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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PRACTICES IN ZANZIBAR: PARENT'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE LEARNING OF THEIR CHILDREN IN PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PRACTICES IN ZANZIBAR: PARENT'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE LEARNING OF THEIR CHILDREN IN PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to explore parent's involvement in the learning of their children in pre-primary education (PPE). Parent's involvement has a wide sense in modern education trends, evolving parent's lifelong participation in children's school activities. In this regard, it would be difficult to cover the topic in this wide sense. Therefore, the study was more focused on exploring the ways that parent's get involved in the learning of their children in PPE, identify the challenges for low parent's involvement and suggest strategies to improve parent's involvement in the learning of their children in PPE.

Methodology: The study employed qualitative methodology and a case study design where only PPE level among other levels of education was involved. A total number of 24 participants were participated in the study where by 10 were parents and 14 were pre-primary school teachers. The study was guided by the Ecological System Theory. Data was generated by using semi structured interviews and focus group discussion guided by a series of open ended questions as well as documentary review.

Findings: The study reveals that parents were involved in parenting, school meeting and in helping their children's academic works. Shortage of time, parent's illiteracy, poor school experience of parents and the lack of sensitive learning programs between school and home limited parents to get involved in the study of their children. Also, the study found that creating effective communication between school and home, developing guidelines for parental involvement as well as creating collaborating academic activities between school and home were the strategies to improve parent's involvement in the study of their children in PPE.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The study recommends that PPE schools should create conducive atmosphere for mutual contact between teachers and parents so as to enable parents to visit the school and contact with teachers regularly for their children's learning progress. Also, policy makers should integrate PPE with parenting styles so as to raise awareness and equip parents with knowledge on the vital role of participating in the education of their children.

Keywords: *Pre-Primary Education, Pre-Primary School Teachers, Parents and Parents Involvement*

INTRODUCTION

A number of literatures inform that pre-primary education (PPE) plays important roles to young children and, therefore requires special attention. The importance of PPE is necessitated by the fact that it enables young children to lay their education foundation for future development, improves self-confidence, providing a strong base for lifelong learning and learning abilities including cognitive, physical and social development (Nsamenang, 2008). Also, PPE help to provides safe and healthy environment to children, appropriate learning experiences, support and positive attitudes to children (OECD, 2019). Despite of these successes that a child can have while in PPE, it is obvious that, those successes cannot be achieved without parental involvement in the education of their children (Epstein, 1995 & 2002).

Parental involvement is the commitment and participation of parent in the education of their children which include parenting and providing support in academic works (Epstein, 2011). Studies emphasize that parental involvement begins at home with parents providing a safe and healthy environment, appropriate learning experiences, support and positive attitudes to children about school (Epstein, 2002, Durisic, 2017 & Ekinci-Vural & Dogan-Altun, 2021)). Thus, parental involvement has positive impact on children leaning. Researches indicate increased of academic achievements with children whose parents get involved in the education of their children including staying longer in school, get more engaged in school works , attend school regularly, have better social skills, show improved behavior and adapt well to school (Epstein, 2002, Ekinci-Vural & Dogan-Altun , 2021 & Kurtulmus, 2016).

Studies related to parental involvement examined different ways that parents get involved in the studies of their children including parenting (Epstein, 2002). In this way parents provide cares which have the most direct and lasting impacts to their children's leaning. Smetana (2017) point out that parenting play an important role for parents to provide support in their children's learning by preparing them to and from school as well as teaching them good moral values and ethics of their society. Ulferts (2020) emphasizes that parents remains role models to their children's lives and education. Thus, parent's attitudes towards education inspire children and empower them as they go through their own educational carrier. Another parental involvement ways are the communicating and helping children's academic works (Mligo, 2017). Through communication parents get to know the strengths and weaknesses of their children in order to provide them with support for improvements. It is argued by Islam (2016) that parents are supposed to make times and space to communicate with teachers and assist their children's academic works at home. Epstein (2002) point out that helping children school works at home help to extend teaching outside the classroom such that parents explore the potential skills they have to their children.

