

Checking In or Checking Out: Exploring Parental Involvement in English Language Education

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Abstract

Parental involvement is a major factor affecting the educational development of students. The present research explores the participation of parents in students' academics, especially in learning English. The current research participants include 12 parents of the grade 7 students studying in a public secondary school. This research was designed as qualitative study which utilized semi-structured interview. Findings suggest that parents have a positive attitude towards parental involvement, and they are generally aware of the effect of their involvement in the academic and psychological aspects of education of their children.

Introduction

Students' development are inevitably influenced by social environments such as family, school, and community whose partnership in education has recently given importance because of the abrupt change in the delivery of education set up due to Covid 19 pandemic. Parents are tapped as learning facilitators at home whose main responsibility is to guide learners in coping up with the new normal way of education.

According to Beck (2013), the parents and guardians or other caregivers are the children's first teachers, and even when they begin school, this position continues. Furthermore, parents need to become constructive partners with teachers to create an atmosphere that promotes their children's success in school. Research shows that parental involvement influences the effects of learning and the social, cognitive, psychological, and interactional involvement of students (Denman, 2016). On the other hand, it should be considered that there are several dimensions of parental engagement other than parents, such as classmates, teachers, school administrators, or policy-makers (Epstein & Sanders, 2018). According to Gonzales (2014), parental involvement can therefore be described as the acts that parents conduct to improve the school performance of their children, requiring partnerships such as parent-child, parent-teacher, and parent-parent partnerships.

In the Philippines, particularly in Quezon province, the Parents embrace the idea that when they get involved in the process, they may make a big difference for the education of their children; thus, they represent the idea that they must actively participate in the process (Gonzales, 2018). Similarly, the research conducted by Magsino (2018) suggests that parents agree that parental

involvement is an important factor affecting children's educational performance without abandoning the concept that education is the duty of school.

This time of pandemic calls for an intense parental involvement in the education sector. From the receipt and retrieval of self-learning modules to the accomplishment of activity sheets, written outputs, and performance tasks, parents are seen to be primarily involved and act as the prime mover. The present study aims to investigate the parental involvement in English language education of junior high school students. The researcher intends to know parents' involvement in terms of their children's English language education and how this parental involvement contributes to the success of the students' English language education.

Research Objectives

The major objective of this study is to find out the extent of parents' involvement in English language learning. For this reason, this research seeks to address the following research questions:

1. How do parents get involve and contribute in the students' learning of English subjects?
2. How does parental involvement affect students' English language education?

Related Literature

One of the most powerful predictors of the achievement of students is parental involvement. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2015) suggest a system in which they take parental involvement as a tool and describe variables that affect this mechanism, considering the importance of parental involvement in education. That is to say, their framework describes why and how parents become interested in the education of their children and the potential consequences of their involvement. They argue that it is necessary to clarify the following aspects of parental involvement to understand and strengthen the parental involvement process: (1) why parents are involved in the education of their children, (2) how parents select particular forms of involvement, and (3) why parental involvement has a positive effect on the educational outcomes of students.

On the other hand, Epstein et al. (2002) reflect on the methods that parents may use to become involved in their children's learning process. They claim that school, family, and community experiences directly impact students' learning process and suggested the hypothesis of simultaneous spheres of control that supports the notion that the structures that make children socialized and informed are school, family, and community. They also say that these organizations ought to work together to accomplish shared outcomes for children at the core of the system. Based on this theory, they claim a structure consisting of six forms of participation that can be selected according to needs or desires by the schools. In this context, the elements of home-school collaboration include parenting, communication, volunteering, homeschooling, decision-making,

and family collaboration. Schools and parents may select one or more of these methods according to their needs and expectations.

Meanwhile, there is a growing body of literature that acknowledges the essential role of parental participation in the educational growth of students as well as various perspectives on parental engagement from teachers and parents. For teachers, parental involvement refers to the home activities in which parents support the academic achievement of their children, such as homework, while from the perspective of parents, it means engaging in educational decisions as a strategy for participation (Göktürk & Dinçkal, 2018). On the other hand, Epstein et al. (2002) indicate that educators and parents need to work together to enter into a successful relationship and provide children with an effective learning environment.

Factors thought to be influencing parental involvement have been explored in several studies. For example, Calzada (2011) posits that socio-economic status, the educational history of parents, the behavior of teachers and school administrators, and cultural factors were found to be the key predictors of parental involvement. Previous research found that parents with low socio-economic status were less interested in the education of their children. Recent research has also shown that parents participate in the education of children if they are invited by teachers (LaRocque et al., 2011). Furthermore, Şad and Gürbüztürk (2013) examined the ways in which parents were interested in the education of their children. Instead of volunteering at school, they explored that parents chose to communicate with the children, create an effective home environment, promote their personal development, and support homework. More specifically, Cunha et al. (2015) researched parents' beliefs about the involvement of homework and their findings showed that parents had positive attitudes towards homework and focused on improving the sense of autonomy and responsibility of students and motivating them emotionally through the involvement of homework.

