University "St. Kliment Ohridski" – Bitola
Faculty of Education – Bitola
ISSN: 1857- 8888
DOI: 10.20544/teacher.27.09

# PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT: WHY IS IMPORTANT AND HOW TO INVOLVE PARENTS IN SCHOOLS?

**Vesna Stojanovska**
University "St. Kliment Ohridski" – Bitola, Faculty of Education – Bitola
vesna.stojanovska@uklo.edu.mk

**Abstract**

This article is an in-depth qualitative literature review on the importance, benefits, and ways of parental involvement in the education of their children. It highlights the fact that parental involvement in their child's learning process offers many opportunities for success – improvements in the child's academic achievement, and social and emotional adjustment. The collaboration between the parent and the teacher is an important prerequisite for encouraging the full development of the child. It is therefore, parental involvement should be seen as an important tool for the advancement of the quality of education that should be part of regular school practice.

The paper also analyzes the possibilities for parent participation in the various aspects of school life. Parental involvement can have different types, from simple informational conversation, and consulting parents, to active and passive participation of parents in curricular and extracurricular activities.

**Keywords:** parental involvement, child education, importance, benefits

## 1. Introduction

The parental involvement in the school, ie. their involvement in various aspects of school life is an important component of the educational process and is directly related to the quality of that process. The partnership between the family and the school is an important prerequisite for adequately supporting and encouraging the child's development. Parents have a strong influence on their children. They have a direct influence that is stronger than teachers, friends, and the environment. For this reason, a parent's positive attitude and support towards their children's education is considerable. It can inspire and empower the child to develop good learning habits. This results in academic success and the long run leads to economic and social benefits for the child.

## 2. What is parental involvement?

There is no universal definition of what parental involvement entails. Some definitions include greater participation in the life of a school, while others focus on increased contributions to an individual child's learning process.

Parental involvement refers to a broad range of activities such as good parenting in the home, provision of a secure and stable environment, intellectual stimulation, parent-child discussion, contact with schools to share information, participation in school events, participation in the work of school, and participation in school governance. It is the active, ongoing participation of a parent or primary caregiver in the education of a child.

The participation of parents can have different types, starting from informing parents about the various aspects of school life, through consulting parents when making decisions related to the education and upbringing of their children, and up to the participation of parents in the decision-making process in the various areas of school life.

Epstein et al, 2002, as cited in Stanikzai, 2013 proposes a framework for parental participation, i.e. the possible areas in which the cooperation between the family and the school is important for encouraging the development of children:

ISSN: 1857- 8888
DOI: 10.20544/teacher.27.09

1. Parenting – enhance parenting skills as well as understanding child and adolescent development at the family level. Assist families with setting home conditions that support children as students at each age and grade level.
2. Communication – communicate with families about school programs and student progress. Communication is regular, two-way, and meaningful.
3. Volunteering – expressing that parents are welcome in the school and that their support and assistance are necessary. Involving families as volunteers and as audiences i.e. sports days, gardening projects, drama nights, intergenerational days at the school or in other locations i.e. libraries.
4. Learning at home – helping parents to understand the educational process and their role in supporting student achievement e.g. helping students with homework and other curriculum-related activities, helping/encouraging learning activities at home, and talking about school with the children.
5. Decision making – parents are full partners in the decisions that affect their children. Therefore, they should join the decision-making organs of the school, becoming parent leaders and members of parent representative bodies like councils of parents, boards of management, and membership to committees.
6. Collaborating with the community – identification, and utilization of community resources to strengthen schools, families, and student's learning and development.

Parental involvement refers to all activities that parents do to help children succeed in school and life. However, the whole idealism of parental involvement revolves around teamwork. It is about parents, schools, and communities cooperating. They ensure that every parent can play a positive role in their child's learning, school community, and social life. Parental involvement is a shared responsibility in which schools are committed to reaching out to involve parents in meaningful ways. Parents are committed to actively supporting their children's learning and development by taking part in the actions provided by both school and community.

## 3. Importance of parental involvement

Why is it important for parents to get involved in their children's education? A study conducted by researchers at the Johns Hopkins University Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships shows that school practices that encourage families to support their child's math learning at home can lead to higher percentages of students scoring at or above proficiency on standardized math tests (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005)

Other research shows that parent involvement with reading activities has a positive impact on reading achievement, language comprehension, and expressive language skills, as well as a child's interest in reading, attitudes toward reading, and level of attention according to a research summary by Cristina Clark (2007).