Epstein (1995) identified six important types of parental involvement. This include parenting in which family provide support and care to children, communicating in which family share ideas with teachers for children's leaning, volunteering in which family collaborate with school to support children's learning, leaning at home by helping children's school works, decision making by participating in decision making process concerning school matters and collaborating with community in different matters including fundraising for construction of classrooms.

Parental involvement in PPE has for so long used to measure parents level of participation in their children's education (Tugrul, 2021). Hornby and Lafaele (2011) describe that parental involvement ways in the education of their children help to understand families and teachers

commitments in making sure that there is close interaction between school and home for better learning of the child. However, studies have longer establishes that poor school planning to involve parents, parents illiteracy and the lack of teachers skills and experiences to develop interactions with parents and create friendly environment make parents to feel unwelcomed and creates hesitation of their involvement in their children's education (Kurtulmus, 2016, Hornby and Lafaele, 2011) .

It can be argued from the above point of views that parents should be actively involved in their children's education and be part of efforts of ensuring that young children receive quality education for better growth and development. Although, it seems parental involvement has been researched for so long, there is still concern and the need to explore the ways regarding parental involvement in the education of their children in Zanzibar context. This is because teachers and parents have different views concerning the ways that parents are involved in the education of their children. In this regard, it is worth and timely to conduct the nature of this study which helped to understand different ways of parental involvement for better PPE practices in Zanzibar.

Statement of the Problem

Zanzibar government through the Ministry of Education has made some efforts on the provision of PPE including the involvement of parents in the studies of their children (MoEVTZ, 2017 and Samuel, 2018). Among the efforts include the involvement of parents in school comities and invitation of parents in different school meetings discussing the progress of their children. Despite of those efforts, the state of parents' involvement in PPE in Zanzibar has not kept up with the national targets. This is because it is very challenging for parents to get involved in the studies of their children. Therefore, this study aimed at exploring parent's involvement in the learning of their children in PPE so as to understand the ways parents get involved, setbacks for their involvement as well as the ways to improve their involvement.

Theoretical Underpinnings of the Study

This study was guided by the Ecological System Theory (EST) developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979. The theory states that individual's development occurs within a complex set of nested interconnected systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The levels of nested systems are Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem and Macrosystem. The theory is useful for understanding children's learning and development in a social cultural context. Also, it helps to understand the impact of the surrounding environment on the development of the child.

Research Gap

The literatures reviewed suggests that, in Zanzibar parents involvement in the learning of their children in PPE has not been adequately studied or given serious attention because the involvement of parents in PPE is still a challenging. This is very unfortunate. Therefore, the present study seeks to bridge this gap of knowledge.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Zanzibar, Tanzania. Qualitative research methods (Interview, focus group discussion and documentary review) were used to collect qualitative data in this study. The aim of this study was to understand teachers and parents views on the ways that parents get involved in the learning of their children in order to get better understanding (Merriam, 2002 & Creswell, 2009). Interviews were conducted to both PPE teachers and parents. Focus group discussion was only conducted to teachers. Due to the nature of jobs, it

was difficult to access parents for group discussion. The proceedings of group discussion and interviews were recorded by using tape recorder. Thereafter, they were recorded in Kiswahili and then translated into English. Data were analyzed following a thematic analysis framework, in which theme, subthemes and its corresponding phenomenon were identified and illustrated using participants' quotes.

RESULTS

The results of this study about the parental involvement in the learning of their children in PPE are presented under three sub-themes namely ways that parents get involved in the learning of their children, challenges for low parental involvement and strategies to improve parents involvement in the learning of their children in PPE. The sub-themes were deductively generated from the main objective of the study whereas unveiled phenomena were inductively developed from the data explored from the respondents.

