Strategies for Enhancing Management of Parental Involvement in Kliptown Secondary School Eldorado Park[*]

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Parent involvement is the volunteer service of parents at school or at home for the purpose of improving a child's education. This means that parental involvement in any form, be it helping the learners with homework, attending parent meeting at their schools, or receiving and responding to their child's academic success, impacts on their academic achievement. Over the past 20 years, parental involvement has become a topic of concern for policy makers, educators, and researchers, but little emphasis was placed on strategies to enhance parental involvement in schools. This study investigates strategies to enhance and manage parental support in Kliptown Secondary School and a case study research design was used in this study. Data was collated by using focus group interview with five participants sharing their viewpoints on strategies to enhance parental involvement. The data was analysed and interpreted by using Creswell's six-step model. From the responses, Kliptown Secondary School has systems and strategies (phoning, asking parent to be a volunteer, sending letters to the parents, parent meetings, and report day) to manage parental involvement but the systems and strategies in place are limited, the school needs to use more avenues to enhance parental involvement. The researcher recommends the school should conduct a survey to determine suitable times or day for the parent to attend workshops or school's events, the school should organise a workshop to educate the parent on importance of parental involvement regarding their child's education, on the school, and the child's behaviour. As a teacher, the researcher noticed that the lack of parental involvement has contributed to the learners' poor academic performance, and that parents' involvement will improve their child's academic performance, hence, the need to look for strategies to enhance parents' involvement in schools.

Keywords: education, parents, secondary schools, Creswell's model, management

Introduction

Prior to the beginning of the 20th century, formalized schooling was a collaboration between families and schools. In the late 1800's, the father was the financial supporter while the mother was to manage the home and help educate children. Accordingly, it was in 1897 that a group of mothers from across the nation founded the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) to support a healthy growing relationship among parents, teachers, and the school. Recently, both parents work to provide for children's needs and with the swing in financial responsibilities, many families are unable to support their children when it comes to parental involvement in schools (Smith, 2011, p. 22). Parent involvement is the volunteer service of parents at school or at home for the

purpose of improving a child's education (Bower & Griffin, 2011). This means that parental involvement in any form, be it helping the learners with homework, attending parent meeting at their schools, or receiving and responding to their child's academic success, impacts on their academic achievement, and it is therefore evident that parental support is important to a child's education.

Literature Review

As civic participation in society increased, parents were invited to become more involved with schools as volunteers, helpers in classrooms and as members of school boards and committees. This model of parental involvement was reflected in education policy for many decades (Savelsberg & O'Hehir, 2014). The aim of this research is to investigate if there are strategies, systems in place that enhance parental involvement in Kliptown Secondary School. Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009, p. 14) described parental involvement as the willing and active participation of parents in a wide range of school and home-based activities. Haack (2007, p. 10) also defined parental involvement as what parents do to enhance their children's schooling success and strengthened the communication they have with children's school. If parents are involved in their child's education, they will get adequate information on what is happening in the school. Epstein (2001) went on to outline six types of parental involvement to characterise how families can get involved in the education of their children. These include: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community.

Firstly, achievement in learning is more likely to be fostered when both parents and schools work together to facilitate a supportive learning environment in both the home and the school. Parental involvement does not mean that parents should spend the whole day or time with their child daily, but it is expected of them to spend some of their time in doing homework with the child, guide or assist the child with any assignment or project given at school or ask them questions about what happened every day when they return from school daily. In recent decades, researchers have turned their attention to analysing what type of parental involvement is most effective particularly for student achievement (Castelli & Pepe, 2008). The results are resounding the greatest impact is brought about by parents' expectations and their efforts in the home, not in the classroom. Clinton and Hattie (2013, p. 324) suggested that at home good parenting' is considered to be of most benefit to children's educational attainment and combined with sound links between the home and the school, is considered to be most effective. It is therefore evident that if parents get involved by assisting their children with schoolwork at home and educate them at home, their children's academic performance at school will increase. Learners whose parents assist them at homework and school projects perform better at school academically.

