Full Length Research Paper

Parents' involvement in inclusive education: An empirical test for the psycho-educational development of learners with special educational needs (SENs)

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There is mounting evidence that involvement paradigm is a major strategy that supports positive learning outcomes and is critically vital for educating learners with special educational needs (SENs). To illuminate the parental involvement concept and potential in a concrete context, this paper explains 1) the empirical literature that explains the interaction between parental involvement, inclusive education and learners' educational achievement, 2) synthesizes findings that relate parental involvement paradigms with psycho-educational development of children, 3) uses both developmental ecological perspectives and the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model (1995) to analyze and explain the interaction amongst parents' involvement, school ecology and students' academic success. Finally, findings revealed a strong and meaningful relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement and that parents' beliefs, expectations and experiences are important ingredients that support better learning outcomes for children.

Key words: Parental involvement, learners with special educational needs, inclusive education, academic achievement, learning outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

There is mounting evidence that parental involvement is a major strategy for effective practice of inclusive education and is critically vital for educating learners with special educational needs (SENs). Though significance of parental involvement (PI) in learners with SENs has never been in doubt, most recent literature (Christian et al., 1998; Fantuzzo et al., 2000; Horvat et al., 2003; Leseman and deJong, 1998; Saracho, 1997a) argues why parental involvement paradigm is a motivating factor for psycho-educational development of learners with SENs and positively linked with learner's emotional,

social and academic achievement in school. Also, within the academic fields related to education of learners with special educational needs (SENs) such as early childhood education, early intervention, special education, inclusive education among others, it is clearly observed that most, if not all, document parental involvement as a key strategy for promoting positive academic outcomes in children. Historically, the demands for learners with Special Educational Needs (SENs) to be in the same class with children without special needs have been globally adopted, and till this date, they continue to

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generate interest among stakeholders. Based on this, inclusive education is grounded on the premise of social justice, with the assumption that rights to quality education must be given to all learners irrespective of their physical, intellectual, emotional or learning disability (UNESCO, 1994).

On the other hand, the plethora of literature documented that diverse special educational needs (SENs) learners actually benefit socially and academically when they attend regular school with typically developing children (Nakken and Pijl, 2002; Flem and Keller, 2000; Vislie, 2003). Previously, this was thought to be unrealistic and impracticable for learners with SENs to get an education in the same class with learners without SENs (Pijl et al., 2003). Thus, the notion of integrating learners with SENs in mainstream school is known as 'inclusive education'. This term denotes 'the method of educating children with SENs in a regular classroom setting around their neighborhood, where they benefit and enjoy the privilege of regular school system that suits their learning needs" if they are not ascribed with any disabilities (Rafferty et al., 2001, p266). Interestingly, literature demonstrates that inclusive education is developmentally strong for all learners, and reported positive evidence of social, emotional, and educational gains that come from classroom (Anderson, 2006; Copeland et al., 2004; Frazee, 2003; Helmstetter et al., 1998; McDonnell et al., 2003; Peetsma et al., 2001).

As good as these sounds, only few studies, if any, focus on the benefit of parental involvement (PI) in education of SENs children. Though much is said about the parent-school partnership and how it relates to positive outcomes for learners with SENs, only few researchers observe the multifaceted nature of parent-school collaboration in inclusive settings. While past and present research linked early (PI) strategy to children educational outcomes (Hara and Burke, 1998; Hill and Craft, 2003; Horvat et al., 2003; Marcon, 1999), evidence shows that the offspring of parents with higher degree of interest in education performed higher and better than those of parents with a lesser degree involvement. This is highly supported by Barnard (2004), Fan and Chen (2001), Feuerstein (2000), Jeynes (2003), McWayne et al. (2004), De Civita et al. (2004) Eamon (2002) and Schreiber (2002), where they reported parent-school collaboration as a positive strategy for advancing academic achievement. Therefore, engaging parents of learners with SENs in their child's learning has not only been identified and recommended by researchers as a positive strategy for advancing academic achievement, but widely acknowledged and upheld by policy makers who have recently incorporated efforts towards increasing parents' involvement in comprehensive educational policy inventiveness.

Moreover, research over the years (Bronfrenbrenner, 1979; 1996; Epstein, 2001; Henderson and Mapp, 2002, 2007; Horvat et al., 2003) highlights parental involvement paradigm as a contributing factor to positive academic outcomes. Besides, most literature on PI confirmed that factors such as parental expectations, school and family behaviours affect learning outcomes (Redding, 2002; Epstein, 2001). On the other hand, Duhaney and Spenser (2000) and other researchers like Fisher et al. (1998) established that the advocacy role played by parents of learners with SENs contributes to their educational success worldwide. For instance, a related study from the United States shows that it was to their credit, (parents) that the US Congress approved the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (PL 94-142). This and other positive outcomes reinforced the arguments that parents are not only collaborators but major partners in their child's school progress, and that, lack of parental involvement in school promotes variables like: achievement gap, inequality and discrimination experienced by learners with SENs in their daily activities.

