

Parent Engagement in Student Learning to Support Educational Leadership

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Abstract—This study outlines the advantages of parent engagement in student learning in the area of educational leadership. It discusses the basic areas of parental engagement and the types of partnerships between students and parents. It also examines the recent issue that raise a great deal in relation to parental contribution to school and identifies some factors that inhibit it in relation to educational leadership.

Keywords—parent engagement; leadership

I. INTRODUCTION

There has been thoughtful and interesting discussion about the role of parent engagement to support educational leadership. In this context, parent engagement is defined as ‘shared responsibility of families, schools, and communities for student learning and achievement’ [1]. It is one of the important factors in the success of student learning. Educational leadership refers to a social influence process that applied to school to create positive change educational policy and achieve certain goal [2]. Nevertheless, the contribution of parents to education is sometimes ignored since people tend to focus more on the value of teachers or principals. The issue raises so much in the reality of less family contribution in schools. Yet, the importance and involvement of parents is now showing a major influence on students’ achievement. Thus, it is necessary to understand how it affects student learning that supports educational leadership. Further, it is important to have a view of the types of partnerships that are typically effective in advocating parents making contributions to schools. Parent engagement, which is sometimes referred to as family engagement, is primarily concerned with the context of children’s education both formally and informally [3]. Following this definition, parent engagement does not relate only to how parents educate their children at home, but is more focused on the way how students learn both at home and in schools that positively affected by parents.

II. PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

A. Basic Areas of Parental Engagement

Parents can actually engage in children’s education and schooling in many ways both formally like in school community and informally like in the home. A previous study

shows that parents’ involvement has a significant effect on student achievement. No matter what background they are from, children tend to earn high grades when parents give them attention regularly. Further, the research notes that children with a strong relationship of parent engagement are likely to have better social skills. Likewise, the link between family circumstances and student school learning, which acknowledges the positive behaviour of the students. When children have better engagement with their parents at home, they initially have better attitudes and a higher level of achievement. A study conducted by Family-School & Community Partnership Bureau finds that there are positive correlations of parents and children’s learning which reflected in ‘improved school readiness, higher retention and graduation rates, enhanced cognitive development and academic achievement, higher motivation and greater ability to self-regulate behaviour, and better social and relationship skills’. Likewise, the National Parent Teacher Association 2008 also stated that ‘the more extensive the family engagement, the greater the student benefits’ [4].

Pinantoan stated that during the children’s learning, parents are typically powerful in time and availability factors rather than teachers [5]. Parents are the first and primary educators at home while teachers are the primary educators at schools. Instinctively, education from home is the foundation for children’s further development as informal education, yet education at schools become a formal one. Still, both parents and teachers are in the same duty and responsibility to student’s learning. In educating students, the role of school is generally continuing education that has been done from home, thus the success or failure of a student’s learning depends on the parents’ home education influences. This is also due to the fact that from the family, students gain the basis of education. As a result, the education which they learn from home determines the continuation of education both in schools and the community. Parents can also be involved in the learning program and help students overcome learning difficulties. Furthermore, when a student cannot understand some subjects, parents help them repeat the subjects or if necessary bring them a tutor. Thus, empowering the role of parents is part of educational leadership from school. Similarly, the relationship

between parents and schools can help reaching the goal of learning process.

While the importance of involving parents and their children in educational process cannot be underestimated, it is equally important to build and maintain collegial partnership with other teachers and school personnel. Schools are of great importance in a child's learning process. An effective school which shows high level of parental and school community partnership will improve high quality of student learning [6]. In fact, a school cannot work well if strong relationships with families and communities do not work well. It verifies information which is crucial for the educational personnel and policy makers to consider the significant relationship between parent engagement and student learning.

B. Type of Partnership

There are various models to help in establishing relations between children and parents at home. Most often, a strong parent-school community partnership is increased by parent engagement at home. These models are proposed in the study of 'Impact on Parents on Student Success which has two key practices that include model of the value of learning and express high but realistic expectations for achievement. The first model of partnership maintains an example for children's learning and the second model encourages their learning and guides them to build self-efficacy. Model of value of learning specifies reading activity and playing simple games together at home as examples to increase engagement. Parents offer easy games such as scrabble or dominos that require 'planning ahead or problem solving'. It is because when they are doing such games, they build fun and communication openly all at once.

The latter partnership model, express high but realistic expectation for achievement, specifies the way that parents can support their children at home by engaging with a discussion after school about their activity at school or their interests. This partnership also clarifies the need for parents to regularly encourage children to work hard in school through positive messages. With this in mind, parents must not push hard to achieve what they want or speak with angry tone when asking children to do something. Parents should present a positive spoken role to their children so they do not feel hurt. If parents can set the gentle intonation in giving advice, then children are definitely going to emulate the habits.

C. The Barriers of Parental Engagement

The argument about the lack of parent contribution is not new [7] but the need to address the issue is clear. Many studies often mentioned some key elements that directly influence the school's capacity such as teacher, principals or administrative staff. In reality, parents seem remain excluded from school activity [8]. The author enumerates that parents are neglected when there is no community framed by schools to facilitate the cooperation between them. Over the years, they become more discouraged and less willing to support school activities. When parents feel neglected, they will show no responsibility to work together with schools. Parents generally need to be actively encouraged to become engaged in school community.

It is normal for them to feel uncomfortable and unwelcome for the first time in the school environment. The main reason is because they feel unimportant to make contribution or they will be perceived as 'overstepping their role' [9].

