

THE IMPACT OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL IN PUPILS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS DURING THE TRANSITION TO LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION

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Abstract

The paper aims to present the importance of parent involvement in school and its impact on academic achievement of children when they pass to lower secondary education (LSE). Through literature review, the paper seeks to answer these questions: (1) What is the impact of parent involvement in school to student academic achievement? (2) Is there any change in the parent-school relationship when the pupil starts LSE? Findings from the literature show a strong positive correlation between parent involvement and improve student academic achievement, and that the level of parent involvement is reduced when he starts LSE.

Key words: *parent involvement in school, academic achievement, school transition, relationship, positive/negative impact.*

Parent involvement in school

The family is seen as a context that has an impact on the transition of children and may serve as a protective factor in this process (Grolnik, Kurowski, Dulap & Hevey, 2000, p. 466). Involving parents in their children's education positively affects academic outcomes and their social behavior (Crosnoe, 2010; Howard Family Research Project, 2007; Shumow & Miller, 2001), enhances self-esteem of children (Eccles, et al., 1991), enhances children's skills to negotiate with the transition (Grolnick, Kurowski, Dulap & Hevey, 2000).

While the research evidence is less than conclusive, years of practice wisdom, theory, and related areas of research ... all strongly suggest that parent involvement in their children's formal schooling is vital for their academic success (Baker & Soden, 1997, p. 17 ; cited in Henderson & Mapp, 2002, f. 88).

But despite this, there are some studies that contradict this fact by showing that there is no connection between parental involvement and children's academic achievement (Balli, Wedman, & Demo, 1997; Bronstein, Ginsberg, & Herrera, 2005; cited in Hill & Tyson, 2009, p. 741).

But what is the parent involvement? Parent involvement is defined as "a regular participation of parents, and meaningful two-way communication involving student academic learning and other school activities" (Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 2005). Another more general definition defines parent involvement as "interactions with school parents and their children to promote academic success" (Hill et al., 2004, p. 1491, cited in Hill & Tyson, 2009 f. 741). Let's see what

the literature tells about the importance of parent involvement and the influence that it has on children's performance.

The study of Crosnoe (2010) brought facts about the impact and the importance of fruitful and real cooperation between this binominal parent-school on children's academic outcomes. In this study were interviewed 17,899 american students in the 8th grade and Achievement Test was administered, also interviews were conducted with parents, teachers and school administrators for connections between family, school and academic achievement. The author came to the conclusion that:

When parents, primary and secondary school staff were in contact with each other, multiple forms of family-school communication reduced income and language disparities in academic subjects (Crosnoe, 2010; cited in Hanewald, 2013, f. 68).

Shumow & Miller (2001) interviewed 2,155 married parents (mothers and fathers) of students from grades 7 and 8 and 60 students from the 50 participating middle schools. They pointed out that the high levels of parent involvement were strongly associated with positive achievements of pupils. They analyzed the involvement of fathers and mothers and changes of this involvement in the child's academic achievement. In addition, the authors showed the type of involvement by educational level of parents: academic involvement at home, school, etc. Parental involvement at home (homework assistance), was in positive correlation with the child's school orientation, realizing in this manner the importance of having success and the importance of education; while parental at-school involvement (school visits, meetings with parents, school tracking issues, etc.) helped to monitor children tasks and, on the other hand, influence on the attitudes of teachers towards pupils.

It is possible also that teachers might have more favorable attitudes toward students whose parents are involved at school or that teachers are more aware of those individual students and consequently provide more individualized guidance to students whose parents are involved more at school (Shumow & Miller, 2001, f. 88).

They propound the reasons why children had succeeded in school after the transition: "The relation found between the young adolescents' past school adjustment (success in school) and school orientation (attitudes toward school) indicates that successful children might have been socialized to the importance of education by families that have made a consistent long-term commitment to education" (Shumow & Miller, 2001, p. 86).

The reseach of Eccles et al. (1991) brought evidence on the impact of family factors on the child's self-esteem during the transition. They also determined the risk and protective factors, which served to increase or decrease the self-perception of children. Results from the survey of 1000 girls and 860 boys in 6th grade and at the beginning and during the 7th grade, for two years, among other things, indicated that the increase in children's self-esteem and their adjustment during the transition to the LSE, can be facilitated if (1) the children were participating in decision-making in the family, (2) if children believed in a positive affective relationship between them and the parents, and (3) whether parents believed in academic competence, sports and social child.

A number of studies conducted in the U.S.A showed that the family support affected and promoted the child's success after the transition on the LSE, on these factors:

- presence of books in the home,
- a place in the home to study,
- parents maintaining rules limiting television viewing,
- frequency of checking on homework,
- parents discussion of schoolwork with their children,
- parent participation in parent-teacher organisation,
- parents monitoring their child's social life and creating a positive peer network for them,
- parent monitoring their child's academic progress,
- parents knowledge of school structure and bureaucracy,
- self-confidence in making demands of the school and to intercede on their child's behalf when necessary,
- ability to provide time, energy and money for resources, and
- ability to wield their resources in supervising, monitoring and supporting their children at home and at school (Catterall, 1998; Falbo, Lein & Amadow, 2001; Falbo & Lein, 1999; Rice, 2001; cited in McGee, Ward, Gibbons, Harlow, 2004, f. 47).