Purpose

The ultimate goal of this paper is to critically examine problems that influenced PI practice in education of learners with SENs and to suggest a process that enhances the effectiveness of parental involvement paradigms as a strategy for promoting children's academic achievement. This is accomplished by first discussing parental involvement and the likely developmental mechanisms that support parents –school collaboration and promote educational development of learners with SENs. The paper uses systematic review of literature to synthesize the correlation between parental involvement paradigm and positive learning outcomes in children. Although society and research evidences have long established a link between parents' participation and students' achievement (Barton and Coley, 2007; Horvat et al., 2003; Sheldon and Epstein, 2005; Simon, 2004; Yan and Lin, 2005), evidence from other related studies reported little, if any, of such assessable effects (Bobbett, 1995; Mathews, 2005). Therefore, apart from individual goals and learners' beliefs, that have already been documented, variables like PI practice wield significant influence on learners' school achievement and behaviour.

METHODOLOGY

This paper analysed and reviewed literature in order to investigate and check new empirical studies that link parental involvement with children's educational achievement. The study collated and reviewed relevant articles, books, journals, and meta-analysis on PI paradigm and inclusive education. Both the ERIC and PSYCHLIT data

bases were searched using the following key words: academic achievement, parents, and parental involvement, inclusive education. This process initially reported about 3800 articles, journals, technical reports, paper presentations and book chapters covering more than a 20 years period. Based on the abstracts retrieved from this initial 3800 plus articles and publications, the search was lessened to a relatively few hundred of studies that are pertinent and relevant to the theme of this paper. The contents of the remaining several hundred of articles cum journals were further scrutinised and only those that reported empirical findings were kept aside and used in this study; while others were left out from further consideration. This process shows that only few studies documented empirical findings about the link between parental involvement paradigm and learners' educational success. Even among those studies that document empirical analysis, the study only used those that show Pearson correlations between PI indicator and academic success. To verify references in this study, manual searches of relevant journals and articles related to the paper were performed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Background information

The parental involvement (PI) paradigm has long been recognized as centrally significant to children's educational attainment. Nevertheless, this process had neither been examined nor analytically considered until early 1960s. Though the call for PI as a strategy for successful learning activities has been robust in recent time, there persists some problems associated with PI practice due to the inconsistency in research findings. Although most of the work in this area is uneven and lacks guiding theoretical framework, recent development particularly, in the theoretical framework has brought a lot of progress to PI research. However, literature on PI simplistically observed it as unidimensional. To be realistic, PI is multifaceted in nature and connotes different kinds of behavioural practices and patterns (Balli, 1996; Brown, 1994; Henderson and Mapp, 2002; Taylor et al., 1995). This belief is highly embraced in a number of experimental studies on parental involvement (Keith et al., 1993; Singh et al., 1995). That is why it is widely agreed that some scopes of PI are more evident to compare in learners' academic success than several others (Singh et al., 1995).

Precisely, the direct precursor to this development is the Article 26 of the universal declaration of Human Rights adopted by the League of Nations in 1945, which proclaimed that, every person must be given education irrespective of gender, race, colour and religion. This is widely acknowledged and enshrined in the constitutions of every independent nation as an important document that promotes children's rights. Also the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities its Optional Protocol that was unanimously adopted in 2008 represents a significant change in education of learners with disabilities by establishing that disability is not only a social problem but also a human rights issue. The idea of inclusion and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities is also well advocated and articulated in many international policy documents and declarations, such as the African Charter on the rights and welfare of the child adopted in 1990; the Jomtien World Declaration on Education For All Report (1990); the Dakar Framework For Action on Education For All (UNESCO, 2002) and the Salamanca Report and Framework For Action for Children with SENs, (1994). Similar documents, such as World Declaration on Education for All (1990); and the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disability (1993) also embraced and emphasized the rights of quality education for learners with SENs. However, among these international documents, the most mentioned and important one is the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). This statement prompted the Western countries to incorporate in their constitutions, the broad-based educational innovation that focuses not only on the development of children but also emphasize the educational needs of learners with SENs.

Theoretical framework

Research on parental involvement (PI) is totally fragmented. The limited empirical research conducted in this area, coupled with the lack of a guiding theoretical framework has made the subject somewhat inconsistent and contestable. Nevertheless, the emergence of new and interesting theoretical frameworks on the concept has changed the notion about its practicability, therefore, making it desirable for study. This paper analyses parental involvement using Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler theory (1995, 1997), and socio-cultural and human capital to explain parental involvement in schooling (Delgado-Gaitan, 1997; Lee and Bowen, 2006; Valdéz, 1996). This model looked at parents' engagement and outcomes from parental involvement paradigm. The model was proven in schools with a significant proportion of African American families (Reed et al., 2000). The results linked parental role construct with parental involvement and reported that self-efficacy, being a major prognosticator of PI, was facilitated by parental role construct. The model also correlates parents' original motive to engage with school with positive learning outcomes using five involvement levels of analysis. While the first two levels of analysis emphasised family's judgement; the other stages i.e. (Levels 3–5) explained how these promote

positive learning outcomes in children. Although the revised version of this model proposed by Walker et al. (2005) is widely embraced in parents' involvement literature, this version is not considered in this paper. The paper focuses on the first two levels of the model.