Table 3.1 Parental Involvement in the Learning of their Children in PPE

Theme	Sub-theme	Unveiled phenomena
Parental involvement in the learning of their children works	Ways that parent's get involved in in PPE	Parenting School meeting Helping children school
	Challenges for low parental involvement in PPE	Shortage of time Parents illiteracy Poor parents' school
	Strategies to improve parental involvement	Lack of learning Effective communication Consultation services Creating guidelines Creating collaborating
experience programs		
activities		

Source: Field data (2021)

Ways that parent get involved in the learning of their children in PPE

The following are the ways that parents got involved in the learning of their children in PPE as presented below:

Parenting

Findings from the participants indicate that parents have good relationship with their children which is supportive and helpful in children's learning. Since, parents are the first teachers who always interact with children. They provide supports to children in physical, emotional, social and intellectual development. Also, the study notes that parents make children ready to school,

prepared food, transport as well as pick and drop their children to school. In this regard one parent commented that:

Let me tell you my dear researcher. I always wakeup early in the morning preparing my child's food, ironing his clothes, get him tea and pick to school. Then, I come back to school during the afternoon to take him to home. After reaching home, I give him food and allow him to sleep for some hours. At evening, I helped him to do home works. I have been told by his teacher that he behaved well at school. I don't like my child to be involved with poor mannered children while at home. I always teach him to respect his parents, teachers and other peoples in the surrounding environment (Parent-/Interview/ May, 2021).

In the same concern, one of teacher quoted saying that:

I saw many parents in the school have good relationship with their children. They prepared well their children with hot foods and come with them to school. At afternoon, they come back to pick them home. Some parents talk with teachers of their children in every day morning to know what is going on to the child (Teacher/FGD/April, 2021).

Participation of Parents in School Meetings

School meeting with parents is found to be significant events in which teachers and parents share academic progress of their children. The study findings revealed different meeting conducted in school between teachers and parents including individual parent-teacher meeting, parent day meeting and school parents meeting. Individual parent-teacher meeting is normally called by class teacher to discuss the success and failures of the child in front of his or her parent for improvements. It normally conducted at any day and especially at the end of the term where teachers call parents to give the progress report of their children. Parent day meeting is a special event conducted by school in each year where parents got opportunity to see different activities done by their children while in school. The meeting aimed at showing parents the success of their children in PPE. Another event noticed was school parent meeting which conducted once or twice a year to discuss the pupils and school development for making some improvements in the implementation of PPE or in physical structures of the school including the construction of the buildings.

It was reported by the study participants that in both the meetings parents are better informed about children's strengths, needs, behaviors and learning styles used by teachers in school. Also, the meetings found to help teachers to learn from parents experiences of parenting. Involved PPE schools were found to set specific date and time for meeting with parents. The study has also affirms that parent-teacher meeting occurs during the evening time so as to avoid contradictions with parents' routines. However, in one PPE school, it was reported that school parent-teacher meetings were conducted in school hours to show pupils that parents and teachers are cooperating together and are both part of instructional team. At this point of view, one of parent had the following to say:

Look my son, I always participate in school meetings once I am informed by call or receiving a letter from school. I schedule my routines so that I can't miss the meeting. It is good forum because teachers and parents discuss how our children's are doing in school. I get to know how my child learns, participate in school activities as well as to know his physical, mental and emotional developments while at school (Parent/Interview/ June, 2021).

To explore more on this aspect, it was reported that school meetings provides an opportunity for parents and teachers to exchange observation experiences of a child with each other both at school and home. It was emphasized that sharing experiences and observations with child provide a wider hope for parent and teacher to plan, prepare and accomplish planning for better learning outcomes of their children. In this regard one of teacher during the interview commented that:

School meeting is a good forum which bridges the existing gap of communication between teachers and parents observations and experiences on children's learning development. It is where teachers share ideas with parents about behaviors, performance and learning abilities of their children both at home and school. Teachers are highly advised and encouraged by the school administration to participate in school meeting with parents because plans on how children can learn started from the meeting (Teacher/Interview/ May, 2021).