The views and attitudes of teachers towards parental engagement have an impact on developing and maintaining the participation of parents in education. Teachers' knowledge of various activities defines the likelihood of collaboration with parents; however, teachers and parents should come together and use common methods to achieve shared objectives (Moosa, Karabenick & Adams, 2001; Souto-Manning & Kevin, 2006). In other words, Teachers who are mindful of the value and significance of parental engagement use many techniques to maximize the interest of parents in education, such as calling and e-mailing home, sending home newsletters, setting up websites for their students, etc (Pakter & Chen, 2013). Christianakis (2011) explored parental involvement through narratives from the point of view of students, and she revealed that the teachers saw the parents as supportive figures for their course objectives rather than partners working collaboratively. Meanwhile, Hakyemez (2015) explored the beliefs of early childhood educators regarding the role of parents. She pointed out that the teachers gave importance to parental involvement, particularly to home support, but she reported that parental involvement was ineffective because of the parents' unwillingness to participate.

Previous research of Panferov (2010) indicates that parental involvement has a substantial impact on children's L2 learning and growth when it comes to the impact of parental involvement on second language (L2) development. Likewise, according to Senders et.al (2012) Parental participation motivationally, affectively, socially and cognitively influences children's achievement of L2. Hornby and Lafaele (2011), on the other hand, state that the expectations of parents can adversely affect the efficiency of parental involvement. To demonstrate, because of their lack of expertise in the area, they will fear the involvement of their children's education. Nevertheless, Castillo and Gamez (2013) use the analogy "...a parent can teach a kid to ride a bike even if he/she does not know how to ride." to refute the parents' claim about their lack of involvement resulting from their lack of knowledge. In other words, they argue that, even if they do not speak the target language, parents can contribute to the L2 development of their children. In short, the parent-school relationship helps students feel socially and emotionally more secure, which positively affects the performance of students (Niehaus & Adelson, 2014). Similarly, the behavior of parents taken as part of parental involvement may affect L2 development directly or indirectly (Üstünel, 2009).

Previous studies on parental engagement in English language education found that parents believed their participation had a big effect on the achievement of children (Al-Mahrooqi et al., 2016; Mahmoud, 2018). On the other hand, the previous study also found that parents' actual participation was not adequate, although they were conscious of its significance (Al-Mahrooqi et al., 2016). From a more general perspective, the relationship between school support, parental participation, and social, emotional, and academic outcomes for the English language production for children was discussed by Niehaus and Adelson (2014). They found that parental engagement was directly related to school support and higher levels of parental involvement decreased anxiety, which improved the achievement of students.

Methodology

This study is a qualitative research which involved narratives of the participants. The researcher gathered data through a semi-structured interview consisting of questions related to parents' opinions about their involvement in the children's English language education. These questions were addressed to the parents to get a deeper understanding of their views on parental involvement.

The study was conducted among twelve (12) junior high school parents of San Jose National High School in Catanauan, Quezon. The researcher is the assigned officer-in-charge of San Jose NHS which served as the setting of the study. The school is situated seventeen (17) kilometers away from Catanauan, Quezon, and considered the farthest secondary school in the district.

The researcher first sought permission from the Public Schools District Supervisor of Catanauan I district to conduct the study among San Jose NHS parents. She also sought the approval of the barangay captain of Brgy. San Jose to interview at least twelve (12) parents from the community. Then, the researcher approached the participants and asked of their most convenient time for the interview.

When it comes to the qualitative analysis, the researcher first analyzed transcripts for emerging themes and areas for further examination through inductive analysis from which the themes and concepts emerged. Inductive coding helped the researcher decrease the level of reliance on the questionnaire and minimize researcher bias. Secondly, She started the systematic coding process and read all the line-by-line transcripts for general codes based on recurring concepts. Three key themes emerged, including parents' perceived contribution to their children's English development, homework involvement and teacher-parent partnership. The transcripts were read again after the initial themes appeared in order to provide supporting extracts, and they were categorized for thorough investigation.