Interestingly, most reviewed literature on parental involvement (PI) emphasised parental beliefs as the motivator for parent's initial involvement in school activities (i.e. role construction, sense of efficacy). However, the general prospects such as the invitation to engage with school that comes from both school and children (Level 1) also influence their involvement with school. Similarly, role construction also denotes parents' perspectives regarding their support for their child's learning (i.e. job as a parent) and it shows a significant correlation between parents with high role construction and school involvement. Also, Bandura (1997) attributes parents' sense of efficacy to their school participation, which variably or invariably contributes to children's learning and school success. Besides, parents with higher attribute for PI believe their contributions aid and sustain behaviour that brings positive outcomes. This characterized general invitations from both schools and learners as a motivation for working in partnership with schools and to take part in learning activities. This proves that family's participation is desirable and valuable for learner's academic achievement. Earlier reviews on PI noted the dissimilarity in general invitations (Level 1) and the specific invitation in Level two of the inventive theoretical model. This broad prospect shows that learners share their concern regarding learning with parents at home or at schools and this allow parents' participation as shown by teachers' attitude towards them.

Conceptual framework of parents' involvement practice

Although most research studies mentioned the importance of ecological perspective and its application to practice (Bandura, 1978, 1986a; Cicchetti and Toth, 1997; Conyne and Cook, 2004; Conyne and Mazza, 2007; Greenleaf and Williams, 2009; Gutkin, 2009; Moos, 2002; Pianta, 1999; Stormshak and Dishion, 2002; Swartz and Martin, 1997), the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979) offers the most outstanding contribution to children's educational advancement and growth. This theory emphasised on four interactive levels of environment, of which each factor continuously influences and impacts on one another. The review of literature on parental involvement (PI) highlights the significance of this model for understanding inclusive education and children's academic success. Also, literature on family engagement evidently buttressed the significance of strong collaboration between parents and school on

learning outcomes. This shows that positive parents' involvement is associated with higher educational incentive, grade advancement, and socio-emotional abilities in all learners including those from different cultural and socioeconomic upbringings (Christenson, 2000; Mantzicopoulos, 2003; McWayne et al., 2004). However, despite mounting evidence linking PI with learner's school success, most PI literature failed in reviewing the evidence that linked parental engagement with children's education and achievement.

So, based on the review of literature and the multi-faceted and multidimensional nature of parental involvement, this paper proposes a conceptual framework using both developmental ecological approach and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model (1995) (Figure 1).

This framework analyses parents' involvement from both micro and meso level interactions. Also, the interplay: (micro and meso) promotes positive school climate, and eventually leads to positive students' outcome and successful inclusive practice. Besides, the framework sees parental involvement as important inter-active agent that interrelates with other relevant factors to promote positive learning outcomes in inclusive education. This paper is founded on this premise as it sees the interplay between micro and meso as a developing mechanism that supports higher school success for learners with SENs. The conceptual model also supports and reinforces the notion that an increased parental involvement is a vital ingredient for psycho-educational advancement of learners in inclusive education. As a parent- focused/ strength-based model, the model demonstrates that, parents are fully accountable for their children's learning achievement. It also indicates that socio-cultural and human capital such as parents' socioeconomic status, educational level, marital status, gender and cultural background are necessary factors that prompt parents' participation in their child's education, and predict positive learning outcomes. The model also illustrates how psychological variables like parents' beliefs, self-efficacy, perception and the way parents view teachers' method of communication impact their level of involvement with school and the learners' educational outcome, which eventually correlate with positive school behavior and academic success.