Further, the study revealed contrary during the interview with one of the parent that it is not a parent's role to participate in school meeting by perceived that they sent their children to school because there are qualified personnel who are employed for the task. Also, it was claimed that, parents do not get chance to say something during the meeting because they are not given the meeting agenda before and most of the time school meetings are focused on problems. In this regard one of parent raised the following concerns:

Oooh!.....yeah..... Let me tell you. I think the participation of parent in school meeting is a privilege and not a right. Because teachers in school are specifically employed to teach and solve any problems which occur in school. I seldom participated because most of the school meetings are focused on problems. Also, parents have less opportunity to express their ideas. Most of the meeting times used by teachers to explain different things. Parents are not given the meeting agenda before to get prepared. I am disappointed to participate in meeting that I cannot got chance to express my concerns and I don't know what I am going to say (Parent/Interview/ May, 2021).

In a different concern, it was reported during FGD that only parents who are interested participate in school meeting. In such meeting some parents are not conversant in the field of education such that they only participate in the meeting to hear what teachers have. This results the school to have poor feedback from the parents which might lead to disappointment in calling to the next meeting. In this regard one of teacher commented that:

The school informs parents to come to the meeting. But, we got only those who are interested in the meeting. Very few parents contribute the discussed topics and the remaining remains silent during the whole meeting. Some of them felt shine and fear to speak in front of others especially woman. To be open, it disappoints teachers. Sometimes teachers are forced to request one parent after the other to express his or her ideas concerning the presented topic (Teacher/ FGD / June, 2021).

Participation of Parents in Home Based School Activities

The study findings show that parents are involved in helping their children's home works and reading. The study has also affirms different experiences of parents in different subjects that help to boost child's morale and trust toward the work given at school. The responses below from the parent illustrate how parents help their children's home work:

I always check the book of my child once after she comes from school. When I found something wrong like poor handwriting, I took efforts to make sure that she is able to write well. Also, I helped my child in doing home works and how to read numbers and letters. I am not good in mathematics. It gives me hardship to help him doing his work in a good way. Fortunately, his sister is good in that subject and is able to help him. My dear.... I enjoy and proud to help my child's school works and especially during reading time (Parent/Interview/ May, 2021).

On the same concern, one of the teachers raised the view that: *parents play a great role in helping their children's home works and reading at home. In deed they facilitate the teaching work to become easier (Teacher/Interview/May, 2021).*

Contrary with the above view, the study notes that some parents are not capable to help their children's home works. This is because they do not know how to read and write. This implies that some children do not get help of doing their school works at home. This might cause the children not to perform well at school. Also, it might be the reason for children to hate learning. In this regard, one of parent claims that:

Ooooooooooh..... It hearts me...but ...let me tell you, my child is given home works every day. I wish to help her, but I am not capable in reading and writing. I try at my level best to make sure that I found someone to help him. However, most of the time I found myself inferior and I don't want many people to realize my weakness (Parent/Interview/July, 2021).

Challenges for Low Parental Involvement in PPE

The following are the challenges hindered parents to get involved and engaged in the learning of their children as described below;

Shortage of Time

During the interview with parents the study found parents claim that they have to work to maintain their financial standing of their families. This make parents to work from morning to late evening or night time. As a result, they lack time to get involved in school activities either by participating in school meetings to discuss the learning progress of their children or helping their children's schools works at home. In this regard, one of the parent raised the concern that

Hi.....I have four children depending on me. All are orphans. I don't have any help. I am supposed to sell bread and fried fish from morning to evening to get some money for my family. I found to use many hours in doing business to serve my family. I received letter several times from school to participate in the meeting. But, I have no time to go to school for meeting. The problem comes when my children need help for their studies. They missed help from home. I always pray to god helping these kids (Female /Interview/ June, 2021).

Parents Illiteracy

Parents' illiteracy was among of the aspects emerged from the data. During the interview with parents, the study found that parents refuse to go to school because they think they are illiterate. This make them to feel they are not confident to talk or they don't know what and how to talk with teachers. Such parents found to be unaware with the significance of PPE to their children. Also, parents believed only teacher are responsible for their children's education. Again, the study notes that it is the parent's duty to help their children's learning but they don't know how they can be involved. In this respect, one of the parents emphasized that:

My son..... I have no skills to teach my child. I solely left the duty of my children's learning to teachers. This is because teachers are educated and are capable in doing their teaching job. I only able to teach my child folktales related to good morals of the past (Parent/Interview/ May, 2021).

