

Challenges Parents Face While Participating in the Education of Their Children

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Abstract: The significance of parental participation in education achievement of learners at any level cannot be over-emphasized. Despite the Kenyan government policy that requires parents to be actively involved in the education of their children at six levels. Available studies show that parents are not as actively involved as required and even those who are involved; their involvement is limited to provision of finances, facilities and attendance of meetings. The study sought to investigate challenges facing parents in their active participation in the education of pre-school learners in Kiogoro Division, Kisii County, with a view of suggesting ways of promoting active parental participation in education of pre-school learners. The study reviewed various literatures on some past studies and assessed their contribution to the objectives of this study. The study used descriptive survey design to carry out the study with both qualitative and quantitative methodologies of collecting data. The study sample comprised of 10 pre-schools, 10 primary school head teachers, 10 pre-school teachers and 111 parents. The study used simple random sampling to select pre-school teachers and parents. Purposive sampling was used to select primary school head teachers and pre-school teachers. Data was collected by use of questionnaire, interview schedule and document analysis guide. Coded data was presented using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages presented in tables as well as Pearson correlation to establish the relationship between the variable. The study found that lack of clear policies in preschools regarding parental participation, lack of proper mode of communication with their children; poor parent-preschool teacher relationship, unfavourable head teachers' leadership style and illiteracy among the parents were some of the challenges facing parents in their active participation in education of preschool learners. Parents should be encouraged through various programs on participation in education welfare of their preschool learners. Awareness programs for parents should be organized informing them on the benefit of their participation in education activities for their children. Parents should also be enlightened on the best communication practices with both their children and the school administration to foster good parent-teacher and parent-child relationship. The study suggest that future studies should be done on institutional factors influencing parental participation in education welfare of the preschool learners and socio-demographic factors influencing parental participation in education welfare of the preschool learners

Keywords: Active Participation, Challenges, Mode of Communication, Parental participation, Pre-school learners, Parent-Preschool Teacher Relationship.

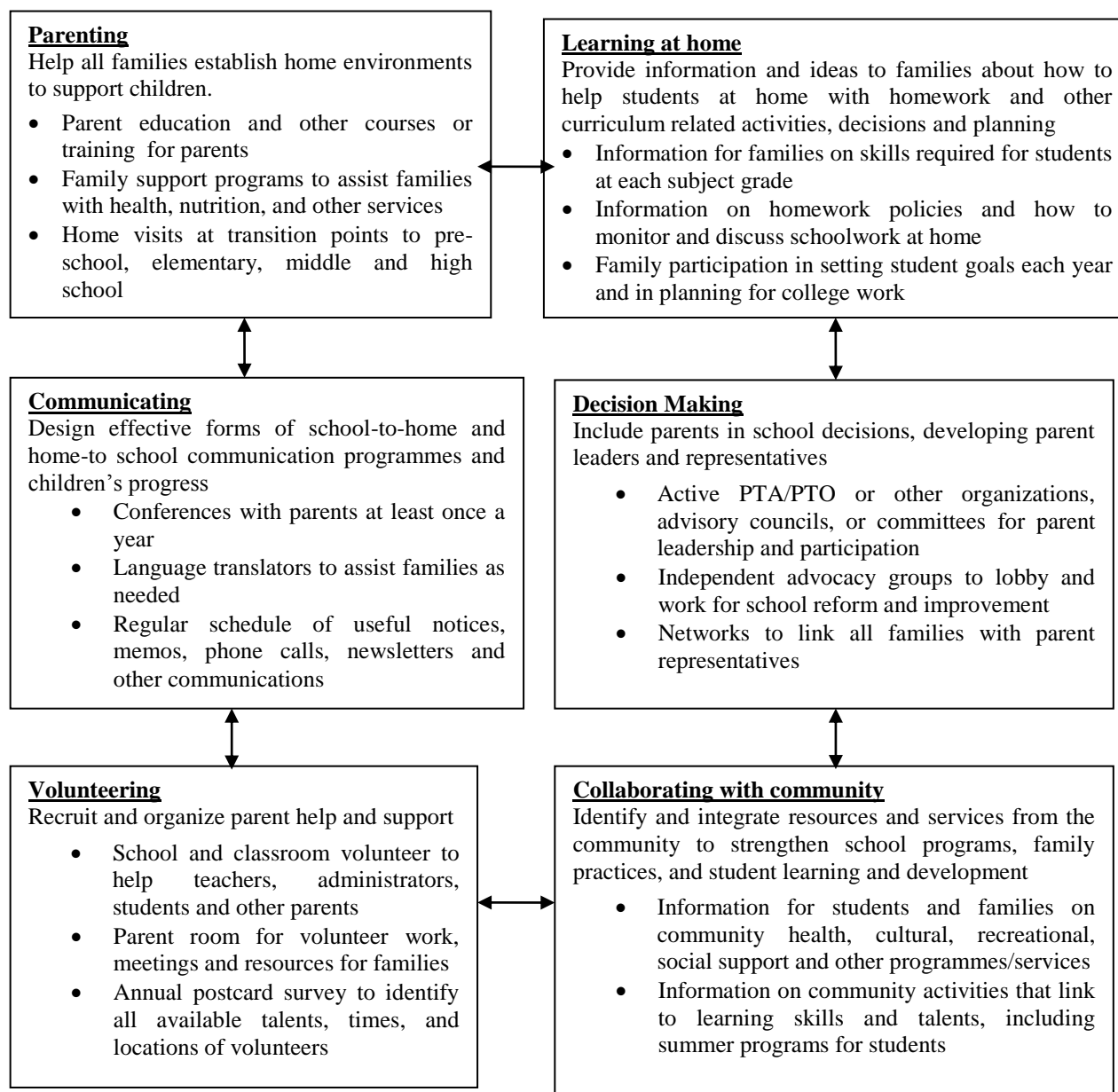
1. INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement in education is the active and willing participation of parents in a wide range of school activities (Squelch, 1994). Nokali and Votruba-Drzal (2010) also defines parental participation as activities that parents conduct at home and in early childhood settings directly or indirectly to support their children's learning. This implies that parental participation would also mean teachers and parents working together and supporting each other in the best interest of the child. When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more. Since independence, the government of Kenya has been providing education in collaboration with stakeholders such as parents and local communities for good academic achievement and outcome of the learner.

