



A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIOECONOMIC DYNAMICS AND PARENTAL PARTICIPATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study was a critically analysis on the relationship between socioeconomic dynamics and parental participation in secondary schools in Kenya Most parents fail to participate effectively in these schools as they get discouraged by their socioeconomic status and hence negative effects. This study was mainly to critically analyze the influence of parents' literacy level on their participation, impact of patents income on their participation, effects of parents' exposure on participation, relationship between parent-child and participation, and impact of school culture on parental participation in secondary schools in Kenya. This study used a quantitative design to carry out a critical analysis. This study brought about recommendations to government, stakeholders, Secondary school administrators and parents on how they should strive to create a friendly environment to encourage more parental participation in school program despite their socioeconomic dynamics. The ministry of education should endeavor to make policies that will involve parents actively in school programs and activities, hence active parents' participation despite their socioeconomic dynamics.

Keywords: socioeconomic dynamics, parental participation, secondary schools

1. Introduction

Most parents are too busy with their work and responsibilities that they have forgotten or deviated from participating in their children's learning centers. Parental participation

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entails parents to actively involve themselves in the school and to their children in schools. Socio-economic dynamics have had a greater impact on parental participation in the changing world. Much is expected out of the parents yet they are so committed to their own destiny rather than their children's interests. Parents are expected to monitor school activities and their children but due to socioeconomic dynamics, it becomes a hindrance to their participation in school. According to Bouffard & Weiss (2008), *"...parental participation are all activities by parents that are intentionally linked to learning. Generally; parents do not select randomly their level of participation in school programs."*

Active parental participation in secondary schools is necessary on the parents' participation. This will ensure improved growth of a school because students, administration and other stakeholders are to benefit. The problem to this study arises because most parents are detached from their jobs, income earned, and their literacy level, parent-child relationship, parents' exposure and the culture of the school. In Kenya for instance, few parents create time to get involved in the school programs yet time is a quantitatively important aspect. Most parents have focused on materialistic provisions for their children and forgotten participation in the schools their children attend. The role of parenting in some households has been left to house helps or relatives from the extended family hence widening the gap between parent and the child. The socioeconomic dynamics that parents face at times makes it difficult for them to get involved in the school programs that require their input.

2. Statement of the Problem

Parental participation in secondary schools in Kenya may have been affected by socioeconomic dynamics faced by parents. Secondary schools are mostly affected by parental participation in that; those that are actively involved in the schools contribute much while the less active do not. The reaction in participation primarily depends on how socioeconomic dynamics affect them. Therefore, the study aimed at critically analyzing the relationship between socioeconomic dynamics and parental participation in secondary schools.

3. Purpose of the Study

The primary aim of this study was to critically analyze the relationship between socioeconomic dynamics and parental participation in secondary schools in Kenya.

4. Objectives

Objectives for this study are as follows:

1. To critically analyze how the literacy levels of parent influence their participation in secondary schools in Kenya.
2. To examine how parents' income impacts on their participation in secondary schools in Kenya.
3. To determine how exposure of parents affects parental participation in secondary schools in Kenya
4. To ascertain the relationship between parent-child relationship and parental participation in secondary schools in Kenya.
5. To critically analyze the impact of school culture on parental participation in secondary schools in Kenya.

5. Research Questions

1. To what extent does parental literacy level influence parental participation in secondary schools in Kenya?
2. How does the parents' income impact on their participation in secondary schools in Kenya?
3. To what level does parents' exposure influence parental participation in secondary schools in Kenya?
4. How does parent-child relationship affect parental participation in secondary schools in Kenya?
5. How does the school culture affect parental participation in secondary schools in Kenya?

6. Research Methodology

Being a critical analysis on the relationship between social economic dynamics and parental participation in Kenya, this study employed qualitative research method. It was found to be all inclusive of facts needed for the study. The method of qualitative analysis enabled the researchers to bring out recommendations on how parents and other school stakeholders can participate in schools without impacting negatively on the learners.

7. Significance of the Study

This study may provide useful tips to the ministry of education policy makers and planners on ways of improving parental participation rates in secondary schools in Kenya. It also aims at restoring parents' confidence in their children's education and improving their social skills. The schools may come up with quality school programs that would encourage parental participation.

8. Literature Review

8.1 Critical Analysis of Socioeconomic Dynamics

The study sought to know the relationship between socioeconomic dynamics and parental participation. Socioeconomic dynamics, being an independent variable affects the dependent variable. Some of the socioeconomic dynamics include; literacy level, level of income, and parent-child relationship. The dynamics to some extent impact negatively because parents no longer have a say if at all their level of income is low. They feel inferior and hence cannot relate well with the school administrators. Parents who are exposed tend to be more thoughtful and mind about their children's welfare so much.

8.2 Parental Participation in Secondary Schools in Kenya

Parental participation in children' schools impact positively on both the child and the school. Parental participation in secondary schools in Kenya is related to socioeconomic dynamics whereby they affect parental participation greatly. The relationship may affect the parents' attitude towards the child, school, administration or education generally. Parents do participate according to their societal needs and individual differences. Most researchers have looked at how parental participation affects the learning outcomes or academic achievement, their classroom participation, but leaving out on the relationship between socioeconomic dynamics and parental participation.

According to Jackson & Davis, (2000), "*parents who participate in division making experience greater feelings of ownership, and are more committed to supporting the school's mission.*" Research shows that when schools engage parents and students, there are significant effects. When parents involved at school, not just at home, children do better in school and stay longer. (Henderson & Berla, 1994)

How these dynamics affect the parent directly and maybe eventually dawn on the child. Active parental participation has more merits than passive but which is better

than no participation at all. The school benefits more from parents who are active rather than the passive parents.