On the same concern, another parent quoted saying that:

Yaaap.....It is our duty as parent to help the studies of our children. But, we do not know our specific roles to the learning of our children. I think there is need for parents to be sensitized on how they can become able to teach and help their children's learning (Parent/Interview/May, 2021).

Poor School Experiences of Parent

Parents' poor school experience was among of the aspects emerged from data. During the interview with parents, the study reveals that some parents have bad experiences with schooling. As a result, they don't feel welcomed to go to school to stay with teachers to discuss something concerning the learning of their children. It was described by parents that they have bad memories like being victim of school violence and failures. Therefore, they do not prefer and feel comfort to return to a place that reminds their injustices and failures. In this regard one of the parents quoted saying that:

When I was in school, the life was pleasant until form four. I remembered my biology teacher request all students in the class to come with bees and cockroach for doing practical. It was difficult for me to catch either bees or cockroach because of worried to be bitten. After reaching school with no specimens. The teacher was very angry to me and started to punish me. Oooohh....I escaped because I didn't want to get any more trouble and harm. From that day, I hate teachers. Always, I pray to the god to bless my son to show him good way in his schooling life. At home, I tried hard to help his home works and assist him on how to write correctly. But, I don't like to participate either school meeting or parent day (Parent/Interview/ May, 2021).

Lack of Sensitive Learning Programs from the School

The study notes that the lack of sensitive programs from school as the other challenge that limits parent's involvement in school activities of their children. It was reported by teachers that their PPE schools lack sensitive activities like home-learning programs including reading at homes, storytelling and singing songs where parents are given a number of exercises by teachers to supervise their children reading at home. Lack of these programs causes some parents to have less care to the learning of their children by missing what to do for their children's studies at home. In this regard, one of teacher during FGD quoted saying that:

Some parents need to be encouraged by creating list of things like reading books to be done by child at home under their supervision. This can help to keep parents busy and interact with their children for learning. Our school lacks such programs. It is only home works which keep children busy at home. But, now day's teachers are seldom providing home works to avoid work load for marking books caused by high number of pupils in the classes. In that situation, parents have less to do with their children. I think it is the one of the factors which makes some parents not to get involved in helping their children's learning at home (Teacher/ FGD / June, 2021).

On the same concern, some teachers claim that parents were informed on the need for them to support and supervise their children works at home. Unfortunately, teachers lack support from

parents in the implementation of home based school programs. Consequently, teachers were disappointed in designing such academic activities to be done by children at home under the supervision of parents. In this regard, one of teacher during interview quoted saying that:

Home learning activities help to improve pupil's commitment in learning. In this school, teachers tried at their level best to involve parents in such activities. But, many parents are busy. Some of them when informed on the need of having that programs at home. They hesitated to come to school given direction on how to monitor their children. As a result children missed support from their parents. Many teachers disappoints with these programs because of lacking corporation from the parents. This led few teachers to design such activities for few parents who are ready. But, those parents who are involved in these activities. Their children found to improve academically (Teacher/Interview/ May, 2021).

Suggested Ways to Improve Parents' Involvement in the Learning of their Children

The following are the suggested ways to improve parents' involvement in the learning of their children

School Should Create Effective Communication between Teachers and Parents

Creating effective communication between teachers and parents in PPE schools is found by the study to be an important way which encourages parents to take an active role in the study of their children's learning. The responses from parents and teachers indicate different forms of communication used by teachers to communicate with parents including letters, notes and calls. Both of these communication forms intend to involve parents to feel welcome in all concerns in learning of their children at school. In this regard one of the parents quoted saying that:

I severally received a letter and calls from school to attend the meeting to discuss the learning of my child. I actually communicate with teachers because I learnt many things from them on how to help my child's works at home and monitoring his behaviors while playing with other children. I also have opportunity to discuss the strength and failures of my child's studies for better improvement. I like the way teachers communicating with me because they informed me earlier to get prepared either for the events like school meeting or they want to talk with me (Parent/Interview/ July, 2021).