Furthermore, involving parents and the community in school activities and social function can increase parental involvement in a school. The key to good in-school parental involvement is for schools to view parents as co-designers and partners in education (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention [CDCP], 2012, p. 18). Therefore, it is vital for school to organise activities that will facilitate and encourage the community to be involve in the school, by doing so it will enhance parental involvement in the school. Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders, and Simon (1997) summarised the benefits of parental involvement as follows:

1. The benefit to learners: Children are assured of two sets of significant adults, parents, and teachers, who care about them and who share their knowledge in the children's best interests. The child's learning is supported at home and at school, and skills, knowledge, and positive attitudes are reinforced in both areas;

2. The benefits to parents: Parents are provided with knowledge about the developmental needs of the child at different ages and grade levels. They develop confidence in their task as primary educators of their children and provided with skills to assist at all stages of schooling. They are brought into contact with other parents of similarly aged children and can share their knowledge with them;

3. The benefit to teachers: The teaching task of the teacher is strengthened when they can rely on the parents' support within the home. Teachers also gain an understanding of families' diverse backgrounds, cultures, concerns aims, and aspiration and their views of parenting.

These benefits are important to the study, because it does focus on the benefit of parental involvement on the learners only but also focus on the benefit to other stakeholders. Parental involvement enables the learners to take their studies seriously, because they know they have good support systems. It can therefore be seen that the first type of parental involvement refers to schools helping to improve parents' understanding of child development, parenting skills, and the conditions at home for learning and the school should also seek to improve its own understanding of the families of its learners for the school to be able to manage parental involvement effectively. Hence, the benefit mentioned by Espein and the above researchers (1997) highlight the importance of parental involvement in the child's academic success. There are several barriers that prevent parents from becoming more involved in their children's education, such as poor literacy or language skills; secondly, lack of confidence; thirdly, lack of time due to work commitments; and finally, negative educational experiences. Another contributing factor poor parent involvement is the teachers' perceptions. Schools have a role to play in being open to the involvement of parents and to explore a variety of ways to engage with parents and the wider community. How teachers view the involvement of parents is an influential factor in parents' decisions to participate in their children's education. Some teachers in Kliptown Secondary School do not boarder to involve the parent, because they have already made up their mind that the parent will not respond or come to school. Where teachers actively welcome and facilitate parent collaboration, parents are more likely to take up the opportunities that are being offered (CDCP, 2012, p. 25).

One way to enhance parental involvement is to view parents as capable and valued partners. Administrators who wish to capitalise on the potential of enhanced parent engagement may want to consider developing and disseminating a school or district-wide belief statement and/or parent involvement policy (National Teachers Association Pennsylvania's, 2009, family-school partnership). An organised, systemic approach to parent engagement assures success. Schools with highly rated partnership programs make greater gains on state tests than schools with lower-rated programs (Epstein & Sanders, 2000). According to Constantino (2003, p. 35), creating a school culture that is welcoming and engages the family is the key component to parental involvement, which research shows has a positive effect on student academic achievements. Also, Constantino (2003) suggested that schools and families should engage and build a positive partnership by making schools the centre of the community and not only involving the teachers, administrators, and parents, but also including businesses and community members to support the school. If the school develops partnership with businesses around the school and not only with parent, but the business will also be able to support the school in terms of donation, attend functions organised by the school, the business will get to know in which way or form they can assist the school. Over the past 20 years, parental involvement has become a topic of concern for policy makers, educators, and researchers, but little emphasis was placed on strategies to enhance parental involvement in schools. As a teacher, the researcher noticed that the lack of parental involvement has contributed to most learners' poor academic performance and behaviour in class, and

that parents' involvement will improve their child's academic performance, hence, the need to look for strategies to enhance parents' involvement in schools important.

Methodology

Welman, Kruger, and Mitchell (2005, p. 2) defined research as a process that involves obtaining scientific knowledge by means of various objective methods and procedures. Babbie and Mouton (2010, p. 75) defined research methodology as the research process and the kind of tools and procedures to be used. Babbie and Mouton (2010, p. 270) defined qualitative research as a broad methodical approach to the study of social action. Qualitative research attempts always to study human action from the perspective of the social actors. The researcher will use qualitative research methods in the study, because the aim of the study is to investigate strategies to improve parental involvement and these strategies will be gathered from participants understanding and viewpoint. It also uses a qualitative method to collect data called focus groups interview, which collects data from participant's viewpoints through discussions.