Meta-analysis conducted by Hill & Tyson (2009), besides defining that three types of parent involvement in education have strong positive correlation with children's performance (home-based involvement, school-based involvement and academic socialization), they clearly presented the impact of each of these involvement in children's success. With the same type and with the same study' problematic, was the meta-analysis conducted by Howard Family Research Project (2007), but the difference was that except schools of lower secondary education, here were also included secondary schools. The study's findings not only supported the postulate that parent involvement increased the child's academic performance, but also stressed fields of positive action parent involvement' strength and his interest for his child.

Henderson & Mapp (2002) examined 51 studies conducted with specified focus on the relationship between student academic achievement and parent and community involvement. Findings from many studies showed that parents involved help students to:

- earn higher grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs.
- be promoted, pass their classes, and earn credits.
- attend school regularly.
- have better social skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school.
- graduate and go on to postsecondary education (p. 7).

Transitions to the LSE associated with positive and negative effects in terms of child's awareness with its own individuality, self-abilities and mental health (Griebel & Nielsel, 2004; cited in Griebel & Berwanger, 2006, p. 32). Parent involvement is also associated with other key outcomes such as attendance and behavior, which are also related to achievement (Appalachia Educational Laboratory ,2005), and parental support and emotional relationship between parent and child, are determinant for facilitating the transition process (Griebel & Berwanger, 2006, p. 32). The researchers are of the opinion that supporting more involvement at school from all

parents may be an important strategy for addressing the achievement gap (Henderson & Mapp, 2002, p. 7).

School-parent relations

Research conducted in different countries, regardless of geographical change, have some similar elements, especially primary and middle school structures, as well as practices of connecting with school parent, etc. American researchers are of the opinion that the types of parent involvement in their child's education, change during the child's transition to lower secondary education. While in elementary school, parent involvement in the school is more strongly associated with academic achievement, due to the frequent visits of the parent in the classroom and the interaction with teachers. This involvement with such intensity interaction makes parent to be good informed about the curriculum, contributes to the increase of social relationships and increases the effectiveness of parent involvement at home (Comer, 1995; Epstein, 2001; cited in Hill & Tyson, 2009, p. 741).

Further, interactions between parents and teachers may increase mutual respect and increase teachers' perceptions about how much parents value education (Comer, 1995; Epstein, 2001; cited in Hill & Tyson, 2009, f. 741).

In middle school, school-based involvement changes from classroom involvement to attendance at school activities (Seginer, 2006 cited in Hill & Tyson, 2009). According to researchers, this engagement of parent with middle school, can disconnect parent from academic information, from his knowledge about child's classroom, the links teacher-parent now are weaker, by not allowing the creation of interaction and mutual respect as in the primary school. These can be the causes of weakening of this type of parent involvement with the child's achievements and outcomes (Hill & Tyson, 2009, p. 741).

Several studies found that families of all income and education levels, and from all ethnic and cultural groups, are engaged in supporting their children's learning at home. White, middle-class families, however, tend to be more involved at school (Henderson & Mapp, 2002, p. 7).

Evidence from research conducted in England, were similar to U.S.A studies, noting various forms of parent-school communication. "This comparable change of the parent-primary school and parent-secondary school relationships, consists that the parents of the elementary school have a regular informal relationship with teachers, often when picking their children up from primary school, in contrast to what happens in secondary school, where they may feel excluded from easy access to school. Also another difference is that the parent contact with the primary teacher, is directly while secondary school used more letters, notifications by e-mail" (Sutherland, Yee, McNess, Harris, 2010, fq 73). A school director, emphasizing direct relationships parent-teacher, expressed:

There's no replacement for the personal contact, letters are important, newsletters, emails, but it's no replacement for personal contact (Sutherland, Yee, McNess, Harris, 2010, fq 73).

American researchers found the reasons why parent involvement in school declines. They gave as the first reason changes in the schools' structure, the large number of teachers and greater

bureaucracy of middle school compared to elementary school. While the second reason, they submitted the highest average duration of working hours of parents now that the children were growing, especially mothers. Mothers now spend more hours at work and therefore the time to get involved in school, decreases (Grolnik, Kurowski, Dulap & Hevey, 2000, p. 483).

Some interesting facts about how parents can change at-school involvement, in response to the behavior of their children, were brought by Grolnick et al., (2000), when they gave the reasons that, although, in general there is a decrease in maternal involvement with school, some mothers had increased their contact with the school. This fact does not mean that this mothers' involvement had balancing transition effects, but showed that learning difficulties and disruptions to the school of their children, were growing up. This parent involvement, had many opportunities to come as a result of calls from school staff to parents because of the problems that had their children (p. 485).

But, how it is perceived by children the parent-school's distancing? Seen in the perspective of the parent, the distance created between parent and school may seem negative. This change can be positive to children who feel they now can become more independent to go to school, in friends' selecting and in a more distance relationship with their teachers, instead of very close relationship with the elementary school teachers - highlights Sutherland, et al. (2010). This fact is explained in this way by a middle school principal:

Also, the other thing is that children are becoming individual adult human beings, so they don't talk to their parents as much about things. And that's a healthy thing, it's not something you want to force to happen. (Sutherland, Yee, McNess, Harris, 2010, fq 73).

Conclusion

Research indicates a strong link between family involvement and improve of academic performance. It is also connected with other key outcomes such as attendance and behavior, which affect academic achievement, academic orientation and self-esteem. The relationship between family involvement and performance, are available to all kinds of families, with the only difference on the way in which the parent is involved in their child's education. Once children transferred to LSE, parental involvement declines due to the change of the structure of the school, number of teachers, greater bureaucracy of the secondary school compared to elementary and more limited time of parents to be involved in school.

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