According to Government of Kenya (GoK) (2006) the Kenyan government designed a policy of partnership that supports partnership between parents and teachers. Further, Kamunge Report of 1979 urged every learning institution in Kenya to organize a Parent-Teachers Association (PTA) that would help in discussing all aspects concerning the school and its activities; providing opportunities for exchange of views among teachers, parents and Board of Governors; creating closer relations between teachers and parents and enhancing parents' interest in their children's education (Koech, 2010). Epstein (1992, 1996) emphasizes that children benefit when parents stay involved in their education and that parental participation relates to more learner achievement and more academic improvement at schools. Yet, Koech (2010) established that most of the parents of preschool learners fail to participate actively in their children's education. For instance, Ndani (2008) documented that most parents of children in public pre-schools do not volunteer as resource persons to talk to children, they do not visit children and neither do they look at diaries. The present study therefore sought to investigate challenges facing parents in their active participation in the education of pre-school learners in Kiogoro Division, Kisii County.

1.1 Conceptual Framework:

Table 1.1: Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement



1.2 Problem Statement:

Parents of preschool children in Kiogoro Division, Kisii County, Kenya, are often faced with unique challenges that hinder them from meeting the learners' needs. Such challenges include insufficient time, career or job type, level of education, order of priority, set home environment, opinion to voluntary work at school, time taken to respond to school activities, parents meetings, conferences, sports, academic clinic day, disciplinary cases and also discussing the academic progress of the child (Rain and William, 2011).

While the policy on parental participation requires that all parents be actively involved in the learning of their children, available data indicate that the parents are not as actively involved as required (Koech 2010; Ndani, 2008; & Wawire, 2006). This has led to the academic performance in Kiogoro Division remaining low for a very long time as compared to other educational divisions in the County (Zonal Evaluation Tests Results Analysis, 2013; 2014). In addition, a study by Uwezo (2011) on Annual Learning Assessment report shows that pupils in Kisii County recorded an average of 24.83% in reading achievement which is below the national average of 27.2%. This was apparently low reading level. The study therefore, sought to investigate challenges facing parents in their active participation in the education of pre-school learners in Kiogoro Division, Kisii County.