The aim of this study is to investigate the strategies for enhancing management of parental involvement in Kliptown Secondary School. To this end, the following objectives are designed:

1. To investigate if there are strategies in place to promote parental support as a means to improve learners' academic performance;

2. To check if there are proper systems in place to manage parental involvement in Kliptown Secondary School;

3. To also investigate if the teachers are using the systems or the strategies properly to engage the parents.

Research Design, Sampling Population, and Method

Omanukwue (2012, p. 55) defined research design as a detailed plan, the visualisation of data to be collected and how problems related to the topic of those data are to be addressed. The study is a case study, because is based on a particular school, this makes the events context specific, and the events would be described in detail. Saunders (2003, p. 23), a population relates to the entire set of data that is of interest to the researcher, the "sample population" refers to the group of people or objects from which the sample should be taken. In this study, the researcher will involve teachers of Kliptown, which are three female and two male teachers, the researcher decided to include the male teachers because parental involvement is being mothers' role. Participants are teachers in Kliptown Secondary School who teaches different grades raging from Grades 8 to 12. Sample size aims to have an appropriate number of respondents to participate in the study. Saunders (2003, p. 10) stated that large sampling techniques maximise the degree to which the sample represents the whole population. The researcher will be using convenience sampling method for this study. The researcher will use convenient sample method to have access to the teachers.

Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher (Welman et al., 2005). For this study, the target population is five colleagues from the researcher's place of work in a secondary school, which makes it convenient to access participants. These colleagues comprise of both male and female teacher, who are teachers, and they teach different grades in the school, that are not far from the researcher's class for easy access and convenience. Ethical consideration is the degree to which the research conforms to moral standards, including issues related to professional, legal, and social accountability (Polit & Hunglar, 1999, p. 574). Permission to

conduct research using teachers in the secondary school was obtained from the principal. The researcher issued a consent letter to participants in the school who were chosen to be involved in the research, seeking their consent and the letter was signed by each participant. The researcher used focus group interview as the research instrument. Validity, regarding interview is important to check and verify the trustworthy in the data collected, through extended and determined fieldwork, multi-method strategies, participant language, and exact accounts (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p. 324). A tape recorder was used to record the interviews, discussion, and direct data was transcribed. This enables the researcher not to transcribe the interviews in a bias way.

Data Collection Tool, Data Management, and Analysis

Research instruments adopted for this study is focus group interview and discussion, which was conducted using a group consisting of five colleagues form the researcher's place of work. Welman et al. (2005) described focus group as group in depth interviews. These groups consist of a small number of participants that are drawn together for the purpose of expressing their opinions on a specific set of open-questions. The researcher used focus group discussion and interview for the data collection tool, because that is what required by the course coordination. One of the constraints of focus group is that the researcher cannot guarantee that participants will maintain confidentiality. This study conducted a focus group interview with five participants who will share their viewpoints on strategies to enhance parental involvement. Data analysis is the process of systematically applying statistical and or logical techniques to describe and illustrate, condense and recap, and evaluate data. The data found in this study through a focus group interview was analysed by using Creswell's six-step model (2009). The research decided to use this data analysis model, because it suits the data collection tool used in the study. Each of the participant responses was aligned to objectives of the study that their response or responses were related to.

Result and Discussion

From the responses, Kliptown Secondary School has systems and strategies to manage parental involvement, but the systems and strategies in place are limited, the school needs to use more avenues to enhance parental involvement. Some colleagues also feels that it not necessary to involve the parent, because they do not response to any letter sent to them and this means they are not interested in their child's education. The school is expected to appoint competent parents that will be well-trained by the school for their role as the parent representative in the school into the school governing body (SGB), so that the SGB appointees can be fully utilize. There is no regular or proper meeting with the parent per grade before the report issuing day parent meeting.