On the same concern, one of the teachers proves the fact that the school communicates with parents of their children to discuss the learning progress. However, some parents have good feedback from the communication with teachers either by attending in school meeting or listen the teachers concerns through the calls. But, some parents ignore the calls and letters. This may implies that some parents are unaware with the important of having good and effective communication with teachers for their children's learning. It was suggested that school administrators and teachers should make sure that their communication with parents is becoming effective by getting feedback from each other so as to ensure greater involvement of parents in the learning of their children. In this regard one of the teachers quoted saying that:

The school tries the best to communicate with parents either to participate in school events or get informed the progress of their children. Some parents respond teacher's communication by participating in school events while others are not. Some children have problems which need collaboration between school and home to solve. Unfortunately, their parents are not seen in school or communicate with teachers. At the end, the school does not know how to help the child. So, such parents need to be educated on the importance of

them to communicate with teachers for the learning of their children (Teacher/Interview/April, 2021).

Schools Should Provide Consultation Services to Parents

The study found that conducting effective parent-teacher consultation in PPE school contributes to the improvement of family involvement in the study of their children's. This is because it helps to promote positive outcomes of the children's education. Both the responses from parents and teachers show that consultations led parents to be in good position being informed about their children's strengths, needs and behaviors in school mean while teachers understand children's behaviors at home. Consequently, teachers and parents stay in good position to cooperate together to ensure better teaching and learning of the child. In this regard one of the parents quoted saying that:

Hi, listen my dear....I actually attend school every month and some days in a week. I consult with the teacher of my son to know his progress and failures. It helps me to know where my child improves and the faced problems in his schooling. Most of the times, his teacher is happy seeing me at school for several times and she advised me to help my child's school works at home. She insists me to look his book every day as well as asking him some questions about what he learnt at school. My child is doing well in school and is happy with me when I helped his studies. I am very happy with the schooling of my child because I get to know what is going on in school. I never sleep without doing all what I have been consulted by teacher to do to my child (Parent/Interview/ June, 2021).

Contrary with the above view, some parents' claims that they are consulted with teachers only when problem arise for taking some measures. However, parents respond quickly once they are informed the problems facing their children in school for proper actions. It was suggested that teachers should consult parents not only in terrible situation but also in a normal situation for better learning of their children in school. In this concern, one of the parent quoted saying that:

Oooohh!.....yeah.....let me tell you... I only consulted with teachers of my child when she is ill and when she performs poor in school. After being informed, I quickly go to school. Ooooooh...I think teachers are supposed to be close and consult parents not only in terrible situation but also in a normal situation. This can help parents to know in detail what their children's proceed in school. I wish if teachers can consult me in several times to discuss the progress of my child education, growth and development. I love the way my child is learning in school (Parent/Interview/ June, 2021).

Again, it was reported by teachers that consultation services provided by the school help to meet with parents to share ideas about children's strength and challenges in learning. These make teachers to understand difficulties' facing their children's and advise parents how they can be involved and help their children's learning. In this respect, one of teacher commented that:

There is a special program to consult with parents in this school. I myself have already consulted with parents in several times. It helped me to share ideas with parents about pupils learning at home. It gives me confidence while teaching because I understand the capacity and difficulties of my children. So that I can select appropriate strategies to ensure pupils better understanding during my lessons. Also, through exchanging ideas with parents, we both come to know and have collaborative strategies on how to help the child in learning (Teacher/FGD/July, 2021).

On the same concern, another during interview teacher added that:

In my school, we have a tendency to consult with parents about the learning of their children. It helps teachers to know children's behaviors at home and how they are learning. Teachers use the consultations to advise and insist parents on the need to be involved in their children's work at home by helping them how to write, read and singing songs. Parents who are involved in such consultations showed positive will because their children's perform and behaved well compared with children whose parents do not get involved in consultation with teachers (Teacher/Interview/ May, 2021).