1.3 Objectives of the Study:

The main aim of the study was to investigate challenges facing parents in their active participation in the education of pre-school learners in Kiogoro Division, Kisii County.

1.4 Justification of the Study:

Parental participation in education is very crucial for child's academic growth and development. Therefore, this study may be useful to the Ministry of Education in implementing ideal policies that would strengthen and promote parental participation as well as give directions on the administration of both public and private pre-schools. It may also create awareness to the government, parents, teachers and the community on the importance of parent's participation in pre-school programmes as well as the importance of funding the programmes. Pre-school teachers and head teachers would be enlightened on the appropriate ways to enhance parents' participation at school to ensure better educational achievement. The study might also enable parents to understand the appropriate strategies to use to strengthen their participation and what to participate in. It may also probably help change attitude of the community members towards positive understanding of ECDE.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction:

This section reviewed literature on some past studies and evaluated their contribution to the objectives of this study. To enhance a comprehensive analysis, the section looked into the challenges facing active participation of parents in education welfare of preschool learners with an aim of establishing the positions held by different authors about the same.

2.2 Theoretical Review:

This study was guided by Joyce Epstein's theory of parental involvement. Epstein (1992, 1996) designed a framework of six types of parental involvement which was crucial to the educators in developing school and family partnership programs. According to Epstein (2001) there are various reasons for developing school, family, and community partnerships. She further explained that the main reason of creating such partnerships was to help all youngsters succeed and prosper in both school and in their later life. The theory also postulates that parental participation in schools activities relates to more learner academic achievement in schools. The framework underscores the six types of involvement and highlights sample practices or activities that describe the parental involvement in school activities. It also underscores the challenges hindering each type of parent involvement as well as the expected results of implementing them for students, parents, and teachers.

According to Epstein, (1996) the levels include Parenting (level 1), whereby parents need to provide conducive home environment that support the learning activities of their children. Parents also need to be enlightened with family support programmes to assist families with information on health, nutrition and other knowledge that looks into the general

welfare of the child; Communication (level 2) such as teachers and schools administration communicating to parents about school programmes and children's progress on a regular basis and communication should be two-way; Volunteering (level 3) such as recruiting and organizing for parental help and support at school. Parents should volunteer for work, meetings and resources; Learning at home/ Parental involvement at home (level 4) including helping children at home with school work, discussions about school, making decisions and planning their work; Decision Making (level 5) such as including parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives; and Collaboration with Community (level 6) such as identifying and integrating resources and enlisting the services from the community to strengthen school programmes, family practices and children's learning, growth and development.

This theory was relevant to the study because through the six levels of involvement parents will gain more self-confidence in their role as parents, show leadership with decision-making, have more effective and productive communication with their children with regards to schoolwork, and more communication with other parents at the school. They will also gain a more positive attitude towards the school and its staff, and gain more confidence in assisting their children with homework, by being involved with their education. In addition, they are more likely to gather support for the school and its programs in the community and become more active community members. For teachers, the benefits are presumed to be better communication with parents, a deeper understanding of the family of their students and their situation, and more effective communication with both the homes and the community (Epstein, 2009). Therefore, it can be deduced that these six factors not only benefit the learners, but also their parents, teachers and the entire school community.

2.3 Empirical Literature Review:

A study by Halford (2012) on why African American children are lacking proper education in U.S.A found that many parents have been alienated from formal education because of historical, cultural and systematic forces which contribute to this problem. Halford (2012) further found that negative teachers' attitude towards parents made many parents to feel left out in the education of learners. In Tennessee, U.S.A., Schlinger (2012) carried out a study which examined whether experiences in the family and the education systems could influence deaf ethnic identity development. The study found that parental attitude towards deafness and experiences in the education system strongly influenced deaf identity development. This challenge which was solely emanating from parents was among the major causes of the average performance in the education of the learners.

Another study by Okeke (2014) on the level of parental involvement in the schooling of their children in the United Kingdom showed that parents cared about their children's education, and want to get involved. However, results also showed that most parents do not always know how to get involved, and some are even intimidated by the operational structures within the school. Kainuwa (2013) also found out that parent's level of education and their economic status affects their participation in their children's education which in turn affects children's educational outcomes. In Kenya, parental participation is an issue that is faced with various challenges.

