasternak, R. (1993). Communitarism in Education. Tel-Aviv: Itab. (In Hebrew)

Stein, M Harpaz, Y. (Eds) (1995. Community School – an Involving Discussions. Jerusalem: Israel Associations of community Centers. (In Hebrew)

Tzabar Ben Yeshua, N. (2016). Traditions and Trends in Qualitative Research: Perceptions, Strategies and Research Tools (pp. 1-200). Tel Aviv: Mofet Institute. (In Hebrew).

Vassalo, P. (2000). More than grades: How choice boosts parental involvement and benefits children. Retrieved April 7, 2008, from http://www.cato.org pubs/pas/pa-383es.html