School Should Create Guidelines for Parental Involvement

The study found that creating parental involvement guidelines is a best way to involve parents in the learning of their children. Both the responses from the parents and teachers affirm that having parental involvement guidelines in school can help the school to support the important role of parents in the education of their children. This is because parents can bind to participate in the learning of their children's by knowing their roles despite of their busy life schedules. Also, having parental involvement guidelines provide opportunity for schools to manage educational programs by bringing parents more closely into the education of their children. In this regard one of the parents quoted saying that:

Hi.....let me tell you, creating guidelines for parent's involvement in school is good way to ensure parents voice is heard for the development and education of their children. The guidelines should clearly stipulate the roles of parents. Because many parents do not know their roles concerning their children's education. But, it needs teachers, parents, school administrators and community's commitment and time to accomplish the goal (Female parent-7/Interview/June, 2021).

On the same concern, one of teacher clarifies that:

It is very important to have guidelines for parental involvement. This is because it can help to increase parental commitment in the learning of their children. Also, it can make parents to have the eligible roles to play in the study of their children. Presently, there is no guidelines in our PPE schools that is why some parents hesitated or do not understand why they are involved in the study of their children (Teacher/Interview/June, 2021)

School Should Create Collaborating Activities with the Community

The study found that creating collaborating activities between home and school improve communication and positive relationship with families which ensure greater parents participation in school activities. This is because it can make parents to spend time for learning together with their children. Since, school alone cannot address all children's education needs. Therefore, children can learn best when family members and school work together to encourage and support their learning. The following responses illustrates the important of having home and school collaborating activities as one of parent quoted saying that;

I always set time to help my child to complete his home works and direct him how to read and write. His teacher gives me a list of reading activities to supervise him at home. With these activities, my child is able to pronounce letters correctly and read different words in English and Kiswahili. I don't like to miss to learn together with my child. I think if all teachers and school have such program. Many children can have success in PPE and every parent can be encouraged to be involved and engaged in the learning of their children (Parent/Interview/ May, 2021).

Discussion

The purpose of this article was to explore parent's involvement in the learning of their children in pre-primary education (PPE). The intention was to understand the ways that parents get involved in the learning of their children so as to know the support they provide to their children's learning. The 2006 Zanzibar education policy guideline located an emphasis on the need of parental involvement in the learning of their children in PPE. The findings indicates that parents were involved in the learning of their children mainly in parenting, participating in school meeting and helping their children's academic works at home. However, some parents reported not to get involved in the learning of their children due to the shortage of time, parents illiteracy, poor school experience of the parents as well as the lack of sensitive learning programs from the school. Having effective communication between school and home, providing consultation services to parents, creating guidelines for parents' involvement and creating collaborating learning activities between home and school reported as the ways to improve parental involvement in the studies of their children in PPE.

Studies related to parental involvement informs that parents with high believes on education are more likely to monitor their children school works and participate actively in school activities to discuss the progress and failures of their children (Epstein, 2002, Ekinici-Vural & Dogan-Altun, 2021, Mligo, 2017 & Ulferts, 2020). This implies that, parents' involvement creates more positive experience for children through interactions which help children to perform better when they are in school. Stemana (2017) points out that when parents prepared their children ready for school shows them that they are active participants in their education. Also, educational aspiration are accompanied with the ways in which parents shape children's activities at home, set time to interact with them and prepares good learning environment for their children.

A study by Chen and Guo (2021) supports that when parents get involved in school meeting for their children's education helped them to better understanding on what is taught in school, gain more information about their children's knowledge and abilities as well as programs and services offered in school. Similar views were made in a study conducted by Epstein (2002) which consonance with the present study finding that parental participation in school meeting improves teacher's performance through sharing ideas with parents and get to know their children's more easily. On this hand this may allowed teachers to teach in a more personalized and effective way. On the other hand, it helps parents to understand the curriculum better, feel more comfortable and happier with the learning of their children. For this reason, it is important for PPE schools in Zanzibar to focus on the practice side by involving parents in educational matters for more experiences in learning of their children.