A study by Spernes (2011) sought to find out about parental involvement in a rural primary school in Kenya. The findings of the study indicated no shared responsibility between parents and schools i.e. the school is solely responsible for children's education. It was also found that there was little cooperation between parents and school and that parents are hardly involved in their children's school work. Ngesu (2013) sought to investigate factors hindering community participation in the development of ECD centers in Kenya. The study established that high cost of living coupled with high unemployment rate and lack of morale contributed to negligible community participation in the development of ECDE centers.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used descriptive survey design to carry out the study in with both qualitative and quantitative methodologies of collecting data. The study sample comprised of 10 pre-schools, 10 primary school head teachers, 10 pre-school teachers and 111 parents of preschool learners in Kiogoro Division, Kisii County. Simple random sampling was used to select pre-school teachers and parents. Purposive sampling was used to select primary school head teachers and pre-school teachers. Data was collected by use of questionnaire, interview schedule and document analysis guide. Coded data was presented using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages presented in tables as well as Pearson correlation to establish the relationship between the variables.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction:

Since the overall objective of this study was to investigate challenges facing parents in their active participation in the education of pre-school learners in Kiogoro Division, Kisii County, the study was limited to this geographical division. The field research was comprehensive, giving most of the attention to the variables of this study which include: parental ignorance, Low parental level of Education, communication and head teachers' leadership style. All these variables were captured in the questionnaires and the responses were highlighted as below.

4.2 Finding on Questionnaire Return Rate:

The study was designed to draw respondents from 10 head teachers, 10 preschool teachers and 111 parents. This is presented in Table 4.1

Table 4.1: Response Return Rate

Category	Targeted number of respondents	Achieved number of respondents	Response Percentages
Parents	111	111	100
Head teachers	10	10	100
Preschool teachers	10	10	100
Total	121	121	100

The study achieved 100% response return rate, given that all the respondents in each category participated in the study as expected. The high response return rate was achieved because the researcher administered the questionnaires to the respondents personally and made follow ups to ensure the questionnaires were duly filled. As for the interviews, the researcher conducted the interviews with the head teachers and preschool teachers.

4.3 Challenges Facing Parents in Active Participation in the Education of Learners:

The researcher sought to investigate the challenges parents face while participating in the education of their learners. The analyzed findings were presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Challenges Facing Parents in Active Participation in the Education of Learners

Challenges Facing Parents	Frequency	Percentage
Illiteracy	10	9.01
Attitude towards teachers	15	13.51
Poor communication	20	18.02
Lack of clear policies on regarding parental participation	25	22.52
Inadequate involvement of parents	30	27.03
Head teachers' leadership style	11	09.91
Total	111	100.00

Findings in Table 4.2 indicate that out of 111 respondents, 30(27.03%) cited that they were not adequately involved in their children's education, 25(22.52%) said the pre-schools lacked clear policies regarding parental participation, 20(18.02%) said that lack of proper communication was a challenge they faced. 15(13.51%) respondents cited that they did not like their children's teachers, 11(9.91%) said the head teachers' leadership style was poor and 10(9.01) agreed that illiteracy was a challenge they faced while taking part in their children's education. It is evident that these challenges hinder effective parental participation in their children's education which in turn influences children's educational outcomes.

4.3.1 Discussion of the Findings:

In investigating the challenges facing active parental participation in education of preschool learners, the study found that most of the parents were not adequately involved in their children's education, lack of clear policies regarding parental participation and lack of proper communication and parent-preschool teacher relationship. The study also found that most of the parents did not actively participate in education welfare of the learners because they did not like their children's teachers, head teachers' leadership style, while other parents cited illiteracy and ignorance of the benefits of participation was a challenge they faced while taking part in their children's education. It is evident that these challenges hinder effective parental participation in their children's education which in turn influences children's educational outcomes. A study by Spernes, (2011) also indicated no shared responsibility between parents and schools i.e. the school is solely responsible for children's education and that there was little cooperation between parents and school and that parent are hardly involved in their children's school work. This was also echoed by Kainuwa (2013) who found that parent's level of education and their economic status affects their participation in their children's education which in turn affects children's educational outcomes.