However, the benefits of parental involvement extend beyond the realm of educational achievement. A meta–analysis of 448 independent studies conducted by a group of researchers of the American Psychological Association shows that parental involvement in their children's education is positively related to children's academic, social, and emotional adjustment and negatively related to their delinquency (Barger et al., 2019, p. 8). The study says that "when parents become involved at school by, for example, attending events such as open houses or volunteering in the classroom, they build social networks that can provide useful information, connections to school personnel (e.g., teachers), or strategies for enhancing children's achievement. In turn, parents with heightened social capital are better equipped to support their children in succeeding in school as they can call on resources (e.g., asking a teacher to spend extra time helping their children) and utilize the information they have gathered (e.g., knowing when and how their children should complete their homework)."

All of the above indicates that parents and teachers should be aware of the significant contribution parents can make to their children's education. On the whole, parents' involvement in their child's learning process offers many opportunities for success. Parental involvement in their children's learning not only improves a child's academic achievement across all subject areas but also promotes better behavior and social adjustment. Thus, parents' involvement in education helps children to grow

ISSN: 1857- 8888
DOI: 10.20544/teacher.27.09

up to be productive, responsible members of society, and, through that, they help in increasing the quality of the overall educational process.

**4. When is parental involvement not beneficial for children?**

Although growing research shows that parental involvement in their children's learning positively affects their performance, not all research results are consistent (Cooper et al., 2000). Some studies find mixed or contradictory conclusions regarding parental involvement.

When parental involvement tends to be controlling the student outcomes show a tendency to be negative. Controlling parents think they need tight control over their children to ensure their success. They pressure their children to achieve and solve problems for them without being asked to. Researchers define controlling involvement as excessive pressure on the child to complete assignments, check if the child has completed their homework, get involved in homework without being asked, and punish the child if homework is not complete (Karbach et al., 2013)

Controlling parent behavior decreases a child's intrinsic motivation. Such engagement undermines children's learning motivation and the child's sense of personal value and responsibility (Rogers et al., 2009)

Parental involvement is helpful when they are not trying to be controlling and when their action shows that they value their child's education. A child who receives autonomous support from a parent tends to perform better in school. Autonomous supportive parents focus on the learning, not the grades. They are sensitive to their children's needs and are available to help with homework when requested (Karbach et al., 2013)

**5. How can parents be involved?**

The benefits of parental involvement in their children's education raise the question of how parents can be involved in their children's education. Considering the importance that parental involvement in the education of their children has in encouraging the quality of the educational process, the legal legislation foresees and precisely defines the participation of parents in the decision-making process through their participation in the School Board as the highest governing body and the Council of parents as a body for the organized realization of the interests of students and parents.

However, in addition to the legal obligation and the determined importance of parental participation, educators and schools should take care of how to promote more effective family engagement to take advantage of the numerous benefits of parents' involvement.

Crucial in promoting parental involvement is strong communication between school and home. Two–way communication helps create a positive partnership between the home and school. Therefore, the most effective way to build a real partnership is to create regular opportunities for open, honest dialogue. All families should feel that the school keeps them informed on important issues and events and that it is easy to communicate with teachers, principals, and other school staff (Redding et al., 2011).

Then, establishing initiatives and programs for parent education that will provide parents with the tools, knowledge, and skills to support their child's learning or increase their knowledge. Parent education can also offer parents strategies and information related to child development, effective strategies (e.g. nutrition, communication, behavior), and tips for establishing supporting learning environments at home (Redding et al., 2011).