Moreover, in proposing this conceptual framework, a number of models on parental involvement were reviewed using developmental ecological theories. However, after thorough analysing, there is a need to expand present perceptions of parents' involvement to the one that emphasizes consolidating the association between parents and positive learning outcomes in schools. From the above conceptual model, it is crystal clear that some factors are at play to stimulate parental interest in their child's education. These factors were tackled from independent variables namely; socioeconomic status
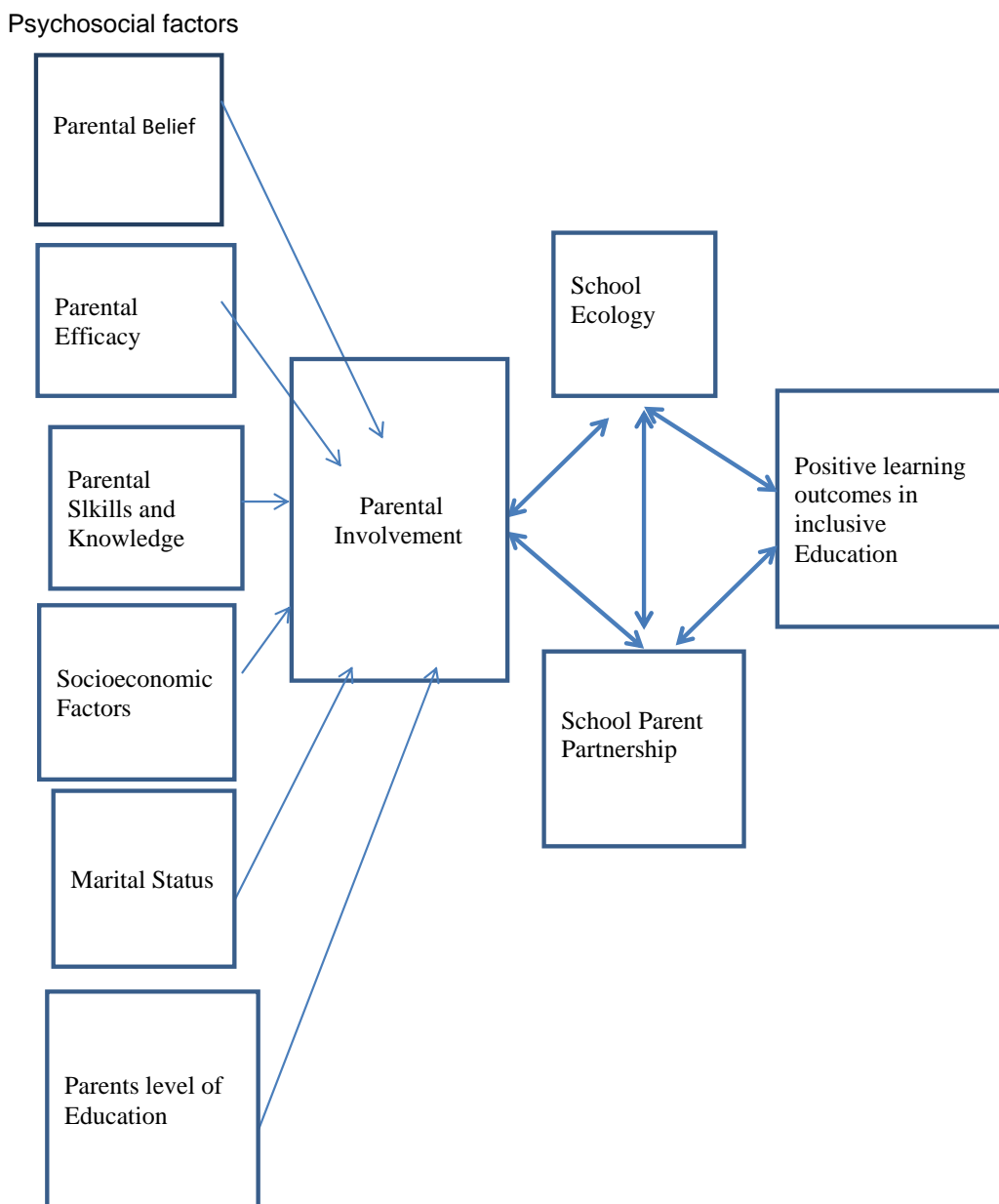
Psychosocial factors

Figure 1. Conceptual framework

(SES), marital status, family structure, parents' level of education, and other factors like parents' belief, parental efficacy, parenting skills and knowledge. These are home factors that hypothetically associate with parents' involvement practice and were explained as a causal factor for positive learning outcomes (dependent variable). Although these factors are interwoven and multifaceted, their interaction plays a significant role in parents' decision to engage with school and contributes to their child's education. For example, a parent's socioeconomic status coupled with their level of education influences parents'

beliefs, attitude, self-efficacy skills and knowledge about their ability to engage and relate to school and this positively impacts children's academic achievement. Parents who believe that they can help their children with school work develop a positive attitude towards school and support home-school partnership, which promotes learning achievement.

At the same time, a positive learning outcome in inclusive education depends on home-school collaboration for it to be effective and this can be sustained in a positive school climate where parents are seen as collaborators

or partners in their child's education. The overall belief that all parents matter really supports and encourages parents' participation in school activities and therefore, promotes children's school success. Likewise, poverty among the families and illiteracy result in parents' indifferent behaviour toward school. This prompts them to view their participation in school activities as unwelcome; and thus, limits learning success and leads to poor school records for SENs learners in the long run. Therefore, this model proposes that when parents embrace a positive role construction and strong efficacy branded by life setting variables that permit and drive robust participation, learners with SENs will succeed in school and this will eventually lead to positive academic achievement.