Results

In the content review of the interviews, three main issues arose about parents' attitudes about the degree and impact of their participation in the English language education of their children. The main themes are their contribution to their children's English development, homework involvement and parent-teacher partnership. First, parents' contribution to the students' English development defines the degree to which parents participate in English language education and the things they do with their children to support their development. It also clarifies the assumptions of parents regarding their effect on the English development of children. Second, homework involvement explains how they do English homework, the methods that parents use to help the process, and their expectations of the impact of homework on the English development of the students. Finally, the extent and efficacy of the parent-teacher relationship is defined in the parent-teacher partnership. In the following section, these themes are dealt with in-depth.

Parents' contribution to Students' English Development

In general, parents agree that they have an effect on the English development of their children; but they also claim that they feel that their presence does not make a difference in the English development of their children. They attribute the performance of the children to their teacher and state that their task cannot go beyond the revision of the vocabulary and language structures. In the same direction, they state that only the pace of English development could be affected adversely if they do not engage in the process. On the other hand, all of them have mentioned various activities that they do with their children in order to foster their children's English development. They have also mentioned the importance of the language exposure for the development of English. To illustrate, they mention listening to English songs, watching English

movies with their children, and reading English materials. One of them says that they read English books together to contribute to his daughter's reading abilities. They give examples of how they study English and these activities to review the vocabulary and structures learned in the school by the children. Parents often discuss the importance of learning English and how they describe its meaning to their children. In addition, they suggest that they are trying to increase their children's motivation by discussing how they will need English in their real lives.

Moreover, the respondents reflect their desire to talk or learn English with their children. They say that because of their kids, their English is improving and also say that they are trying to improve their English skills to be useful for the studies of their children. To sum up, parents feel that they make a reasonable amount of contribution to the English development of their children. On the other hand, they indicate that children can learn the language without their participation because they only affect the pace of development with the revision activities and the activities that expose the children to the language to some degree.

The following quotations highlight the views of parents on the level at which they contribute to the English development of children:

"We could only contribute her English by supporting her learning process since she does not learn English with us. To illustrate, I try to create an environment in which we talk in English, yet it lasts for maximum 2 days. We could not manage to continue talking in English and turn back to the natural. However, we revise the vocabulary and structures that she has learned at school. (...) Therefore, I think she learns English effectively at school. Even if we do not support, she will learn. She may forget some of the vocabulary, but she could remember with a brief revision."

Similarly, another participant has expressed:

"I could say that.... (mentions the name of the student) will eventually learn English even if we give up studying at night, or watching English movies or I do not engage in the process. However, I believe that the pace of her learning will be affected adversely in such a situation."

Although parents claim that their involvement does not significantly affect the language development of their children, they have mentioned the various activities to strengthen the language development of children, which are illustrated in the following statement:

"As I have mentioned, we make her watch English movies which I give importance to have subtitles, in this way she could see the spelling of the vocabulary she hears. It will contribute to her English development since she has a good visual memory, to me. Apart from these, we have tried to read English books having a few sentences. I mean easy ones. I have seen that we could manage this, as well."

Homework Involvement

All of the respondents state that they assist their children while doing homework. Some of the parents argue that they try to make their children do the homework on their own; therefore, they only guide them when the student could not understand the instructions as it is exemplified in the following statement:

“I want her to read and understand the instructions while doing homework such so that she could study on her own without our help. There is no sense when I say everything.”

The others, on the other hand, express that they participate in the whole process. They do not only guide the children but also assist their spelling and pronunciation skills.

“As for video homework, I, firstly, explain the demands of the teacher and we talk about how to do it. Then, we prepare the sentences together and record the video. When it comes to the written homework, we usually help her as she struggles. When I guide her, she can understand easily. In other words, she can continue to do the exercise after we help in a few examples.”

All of the parents reflect their discomfort with the translation; however, they all admit that they give the Tagalog meaning of the sentences when the children have difficulty in understanding English.

Two of the parents express their pleasure of English homework by indicating that they take the homework as an extension activity and try to illustrate the vocabulary and structures in various ways in order to broaden the understanding of the subject and grammatical structures of their children. Another prominent issue parents touch upon is that they hesitate the strategies they use while helping their children since they cannot be sure whether they affect their children's English development in a positive way or mislead them. The following quotation shows their hesitation clearly:

“Since I do not have enough skills in English, I may mislead or confuse my child. For example, the teacher may have a strategy to teach particular subjects, and I could follow a different path for the same subject, which may cause confusion for him.”

Parent-Teacher Partnership

The parents believe that if there is a problem, the teacher will interact with them or they can reach the teacher if they need any, while other parents reflect that the guidance and feedback of the teacher are adequate for them by stating that they do not request anything else for participation or partnership. The quote given below reveals the nature of parent-teacher partnership in parents' eyes:

“I try to follow the teachers’ guidance. Because of my job, I confess that I could not spare enough time to my daughter in terms of her education. However, the feedbacks that the teachers give when I talk to them assist me supporting the process.”