Collaboration and communication between the school and the community should be increased or encouraged, so that the community can participate or be given chance to be involved in the school decision making. Post-level 1 educators are not properly equipped or trained on how to go about involving the parents on any issue that needs parent's attention. Parents' needs to be work shopped on the importance and benefits of parental involvement in their child/children's academic yearly. Some of the teachers write notes in the learner's book for their parents to sign or reply, but sometimes they do not get to check if it responded to. The teachers write those comments as evidence to show they are really monitoring the child's work and behaviour in class. Parents who are involved in their child's academic, the teachers said most of those learners performs very well academically and behaves well in the classroom.

Table 1

Summary of the Major Findings in This Study With Respect to the Objectives

Colleagues	Objective 1	Objective 2	Objective 3
Colleague A	Colleague A said, involvement of SGB, parents volunteering to come and assist if any teacher is absent.	The systems used by her is giving report to parent not the learners, suspending the learner so that the parent can come to school.	She involves the parent by writing notes to their parents in the learner's notebook, but parent do not respond.
Colleague B	She said the school engages the SGB, but most of the SGB members are not properly trained.	She said the only way to get parent involved is when you suspend the learners, most of the parents do not show interest.	
Colleague C	She said parent meeting and grade meetings. Report evening.		She phones the parent to give them feedback about their child's performance and behaviour.
Colleague D		She also said is using the systems available to involve the parent which are calling the parent on the school phone and send letters to the parent and making notes on the learner's book for their parent to receive feedback.	She states several efforts used in encouraging parental involvements. Parents report evening or meeting, High Teas with the parent to build relationship with the parent.
Colleague E			He communicates effectively with his learner's parents through phone calls.

Conclusion

Parent involvement is important across cultures and school levels. Children whose parents are actively involved in their education do better academically and socially. Furthermore, children whose parents are actively involved in their education have a higher rate of matriculation. It is important that schools collaborate with parents in order to facilitate a climate of cohesiveness. When parents are actively involved in their children's education at school and at home, students do better in school. Parent involvement is critical to helping children succeed regardless of grade level. A home environment where learning is promoted is a better predictor of academic success than income or cultural background.

Parent involvement drops off significantly after elementary school. Students whose parents stay involved in their schooling do better academically and socially. Obstacles that may prevent parents from becoming involved at the secondary level include: (a) not knowing how to be involved; (b) parents feel schoolwork is beyond their knowledge; and (c) previous negative school experiences. Kliptown Secondary School can increase parental involvement by sending positive notes home, appreciating the parents those volunteers at the school and home visits. Some of the teachers in the school need to understand the importance of parental involvement on the learner's academic performance, behavior, and the school itself. Limitation to this study is that the population sample was very small and not a full representative of the school staff.

Recommendations

From the above results, certain recommendations will be valuable to improve parental involvement. Kliptown Secondary School educators should use other means to involve the parents apart from phoning, asking parent to be a volunteer, and sending letters to the parents, parent meetings, and report day. The following should also be used by the school:

Firstly, Kliptown Secondary School should conduct a survey to see which times or day is suitable for the parent to attend workshops or school's events. At the same time, the school should also organise a workshop to educate the parent on importance of parental involvement in their child's education, on the school, and the child's behaviour. The school should provide a variety of volunteer opportunity and involve more parents.

Furthermore, the school should organise parent meeting every term, not once a year. The school should schedule meetings and activities on a Saturday and the school should also offer teachers and the parent's incentives for attendance. Organise meetings and activities during the day for parents who work or are unable to attend at night and meetings and activities should be held after rush hours. The SGB appointees should be properly trained and equipped for them to be able to carry out their duties effectively in the school.

Finally, the school should organise school meetings or events off school campus, such as in community centre or places of worship in an informal setting, whereby the parent also participates in organising them. The school should avoid scheduling meetings and activities that conflict with other school activities, major community events, and religious holiday. Each class or subject teacher should get the contact details of their parent and create a Wats up group for easy communication and to make information available to parent.

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Appendix

The interview questions and the responses from each participant in the focus group.

1. In what ways does your school's mission/vision statement and objectives include parent involvement responses?

Colleague A: By appointing more parents in the SGB.

Colleague B: I am not aware if the school mission/vision statement supports parental involvement.

Colleague C: Through parents and grade meetings.