Parental involvement paradigm and education of learners with SENs

Even though the array of problems surrounding education of learners with SENs in inclusive education is clearly extremely multifaceted and not fully understood by anyone, it is clear that parental involvement paradigm remains a vital ingredient that contributes to positive learning outcomes. By attributing positive school beha-viour and learning outcomes to parents' engagement with school, parental involvement paradigm unconsciously creates a positive environment that promotes and sustains psycho-educational development in children with SENs. A few of the most important factors that support parents' involvement practice in education of learners with SENs are well thought-out briefly in this paper. Though, recent research generated intense debate on the relevance of PI, including its applicability to learning success. Of much interest in research has been the degree to which parents engaged or unengaged with the school concerning their child' learning (Ferrara, 2009; Gibson and Jefferson, 2006; Mapp, Johnson et al., 2008). Although research established the significant role that contextual environment plays in understanding learner's academic achievement, child's contextual environment, family, and schools significantly influenced their perfor-mance. This indicates the significant role that engaging parents of learners with SENs played in promoting learning outcomes world-wide, and that learners gain substantially from the shared efforts of both parents and schools.

Also, studies document that PI is related to emotional processes and characteristics that back learners' success (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Steinberg et al., 1989). At the same time, these support accomplishment that cuts across different collections of learners, including those vulnerable for shoddier learning and developing outcomes (Grolnick et al., 2000; Miedel and Reynolds, 1999). Moreover, knowledge of learner's motivational, socio-

cognitive and behavioural traits are vital for the under-standing of the direct impacts that family-school interactions have on students' academic achievement. The analysis of children's contextual environment shows how the interactions among the systems influenced their school performance. Specifically, families and school collaboration signify important influences on and probable roots of support for learners' educational development. Therefore, the assumptions that support parent-school partnership as a vital principle of child development remain crucial to teaching of SENs children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1992). However, learners who grow in a multiple environment reaches the optimum level when tangible networks and stabilities among the systems are formed (Hobbs, 1966).

Research also argues that parents are their children's first and most enduring educators. Similarly, a wide-ranging literature supports the assertion that parents are major stakeholder in their child's learning and have better understanding of their learning needs more than any other person in the system. Likewise, Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) and Harris and Chrispeels (2006) posited that parents have momentous constructive impact on children's wellbeing and achievement after other variables are eliminated. Also, Sylva et al. (2004) support the notion that early involvement of parents in children's education leads to future constructive commit-ment in educational progressions. In addition, parents' learning conducts and attitudes on learner's education have also been found significant, particularly in the field of developmental psychology (Birenbaum-Carmeli, 1999; Catsambis, 2001; Fan and Chen, 2001; Gonzalez-Hass et al., 2005; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Kohl et al., 2000; Overstreet et al., 2004; Spera, 2005).

Furthermore, PI in learning transversely varied cultural environments has also been found as important for positive learning outcomes (Bermudez, 1993; Constantino et al., 1991; Davies, 1993; Huss-Keeler, 1997; Lee and Bowen, 2006; Okagaki et al., 1995; Peng and Wright, 1994; Vincent, 1996). Most studies revealed that PI is strongly related to high academic success for learners in school system and that, it leads to increase in learners' attributes favorable to school success such as: punctuality and behavior, constructive awareness of classroom and school ecology, higher self-regulatory abilities and work adaptation, and last but not the least higher learning ambitions (Eccles and Harold, 1993; Grolnick and Slowiaczek, 1994; Masten and Coatsworth, 1998; Paulson, 1994; Siu-Chu and Willms, 1996; Zellman and Waterman, 1998). Similarly, the longitudinal study, carried out by Sylva et al. (2004), argues that PI strengthens the connection between parental involvement in school and learners' cognitive attainment, specifically, during early school years. A related study by Palmer et al. (2001) also established that engaging parents in decision-making facilitates academic success.

International perspective

In Europe, for example, the European Commission posits that the degree of PI is a significant indicator that signifies school excellence. According to Berger (1995), Levy et al. (2006) and Pérez et al. (2005), family's involvement is a major contributing factor that validates positive learning outcomes for learners in respect of their unique feature or differences in inclusive early education program. Previous research established high significant positive correlation between parent's involvements; school performance; higher test scores; constructive approaches toward school; higher assignment achievement rates; fewer placements in special education; academic doggedness; lower dropout rates; and fewer suspensions (Christenson et al., 1997; Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997; Pérez et al., 2005). Also, Jeyne (2007) argued that active PI definitely affects school punctuality, school conduct, and, students' achievement in school. She also argued that children do better and perform creditably well in school, when their parents are actively involved in their education (Denforges, 2003). To support this assertion, Department for Education and Skills, UK (DfEs, 2003) concludes that parental involvement has significant positive differences on pupils' engagement and achievement and it benefits the students, parents, teachers and schools. Additionally, Denforges (2003) shows that early parental involvement practice has positive impacts on children's socio-cognitive growth, reading ability and numeral skills. Moreover, a PI practice in child's learning between the ages of 7 and 16 years is more influential than the family upbringing, family proportions and parents' level of education. This further confirmed that PI significantly influences pupil's achievement throughout their educational years.