During the interviews with the head and preschool teachers, one of the outstanding theme that was discussed was illiteracy of the parents and lack of awareness. It was found that many parents were not participating adequately on the school activities and education outcome of their children because they were not aware of its importance and were also illiterate of information of its benefits. For instance, one of the head teachers said:

"Many parents lack the basic information of the importance of involvement in education outcome of their children perceiving preschool education as none significant less important to a child's education life." [Head teacher 5].

Similarly, one of the preschool teachers said: *"Parents with low education background perform poorly in terms of their involvement in education welfare of their children because they have no information on the benefits of such involvements"* [Preschool Teachers, 5]. This implies that parental ignorance was a challenge to parents.

Another theme that was discussed was Low parental level of Education. Low parental level of education influences negatively the educational outcome of the learners because of their inadequate knowledge of the significance of parental involvement in school activities. Such parents also earn less hence may not be able to provide adequately basic needs and school requirement of the learner. This was also supported by one of the head teachers, who said that:

"Parents with only basic education may not be able to see the significance of actively participating in school activities such parents don't pay school fees in time, don't come for parents meeting and don't assist the child with homework" [Head Teacher 2]

This was also supported by one of the preschool teachers who said: *"Most of the parents with low level of education are neglectful hence do not care much about their children education welfare and this ultimately hurt their academic outcome"* [Preschool Teacher 1]

In these statements, it can be deduced that parental level of education affects their involvement in school and education welfare of their children and ultimately affect the child's education outcome. Nortey (2009) also found that due to many factors which included communication barriers between parents and the school, low level of education among the parents and parental ignorance, many parents feel uneasy to participate in school activities and academic welfare of their children.

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction:

The study sought to investigate challenges facing parents in their active participation in the education of pre-school learners in Kiogoro Division, Kisii County. In view of this, the study provided the recommendations that would promote active parental participation in education welfare of the preschool learners. This would be helpful because active parental involvement in education matters of preschool learners influence positively their education outcome.

5.2 Summary of the Findings:

According to the study findings, out of the 111 (parents) respondents that took part in the study, 27.03% mentioned that they were not adequately involved in their children's education. When probed on the reasons for low key parental participation, 22.52% said that the pre-schools lacked clear policies regarding parental participation, 18.02% cited lack of proper communication between the preschool teacher and the parents, another 13.51% of the respondents mentioned that they did not like their children's teachers, 9.91% said the head teachers' leadership style was poor, while 9.01% agreed that they were ignorant of information on the importance of parental participation in education, mentioning that illiteracy was a challenge they faced while taking part in their children's education.

5.3 Conclusion:

The study sought to investigate challenges facing parents in their active participation in the education of pre-school learners in Kiogoro Division, Kisii County. Based on the study findings, it was concluded that some of the challenges facing most parents in adequately participating in academic life of their preschool children were; lack of clear policies in preschools regarding parental participation, lack of proper mode of communication with their children, poor parent-preschool teacher relationship, unfavourable head teachers' leadership style and ignorance and illiteracy among the parents. It was evident that these challenges hinder effective parental participation in their children's education which in turn influences negatively children's education outcomes. Interviews with the head teachers and preschool teachers also revealed that most of the parents who did not get involved in the school and academic welfare of their children had low level of education or were ignorant of information.

5.4 Recommendations:

The main aim of the study was achieved through a close look at the specific objective which was discussed comprehensively in this study. In as far as challenges facing parents in actively participating in preschool children's education is concerned, it emerged that most of the parents were not actively involved in their children's education, because of various reasons ranging from lack of clear policies in preschools regarding parental participation, lack of proper mode of communication with their children, poor parent-preschool teacher relationship to unfavorable head teachers' leadership style. Based on the findings and conclusions, the study makes the following recommendations, teachers and parents should devise modern methods of communication that may enable them communicate regularly on the progress of the children while at school and at home. This will increase the level of involvement by the parents in education welfare of their children, the Board of Management (BOM) should sensitize parents on the importance of making regular visits to pre-school centres to discuss the progress of their children in general as this would increase parental involvement in education welfare of their children for good academic outcome, teachers and other stakeholders of education should educate parents on the importance of teaching and learning resources in improving their children's academic performance. The proper provision of these basic needs could improve children's performance in various subjects, parents should also be enlightened on the best communication practices with both their children and the school administration to foster good parent-teacher and parent-child relationship as this will have a positive influence on academic performance of the learners.

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