Generally, the respondents indicate that they hesitate to make the children frustrated. The parents reflect their desire for involvement; however, they expect guidance from the teacher in order to have mutual strategies for enhancing their children’s English development. The quotation given below illustrates the desire of parents’ for setting up more efficient partnership with the teacher:

“Eventually, we would be on the same wavelength, and I would not struggle to show empathy towards the teacher. Our partnership will support us and improves the education process. Also, it prevents the conflicts between the parents and the teacher.”

Discussion

Parental involvement includes a variety of practices that the parents could implement. One of the most significant practices is to construct partnership with the teachers since it reinforces the students’ achievement and promotes the quality of education. The findings indicate that there is a frequent information exchange between parents and the teachers. The teachers not only get in touch with the parents when there is a problem and need for assistance, but also in order to guide and provide feedback to them. This view may lead to the assumption that parents often expect the invitation of teachers to participate in the educational process, as verified by the results of previous research (Anderson & Minke, 2007). When it comes to the second assumption, the parents have highlighted their hesitation of making the students frustrated. In other words, parents are worried that students will be fed up with learning English. This point of view concludes that the psychological dimensions of education are known to parents. They therefore aim to prevent potential negative influences of their over-engagement in the education of children, especially the development of the English language. This inference is in line with the study by Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2016) which reveals the awareness of parental participation by parents of academic, psychological and social influences.

Parents, however, believe in the beneficial effect of their engagement in their research on the distinct educational performance of the students. Results show that parents are aware of the value of the independent and responsible behaviors of students when studying with regard to the academic assistance that parents provide for their children, since the parents have indicated that they encourage the children to work independently. Results suggest that parents prefer to instruct kids when learning rather than having straightforward answers to the questions. This outcome is consistent with previous research (Cunha et al., 2015). Secondly, parents are conscious of the detrimental consequences of offering translations and guidance for L1. Qualitative results indicate that parents feel that they do not have a fundamental influence on the English development of

children, even though they jointly undertake different activities to improve their English development. In addition, parents can underestimate their participation in the development of the English language as the findings indicate that they have a positive attitude towards participation besides the activities they mention throughout the interviews. This statement can be clarified with the outcome of Erdener and Knoepfel (2018), showing that parents assume that education is the job of school even though they acknowledge the positive impact of parents on the achievement of children. Parents thus attribute the performance of their children to the teacher. In the same manner, the parents suggest that not only do they prefer to consult with the teachers struggling with the homework, but also expect encouragement from teachers to participate in the process more effectively. The potential outcome of this finding may therefore be that teachers should be aware of the aspirations of parents and direct them to a successful relationship between teacher and parent.

As for the logistic and indirect help parents give to their children, all of them acknowledged the value of providing indirect assistance in the teaching and learning process with regard to the logistical and indirect support parents provide to their children. At the same time, almost all of them stressed their desire to understand the world of their children, provide them with a friendly and encouraging home setting, and spend time with the children, talking and listening to them. This result is in line with not only the outcome of Mahmoud (2018), but also the results of Şad and Gürbüztürk (2013), indicating that parents also provide their children at home with an improving atmosphere to support their learning.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The present study aimed to explore the views of parents regarding parental involvement in education in the English language. To begin with, the results show that they have a good outlook towards the involvement of parents and are generally aware of the educational and psychological dimensions of education. As for the connection between parent and teacher, they think that there is a successful relationship with the teacher. In addition, they see the teacher as an expert; thus, in the event of need, they not only consult him/her but also anticipate guidance. With regard to their participation, they look down on their contribution to the English development of their children. They are aware of the importance of homework obligation and autonomous work when it comes to the academic support they provide, as most of them only have instruction when the students do homework. The parents attach importance to it as much as the direct assistance they could provide, such as supporting the children's homework, with regard to the indirect and direct support they provide to their children.

Nevertheless, this study concentrated only on the expectations of parents regarding their engagement in language education. For further research, teachers' experiences should also be explored. Therefore, in order to strengthen the teacher-parent relationship, the essence of their partnership should be understood to establish more successful strategies. As such, this research

may be replicated in different contexts since parents' opinions may change over time as their children grow.

There are several limitations to the present study. First, since the data was gathered in a public school, the results may differ in different contexts. Secondly, it focuses on the views of parents without measuring the academic, social, or psychological results of parental participation in the English development of children. The parents may therefore be mistaken about the consequences of their involvement. In addition, teachers can interpret this process in a different way. Thus, to draw a better picture of the effect of parental intervention, their expectations need to be examined.

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