In the United States, some researchers (Duhaney and Spencer, 2000; Fisher and Sax, 1998) reported a high increase in the implementation and adoption of successful educational programs for SENs children among school districts. The report confirms and highlights the supporting roles played by parents of learners with SENs in their child's education. Similarly, the adoption of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (PL 101-476) of 1990, (IDEA) and its re-authorization in 1997 by the Government of the United State also acknowledged parent as a major stakeholder in inclusive education. Though the Act sees parents 'engagement with school as significantly important, it also recommends proper cooperation and collaboration between professionals and parents in the planning and implementation of educational policy including rights to their child's learning (Kalyanpur et al., 2000). Also, the report from the national study in the United States indicates that the best predictor of PI and student's academic achievement is the school actions or activities to promote it. This proves that school attitudes and actions are more significant than parents'

income, educational level, race, or earlier school-volunteering experience in projecting PI and children's school success. Research argued that establishment of parent center, home visit program, and action research teams promote PI and working partnership between parents and educators (Davies, 1991), and that parental involvement varies according to race and family income (Desimone, 1999).

African perspectives

In Sub Sahara Africa, the case is not different from what is shared in the other parts of the world. Research has found that parents/guardians are often an untapped resource in learner's education in spite of them nurturing the children, decide on whether to send them to school or not, decide what kind of schools they should attend, and in many cases fund their education. Although research shows that inclusion movements are critical in their opinion, their actions received accolade and major support from parents who viewed separate school system as institution that promotes inequality and poor quality of education for their children. Therefore, this influences the learning support received by children with SENs in school (Winnick, 2000; UNESCO Salamanca Report, 1994; Nziramasanga Report, 1999). Interestingly, Ballard (1999) echoes the general beliefs that, parent's support and collaboration with one another, access to information, advocate and asserts to be heard, involve in the decision-making, both in policy and practice and last but not the least, interaction with other stakeholders promote global socialization and learning for SENs children.

In Zimbabwe, it was reported that the Education Act of 1987, and the revised version of 2006, acknowledged the application of parental involvement paradigm as a tool to promote and provide necessary equipment, facilities and materials for successful implementation of inclusive environment. The revised Education Act, 2006 supports parents' participation and management of schools (UNESCO, 2002). Research highlighted that parents of SENs must work together and collaborate with teachers in the adaptation and uses of physical educational equipment like wheelchairs, brackets, balls, racquets, goal posts, basketball and tennis nets (Kanhukamwe and Madondo, 2003). Thus, research concludes that parental involvement in school activities promotes learners' education and increases positive attitudes and orientation of learners with SENs in school and society at large (Chakuchichi et al., 2003; Lesotho Society of Mentally Handicapped Persons, 1997).

In Nigeria, the full potential of average Nigerian parents as agent of educational development has not been fully used. However, this is not to deny the growing awareness among the Nigerian population about the positive signs of encouraging parents to engage in their children's literacy

development (Oyetunde, 1999). Consequently, the main vocal point of agitation among Nigeria populace is that to stop the general occurrence of widespread academic failure in schools, the home must play active roles (Lawal, 1999). However, despite the general consensus on significance of PI practice in learner's education in Nigeria, it is clear that research on parents' participation and school-family partnership in inclusive education is very limited. The reason for this exclusionary practice of educating children with SENs is linked to the following factors: parent's negative perception of inclusive practice, socio-cultural and religious beliefs about disabilities and government's attitude on policy formulation and imple-mentation. In addition, the government policy on IE in Nigeria has failed to appreciate the significant role played by parents in their child's life. As the chief custodian of their children's education, parents take full responsibilities about when, how and which school their children should attend.

Families' socio-cultural characteristics and learners' school achievement

Research probing learners' school achievement continues to see parents' involvement as an important predictor of students' academic success. Also, parents' socio-economic status is linked to parents' learning anticipations and desires for children (De Civita et al., 2004; Singh et al., 1995; Zhan, 2006). Bronfenbrenner, in his ecological model (1986), explains that meso-system symbolizes two essential aspects of parents' educational involvement practices. This notion illuminated the connections and interactions among adults in children's microsystems and behavioural congruence, values, and attitudes across settings. For example, parents' participation in school system encourages adult's relationship in two of the child's primary microsystems, i.e., home and the school, while parents' learning involvement at home displays attitudes and behaviours resemblance central to these two microsystems. Also engaging parents in schools receives more accolade and attention than home involve-ment. Nevertheless, these two processes are linked to achievement gap. According to Coleman (1988); cited in Lareau, (2001) application of the principle of social and cultural capital to home-school mesosystem encourages better understanding of the achievement gap and, school strategy to address it. Earlier results findings point out that parents with different backgrounds show a different attitude to their child's education because of their cultural beliefs and orientation, particularly as regard habits (i.e., predispositions toward certain types of behaviours, attitudes, or perceptions). Grenfell and James (1998) established that this variation in behaviour is as a result of their level of financial resources, education and experiences they have about the educational system.