8.3 Parental Literacy Level and Its Influence on Parental Participation

The kind of parental participation in secondary schools depends majorly on parental level of education. Parents whose level of education is higher normally participate actively in the school programs like seminars and class conferences and make a thorough follow up of a child's progress in school. The parents are able to know the impact and urgency of the school programs hence improvement on the parental participation. Such parents would want the best for their children so participate more freely to make a better future for their children.

Parents who are semi illiterate or illiterate have minimal knowledge and rarely do they participate in secondary school programs or activities for they do not see the ideology behind it. To such parents, sending a child to school is the major role but not participation. They assume that the role of the teacher at a school is to teach and parent altogether. Their level of participation is low due to embarrassment and inadequate knowledge about the school systems.

Parental literacy level influences the participation in schools. According to Guryan et al, (2008), urged that ,parents who are highly educated have a stronger preference and a lower elasticity of substitution between own and market based childcare hence the need to invest in their children's schools.

8.4 Income Level of Parent and Its Impact on Parental Participation

The income level of parents may be high or low. Parents who work as casuals and are underpaid or earn fewer wages are underrepresented among the parents who are involved in schools. Some of them, due to low self-esteem, inadequate time because they have to work physically for long hours before they are paid. They assume that teachers and administrators may not welcome them as needed. These kinds of parents require enough support from them administrators to encourage them. According to Chavkin, F. & Williams, D. (1987). Recognizing that parents differ greatly in their income levels, abilities and time for involvement in school activities these schools provide a continuum of options for parent participation.

Parents of this nature will not actively participate in the schools activities like parents meeting where their views are needed because they feel inferior. On the other hand, parents whose income level is high have the ability to participate in schools actively because they have high self-esteem. However much busy they are, they always create time for participation in schools because they feel their contribution in activities

matter and is recognized. This promotes the school and motivates even the administrators.

8.5 Effects of Parental Exposure on Parental Participation

Parental participation is affected by parental exposure in terms of how well a parent is exposed in attitude towards education and school programs or linguistic ability. The more exposed a parent is in matters pertaining education, the better and increased level of participation. Naturally, parents are more nurturing and restrictive towards their daughters, but discipline their sons more. According to Duru & Jarousse (1996), data shows significant differences for parents expectations about educational careers of their children which might influence their participation in schools. Parents who are exposed will give advice willingly to the administration and even criticize them so that an improvement in school programs can be seen.

They also create a good impression by attracting more parents to join them. These parents are able to recognize good ideas and export them to their institutions and make informed decisions on matter to do with education. Parents whose level of exposure is wanting tend to shy away or even show no interest at all in matters pertaining the school. To them, once a child is admitted to a certain school and they settle down, they go their own way because they do not see the need for active participation in the school programs.

8.6 Effect of Parent-Child Relationship on Parental Participation

It is important to have a mutual relationship in any institution, be it home, school or place of work. Parents and children should struggle to have a better relationship between them for the parent to participate actively in school activities and programs. (Epstein et al., 2002) parent involvement creates a better understanding of roles and relationships between and among the parent-student-school triangle. In addition to that, it improves student emotional wellbeing.

When the relationship between the parent and child is healthy, then a positive impact on the parents' side and hence active participation can be seen well. It makes the parent more interested in his or her child's welfare hence will be closer to go through and be aware of school programs and participate actively in them. On the other hand, when the relationship between parent and child is strained, it makes the parent so much discouraged or disinterested with the welfare of the child. The strain in their relationship can be felt or seen through the parent's participation in school activities or programs. The parent may decide never to be seen or heard in the school where the child learns and may impact negatively on her child and the administration as well.

8.7 Impact of School Culture on Parental Participation

School culture refers to the daily routine which involves programming within a given time frame and work to be covered. a culture may be a habit that the school is used to carrying out like annual general meetings, parents conferences for individual classes or academic days, prize giving day etc. each school has its own rules and regulations to follow in relation to all these schools that have most of these activities and invite parents or encourage them to come usually results in higher levels of parental participation.

This may be due to the feelings of being appreciated or motivated any time they participate in programs. In schools, the culture of parental participation has not been inculcated in terms of involving them in the school programs. Davies (1991) proposes ways that schools can promote parent involvement; creation of a parent centre, a home visit program and action research team. It is difficult or becomes rare for parents to be motivated to participate. The culture may be that which does not allow frequent interaction of students, parents and teachers therefore will discourage most parents and hence they will not participate actively.

9. Conclusion

Socioeconomic dynamics have a direct relationship with parental participation in secondary schools in Kenya. They either discourage or motivate parents in active participation in schools. Some of the indicators of socioeconomic dynamics include: parental literacy level, parental income, exposure or linguistic abilities. The dynamics directly affect the parents to behave inferior or superior depending on the impact of the relationship between the two variables. The variables therefore have a direct relation with each other.

10. Recommendation

The study critically analyzed the relationship between socioeconomic dynamics and parental participation in secondary schools in Kenya. For participation in secondary schools in Kenya to improve positively, the following needs to be done:

1. Parents should be motivated to participate in secondary schools by providing a fair forum during meeting sessions to avoid feeling inferior because of their level of education. if possible, a national language be used and interpreted for those with linguistic incompetence.

2. The administrators should strive to improve on communication and relations between parents and administrators. This will restore their confidence in the school and hence will actively participate in school programs.
3. For better understanding of family cultures and diversity, a follow-up program should be made by the administrators to know how to incorporate these cultures with the school culture or programs to avoid clashing or cultural shock on parents.
4. The ministry of education should come up with clear policies on high quality school programs that will encourage parental participation. This will ensure common parental participation. This will ensure common structures which will cater for all parents regardless of their socioeconomic differences.
5. The parents should be guided and counseled in terms of their participation in schools to change their attitude towards active parental participation in secondary schools in Kenya.

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