Colleague D: Parent being part of the SGB, report evening, and parents meeting.

Colleague E: Report evening with parent and grade parent meeting.

2. What is your school policy and practices are regard to parent and community involvement?

Colleague A: Parents are involved in the decision making in the school.

Colleague B: I have yet to see community members being involved in the school.

Colleague C: Parent meetings and the involvement of the SGB.

Colleague D: The school involves the parent and the community in the school affairs by asking them to help during fund raising.

Colleague E: Through volunteering in the classroom, when a teacher is absent.

3. Do you think as a staff or school, you are putting enough/adequate effort to encourage parental involvement in your school?

Colleague A: Yes, but some parents do not respond to the letters or notes written to them.

Colleague B: Not really, because their parents are not interested, I only speak to parent on the day we issue report.

Colleague C: Not really, because most parent do not respond on time or at all.

Colleague D: Yes, through report evening and organising events like High Teas.

Colleague E: Yes, by phoning the parent.

4. What role do you play in executing the school's parent involvement policies and parent?

Colleague A: I write letter to the parent, as post level teacher I can't do much.

Colleague B: I do not play in executing the policy.

Colleague C: Phoning parent to have teacher to parent rapport.

Colleague D: Attends parent meeting to meet with the parent and speak to them, sometime I call them.

Colleague E: I am assisting in teaching the learners as a volunteer parent.

5. What organisational and structural barriers do you believe attribute to low parental involvement?

Colleague A: There is no structural barrier stopping parent to be involved in their child's education, they are just not interested.

Colleague B: No structural barrier stopping the parents, they just give excuses.

Colleague C: There is no structural barrier; parents tend to ignore matters relating to their child's education.

Colleague D: There is no structural barrier preventing parental involvement in our school, is just that most of our parents are not educated.

Colleague E; No structural barriers, parents are not just interested in their child's education.

6. What strategies have you used as a teacher to encourage and manage parent involvement in the school?

Colleague A: Not giving the report card to the learners but rather give it to the parent, write notes in the learners note books and send letters to the parents.

Colleague B: I have not used much strategies, I only send letter to the parent, which is seldom responded to.

Colleague C: Signing and writing notes in the learners book, phoning the parent.

Colleague D: Writing letters to the parents and making notes on learner's books.

Colleague E: Phoning the parent.

7. Is there any organisational and structural practice that could increase parental involvement in your school?

Colleague A: The SGB, School Management Team, Department of Education must assist us to increase parental involvement.

Colleague B: Yes, effective communication between the school and parent.

Colleague C: To have more teachers and parent meeting during the year, not only the report day.

Colleague D: Yes, have more events like fund raising which will involve parent more.

Colleague E: Effective communication through phone between the teachers and parents.

8a. What resources does your school have to encourage and manage parent involvement effectively?

Colleague A: Sending letters to the parent and phone calls.

Colleague B: Engaging parents in the decision making at school, asking parent to volunteer to assist in a classroom if any teacher is absent.

Colleague C: Phoning parent using the school's phone, but sometime when you get to the office you will be denied access to the phone, so sometimes one tend to forget.

Colleague D: Sending letters to the parent.

Colleague E: Parent and school collaboration

8b. What part have you played to ensure these resources are being utilized?

Colleague A: Make calls to parent.

Colleague B: None.

Colleague C: Interacting with through phone call.

Colleague D: Being available when needed.

Colleague E: Contacting the parent.

9. Do you believe there is a correlation between parent involvement and students' achievements? Explain your answer.

Colleague A: Very much believed it, because most of the learners who are performing in my class, their parents are involved.

Colleague B: Yes.

Colleague C: Yes, if learners know that both teachers and parents are working hand in hand, they would really improve.

Colleague D: Definitely, a parent who is concerned about their child's education reflects on the learner's performance and behaviour in school.

10. Please share any comments that my questions did not allow you to make.

Colleague A: None.

Colleague B: The school should motivate or encourage the parents that involved in school through recognition by giving them certificate, sending thank you letter or creating a site where parent can access to the school information.

Colleague C: Increase communication between the parent and school.

Colleague D: None.

Colleague E: None.