Based on their habits, parents associated with non-dominant groups often display less influence in learners school achievement and also with school.

Educational factors

Parents with low levels of education participate less in learning activities of their children because of their low self-efficacy and confidence in engaging school staff, poor knowledge of school system, lack of understanding of learning terminology, and own negative educational beliefs. A number of studies established that parent level of education will significantly influence their attitude. Leyser and Kirk (2004) establish that parents with higher education (college) show a constructive attitude to inclusive practice than those with low level of education (high school): t (403) =3. 26, p=. 013. A similar finding was established by Tafa and Manolitsis (2003) where mothers who had maximum education displayed more constructive behaviour to inclusion of learners with SENs than mothers with a minimum level of education. Nonetheless, Kalyva et al. (2007) documented that the attitude of parents of learners with SENs is not influenced by their level of education.

Cultural factors

Research indicates that parents from different cultural backgrounds view home participation in school activities as more important than engaging with school. Despite these distinctions habits bring less cultural capital in some parents vis-a-vis the school. However, this type of parent still engages at home in a way that meets the school values and principle. According to Grenfell and James (1998), parents irrespective of their socio-economic status see education as important tools for fighting ignorance. In addition, the study revealed that working-class mothers valued their child's education, despite their adverse experiences and worries on learning (Grenfell and James, 1998). Therefore, finding-variations exhibited by parents from different social backgrounds further support the claim that families vary in terms of learning habits (Laureu, 2001). Besides, recent studies on educational levels and parental involve-ment show that family income and educational attainment significantly influence levels of parent's involvement in learner's education

Findings from meta-analyses

The debate about parent's involvement in education has been on for a long time among scholars on what really constitutes parents' involvement. Although it has been

generally acknowledged that parents have inalienable rights to get involved and engaged with school in matters relating to learning, in reality this is not generally applicable. Recent empirical studies in international literatures document constructive association between PI and learners' academic success (Cox, 2005; Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Fan and Chen, 2001; Henderson and Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005; Pomerantz et al., 2007). Besides, empirical review of PI literature shows that a successful and sustainable home-school partnership that excels all learners needs a definite situations like strategic planning that embeds home-school success; ongoing support, resourcing and training; and community participation at all levels and multi-level leadership must be attained (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Epstein and Sheldon, 2006; Harris and Goodall, 2007).

Similarly, Harris and Goodall (2007) reported a significant association between parents' involvement in education and positive learning outcomes. They reiterated that no specific indication of what kind of parental involvement strategies promote positive changes in school. They suggested some characteristic that school can introduce in order to engage diverse parents in their child's school activities. They concluded that school must lay strong emphasis on building partnership with stakeholders and must recognize differences in family orientation and needs. Moreover, Singh et al. (1995) reported parents' desire for students' learning as the sturdiest prognosticator for educational success amid all other scopes of PI observed in their study. They submitted that household arrangement really exhibited a very insignificant adverse outcome on educational achievement. However, this finding does not totally indicate that home management has little or no effect on learners academically because closer parental involvement at home might be as a result of learner's poor performance in school.

A study conducted in the United Kingdom by Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) also highlighted how parent-school relationships promote learning achievement for learners from ethnic minority group. According to the reports, majority of these schools listen to parents 'concerns, and work in partnership to resolve any issues or differences that come with learning. This actions prompts parents to base their understanding of their child's academic development on the discussion, inter-action and communication shared with school (Ofsted, 2002, report No. 448, p4 cited in Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003, p62). Likewise, Katyal and Evers (2007) see proper home-school communication and collaboration as vital for students' academic success. They maintain that collecting information about students in an organized manner cum continuous interaction between home and school is a modern technology for promoting learning outside the classroom environment. Katyal and Evers (2007) also conclude that

communication as a tool plays an important role and serves as the bedrock for home-school partnerships. Studies from United State show that the effect size, which assesses the level of changes brought about by inter-ventions of impact of PI on children's school success was .51 for all schools (Hattie, 2009) and from .70 to .74 for primary schools located in urban areas (Jeynes, 2005). Also, Hattie (2009) reported that the size of interventions in education was recorded at .4; this implied that any figures above this percentage on parent's involvement would definitely influence children's academic perfor-mance.

Although there are many extensive researches on parental involvement and children's learning, most findings show that, little work has been done on how parents invariably or variably socialized with children in terms of school-related behaviours. While earlier studies confirmed a significant relationship between parenting, children's academic achievement and behavioural competence at school, few documented studies were conducted on "academic socialization". According to Taylor et al. (2004) this concept is operationalized as an array of different parental beliefs and behaviours that impact on learner's school-related development. Though empirical research on PI documents gains and oppor-tunities that come from parents engaging with school, only few mentioned how and what motivated them. Nevertheless, some of the gains that come from parental involvement include higher achievement in classroom task, better school attendance, more positive attitudes and behaviours towards learning and higher graduation rates among developing children and their peers with disabilities.