Generally, parents are not directly involved with school activity; they are only expected to support the financial and other material for their children [10]. Children may not be concerned with the importance of sharing between parents and school personnel. This issue can lead to misunderstandings and tensions; thus, a program of partnership could address this possible barrier to parental engagement by setting out parents' roles in order to ensure equitable and shared cooperation. The way they provide and manage the children's learning is actually can be shared in the school community. If one family shows good engagement with their children, they can share to school community and be a role model to other parents. As a result, they will not only benefit their own families but also other families in the school community.

D. The Importance of Educational Leadership

Drawing from that reality discussed above, some ideas are needed to seek how schooling help parents to assist their children learning better. Schools need to encourage parents to form a partnership with school personnel to engage with children learning process. Without any partnership between schools and parents, parents will be less motivated to contribute in school activities. Jasis and Ordones-Jasis mention that generally approaches to the contribution of parents in schools is affected by issues such as their educational background and socioeconomic status [11]. However, although there are contrasting approaches to address the barriers mentioned previously, building a strong parent-school community partnership is a crucial element in the learning process. This supports is particularly required if there is 'a shared emphasis on its positives effects on the schooling' to those who come from a low-income social background. Sharing joint responsibility for the welfare of low-income families will help them much to pay the school fees. As an illustration, the school community set a program for low-income family in the annually agenda. A program of cross-subsidy may one of the solutions to be maintained. Parents from low-income is required paying less than those who are from high-income so that every students whatever they background can go to school. Thus, the educational leadership plays an important part of parental engagement program.

Education leadership needs parents since they have a major influence on children's learning. Effective leadership of parental engagement is essential to the success of children's achievement. However, the effectiveness applies to different elements namely parents, schools, services and policy makers. A parental engagement partnership is typically led by a senior leader, who is not always the teacher since apparent can actually play the role. It is also driven by cluster strategy managers and coordinators who have a strong sense that children and families matter. The program's emphasis in the context of a school service working program is to have a clear strategic goal, expressed and pursued by a strong leader who is

capable of making progress and reflecting on the implementation regularly. According to the 2010 National College Study of Leadership, parental educational leadership also focuses on people who build trust and integrity consistently, standards setting, and outcomes [12].

Nonetheless, building educational leadership in schools about professional engagement creates areas of tension and challenges. Not all parents have time to attend on school activities and or have the capacity or knowledge to contribute to the partnership. Thus, an effective strategy is promoted that is mostly conducted by schools and the education board. Parental training is suggested to encourage parents to make a contribution to school programs. Parents typically need the training to develop the leadership knowledge and skills to take on the roles in school programs. Following this view, the study confirm that parental training programs provides opportunities for parents to increase their engagement in children’s education, and along better communication with other parents and school personnel about education issues and school improvement efforts. Moreover, the training is an effective way to create a community that is committed to improve schools and even establish a school-based community that will support the area of educational leadership. Parents become engaged in school advocacy activities and this leads to wider engagement. One of the examples is recruiting and encouraging other parents to develop and serve on advisory committees. Other examples are that parents can be volunteers in classrooms or school. Therefore, the importance of parents as part of the school community in order to increase educational leadership is clearly outlined.

Discussing the essential of educational leadership that engage parents as the main element, there is a range of strategies that can foster parent engagement and partnerships. The partnership benefits to schools and affects to policy makers as the element which support and manage educational policy. A focus strategy on educational leadership for developing parent engagement, as follows.

TABLE I. STRATEGY ON EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP FOR DEVELOPING PARENT ENGAGEMENT

For Schools	For Policy Makers
<p>Parental engagement must be a priority. It must be embedded in teaching and learning policies, and school improvement policies, so that parents are seen as an integral part of the student learning process.</p> <p>Schools must be clear about the aims of all communication with parents. What response, if any, is required from parents, and how will that impact on the school and the learning of the child?</p> <p>Schools should endeavour to support the engagement of parents who are already</p>	<p>Offer clear guidance about parental engagement (rather than involvement) in schools.</p> <p>Provide direction to schools about the relationship between forms and purposes for parent engagement.</p> <p>Create policies that clarify the range of ways in which parents can be productively engaged in schools.</p> <p>Ensure that the purposes for parental engagement are explicit in relevant policies.</p>

For Schools	For Policy Makers
<p>involved in the learning of their children as well as reaching those parents who are less engaged.</p> <p>Schools should consider training for staff (teachers and others) who works most closely with parents.</p> <p>Schools need to be flexible in dealing with parents, in terms of times of meetings and locations.</p> <p>Schools should consider the uses of new technologies for communicating with parents and be clear about what they aim to achieve with these.</p>	

III. CONCLUSION

It is clear that parent or family engagement cannot be left in the dark about what happens in the classroom and in terms of educational leadership development as well. The most important aspect is that the involvement of the family in the lives of their children is significant and leads to their higher achievement in school. Moreover, it is important to take into consideration that schools need to recognise the role of parents and encourage them to contribute to the school–parent partnership. Attaching importance to engaging in school activities is one of the themes that school communities should focus on most. Parents relate to the educational leadership as part of the strategy of choice in the real operation in schools. The need to create standards that focus on the roles of parents, school personnel, and communities that have vision to work together to support student success, particularly in their learning, can be a strong recommendation in the development of educational leadership and educational policy afterwards. The opportunity for school to pursue parents to participate in school communities is now being recognised. Starting something new is sometimes challenging, some parties with whom to share can help ease apprehensions. Bouncing ideas around will result in better ideas and goals in education. It is then suggested to model this parental partnership in the professional educational leadership if we expect the students to work together interdependently and reach better achievement. Finally, one of the essential elements in developing educational leadership, particularly in student learning, is promoting parent engagement.

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