Determining and publicizing where needs and opportunities for parental involvement exist at schools or in classrooms and with students, as parents may want to be involved, but feel unaware of ways to participate or unsure if they have anything to contribute. By accessing a published list of school needs, parents can easily identify how and where they can contribute based on their strengths and time (Barriers to Parent Involvement: Roadblocks and Detours, 2015)

The parents themselves also presented a series of ideas about the possible activities in which they could participate:

ISSN: 1857- 8888
DOI: 10.20544/teacher.27.09

- Organizing different types of meetings so that parents would get to know each other better (for example, joint parent meetings);
- Joint activities of students, parents, and teachers in the school environment (celebration of significant dates, school activities, and activities within projects);
- Joint workshops for parents and students on current topics (health, drug addiction, gambling, alcoholism, internet addiction, free time, ways of learning, motivation for greater achievements);
- Parental involvement in the work of school sections;
- Organizing seminars and lectures intended for parents (for example, supporting parents in understanding all the specificities of the adolescent age);
- Organizing joint sports meetings, and tournaments;
- Various extracurricular and extracurricular activities (visiting a museum, theater, cinema, excursions, competitions, concerts, festivals in the city);

At the same time, the activities in which parents, students, and teachers would take an active part, the parents assessed as a contribution to creating conditions for equal chances for the development and progress of all students, because this kind of cooperation brings a series of benefits for all participants in education - the educational process (Bursac et al., 2015).

## 6. Conclusion

Parental involvement is seen as an important strategy for the advancement of the quality of education. The ultimate goal of this is to expand the social and cognitive capacities of pupils.

Research has shown that parental involvement leads to better academic, social, and emotional outcomes for pupils. The benefits of parental involvement extend beyond the realm of educational achievement. Children whose parents are involved show better behavior and social and emotional development.

There are different types of participation, starting from simple ones such as informing and consulting parents, participating in parent meetings, and working with children at home, which further lead and help parents to engage in more complex forms of participation, such as participation in the decision-making process. Therefore it is important, within a well-planned and long-term program, to offer parents diverse activities in which they can be involved, depending on their preferences, obligations, and abilities.

It is important to encourage teachers and parents to think about the different ways in which they can collaborate and encourage parents to be involved in their children's educational process. Parental participation should be part of regular school practice, not an isolated instance that happens thanks to the goodwill of interested individuals.

**References:**

Barger, M. M., Kim, E. M., Kuncel, N. R., & Pomerantz, E. M. (2019). The relation between parents' involvement in children's schooling and children's adjustment: A meta-analysis. Psychological Bulletin, 145(9), 855–890. https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000201

Barriers to parent involvement: roadblocks and detours. (2015, August 5). FlipHTML5. Retrieved February 11, 2024 from https://fliphtml5.com/kqok/opjp

Bursac, V., Rodic, Z., & Pandzic, A. (2015, September 15). Participacija roditelja vazan factor podrske razvoju ucenika i skole https://www.scribd.com/doc/279024802/TS-Pavle-Savic-Participacija-roditelja-vazan-faktor-podrske-razvoju-ucenika-i-skole-pdf

Clark, C., (2007). Why it is important to involve parents in their children's literacy development, a brief research summary National Literacy Trust. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED496346.pdf

Cooper, H., Lindsay, J., & Nye, B. (2000). Homework in the Home: How Student, Family, and Parenting-Style Differences relate to the homework process. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *25*(4), 464–487. https://doi.org/10.1006/ceps.1999.1036

ISSN: 1857- 8888
DOI: 10.20544/teacher.27.09

Karbach, J., Gottschling, J., Spengler, M., Hegewald, K., & Spinath, F. M. (2013). Parental involvement and general cognitive ability as predictors of domain-specific academic achievement in early adolescence. *Learning and Instruction*, *23*, 43–51. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2012.09.004

Redding, S., Murphy, M., & Sheley, P. (2011). *Handbook on Family and Community Engagement*. Academic Development Institute. pp.172–173. Retrieved February, 11 2024 from https://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/downloads/FACEHandbook.pdf

Rogers, M., Theule, J., Ryan, B., Adams, G. R., & Keating, L. (2009). Parental involvement and children's school achievement. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology*, *24*(1), 34–57. https://doi.org/10.1177/0829573508328445

Stanikzai, R. & Faculty of Arts and Social Science Department of Educational Sciences. (2013). Parental Involvement in Children's Education [MA thesis, Karlstad University]. https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:709331/FULLTEXT01.pdf

Sheldon, S. B., & Epstein, J. L. (2005). Involvement counts: family and community partnerships and mathematics achievement. *The Journal of Educational Research*, *98*(4), 196–207. https://doi.org/10.3200/joer.98.4.196-207