Additionally, when there is positive collaboration and partnership between school and families, children achieve much higher in academics and increase in the time spent in school (Barton and Coley, 2007; Henderson and Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005; Pomerantz et al., 2007; Reynolds and Clements, 2005). Schools that promote family collaboration develop high level improvement in classroom task, teacher morale, social skills and high community rating compared to schools that never support partnership with parents or engage them in school activities. Evidence from the last thirty years of educating learners with disabilities lends more credence to this by emphasizing the significance of parents 'participation in learners' school achievement (Bronfrenbrenner, 1979; Comer, 1996; Epstein, 2001; 2005; Henderson and Mapp, 2002, 2007; Anderson and Mike 2007). Research shows that parental expectations, school and family behaviours affect students' academic achievement and learning outcomes respectively (Redding, 2002; Epstein, 2001). For example, Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) measured a theorised three-dimensional interpretation of PI comprising social, mental and personal aspects.

Besides, parents' attitudes, orientation, and actions

connected to learners 'education impact pupils' education and achievement (Domina, 2005; Fan, 2001). Scholars have integrated the multidimensional conceptualisation of PI by recognizing and reviewing particular components of this construct.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Although the notion that parental involvement is a vital strategy for learner's academic success is naturally interesting, the inconsistency reported in the empirical research literature makes it questionable and immeasurable. Nevertheless, the multifaceted nature of parental involvement coupled with the differences in measurement of academic success has perhaps, added to the discrepancies in the area. Research apparently linked PI to learners' academic performance. This outcome has enormous and useful impacts for parents, practitioners, and policymakers. Reports show that when parents engage their children in enriching learning programmes outside school, it enhances their learning and performance. Three decades of research demonstrate that PI meaningfully adds in a various ways, to improve learner outcomes associates with learning success. This remains fairly reliable in spite of families having undergone major changes during these periods, and schools function in very unrelated times than experience of a decade or two ago (Drake, 2000, p. 34). Thus, schools that identify the "co-dependent nature of the association" between families and schools and rate parents as "indispensable partners" in the learning process will understand the full worth of this partnership and use it to inspire learners' educational success. Such method identifies 'families and the school contributions" as an "essential outline" for collaborating together in "harmonizing efforts toward common goals" i.e., to maximize achievement for pupils as learners (Christenson and Sheridan, 2001).

Besides, studies in the last decades also mentioned the significant relationships between learners' outcomes and variables like family culture, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Earlier research such as Griffith (1996) and Kellaghan et al. (1993) explained that learner's performance is not influenced by these factors. For example, Shaver and Walls' (1998) report that arithmetic and reading success for learners of all social class is significantly influenced by parental involvement, even though learners from higher socioeconomic backgrounds experience best improvement. Therefore, parents remain a resourceful instrument in the education of their children and both educators and policy makers must recognise the differences in income and education in their planning.

Although numerous work described PI as promoting positive learning outcome for learners with SENs, few studies still reported no constructive link between PI and learners' academic success. The limited academic work used a meta-analysis to determine the kind of PI strategy that supports positive learning outcome and proves a dearth of information concerning the utility of the concept. This is because parents' involvement research is one-dimensional and fragmented, therefore lacking a consistent guiding theoretical framework (Sirvani, 2007a, 2007b). This lack of empirical knowledge and inconsistence continue to hamper the recent progress made in PI studies. For example, Mattingly et al. (2002) found that PI programmes established virtually no effect on learner's educational achievement because most of the research depends on correlation and non-experimental techniques. Similarly, Chad et al. (2006) reported no significant correlation between PI and learners' academic achievement. Therefore, a multidimensional approach to parental involvement is suggested for analysing parental behaviours and practices (Epstein, 2001; Grolnick and Slowiaczek, 1994).

RECOMMENDATION

Based on research findings on PI and learners' educational achievement, the following specific recommendation related to this paper suggests that effort should be directed toward promoting family-school connections that see parents and teachers as collaborators and key influential in tackling learners' needs and at the same time responsible for academic achievement. Future research should focus on both SES and parental involvement by looking at the relationship between parental involvement and learners' academic outcomes prior and after partialling out the impact of SES. Also researchers should give special consideration to the definition and measurement of PI when analysing the correlation between parental involvement and learners' school performance. Policy makers and educators should employ PI paradigm as a viable additional intervention to advance learners' academic performance. Effort should be directed towards outward facing parental engagement strategy that will not only respect parents' view, but also consider the evidence and knowledge of other schools and community. Lastly, future effort should be directed towards appropriate means of measuring academic achievement

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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