Kurtulmus (2016) revealed out that schools have hard time reaching parents and capturing their attentions. Also, parents have limited time knowing how to get involved in the learning of their children. Although, they trust the education of their children. At this point, it makes sense to argue that there is a disconnection between school and parents because of busy life styles of parents. It is likely to say that parents believed if education is important for their child's success in life. But, they do not see the important why they need to be involved with the school educating their children. Based on this, it can be suggested that there is a need for parents to be sensitized on the important of being involved in their children's learning. This would help them to know what is going on in school programs as well as their responsibilities toward their children's learning. A study by Ntekane (2018) supports Kurtulmus (2016) findings that one of the challenges that many parents faced is to find time to attend school meeting to support

their children's learning. The study adds that it is also challenging for the teacher when the children are expected to perform well academically, but the children do not get and receive any support from home.

Durdanovic (2015) reports that while many people think homes are beneficial environment for children's to learn, not all homes provide a conducive learning environment. The study adds that some parents do not get enough time for helping their children's home works. This finding consonance with the finding of the study by Armento, Henderson and Scafidi (2011) in Georgia that some parents do not provide any kind of support or homework to help their children due to personal education barrier and sometimes cannot. This implies that it is very difficult for some parents to sit with their children and help them out in completing tasks given from school. This is very unfortunate. Therefore, it could be suggested that it is very important to raise awareness to parents on the need of helping their children's school works at home. This can help parents to spend more time with their children while learning at home.

Asamoah (2016) revealed out that many parents with limited education background tend to feel shy and non-confident from getting involved in school activities of their children. This is because they perceived themselves as illiterate in being able to make any impact in their children's learning. Asamoah (2016) continue to argue that such parents were unable to neither read nor comprehend any school form or letters sent to them. Also, they are unable to assist their children's homework's though, some of them wish to do so. Asamoah's findings is supported by Zhou (2015) who found that parents who felt themselves inferior to make any impact in the learning of their children have great possibility to avoid any contact with the school environments and its teachers. Consequently, such parents hesitate to get involved in the learning of their children

Armento, Hernderson and Scafidi (2011) in Georgia concurs with the study findings that parents have great expectations with the learning of their children's in PPE but they don't know their roles, lack skills and practices. This made parents to believe that only teachers are responsible for their children's learning. As a result, they blame teachers when their children perform poorly because they don't know their responsibilities toward their children's learning (Stemana, 2017). This can be interpreted that every family wants their children to have success in education but they lack the knowledge limits their opportunities to be involved in the learning of their children. Based on this argument, it can be suggested that user Ministry and PPE schools should conduct different interventions like workshop and seminars to sensitize parents on the important role they should play in boosting their children's learning in PPE by getting involved.

Another study by Durrant (2012) in Canada found out similar results that because of fear created to parents during their schooling. Sometimes parents may not effectively participate in giving contributions, ideas and experiences about what they know in PPE. This means that they become passive participants in the learning of their children. However, the study by Armento et al (2011) emphasizes that parental involvement in children's education leads to transformation of the parent from being passive education supporters to active member of the school. It appears that when parents have active participation and support towards their children's learning. Probably, they become exited to realize the importance of parents being involved in the learning of their children.

Furthermore, the findings of the present study is contrary with the results from the study conducted by Pokharel (2014) in Nepal who found that parents who receives compliments for

being a good student and have success in their schooling. They are likely to show better academic behaviors and have greater involvement in their children's learning than the parents who experienced poorly in schooling. Pokharel's (2014) findings stresses the need of educating parents with poor schooling experience that they should support their children's learning by getting involved in their learning activities. In so doing can help to avoid their children to imitate the aggression from them though they do not experience any bad things in school. This can also help children not to develop the feelings of angry against the school which might cause unnecessary emotions to their teachers.

To explore more on parental involvement, a study by Ulferts (2020) found that effective communication between teacher and parents should start by saying something positive about children's learning to encourage concentrating on the discussed topic. Even though, teachers may want to report misconduct or failure of the child. In so doing teachers can have effective communication with parents. However, a study by Bi (2018) revealed out that teacher usually calls parents to report a child's inappropriate behaviors or academic failures. This causes parents to become defensive if they think that every phone call brings bad report. This can be interpreted that some teachers do not have skills on how to communicate and report either success or failures of children's to their parents. This stressed the need of equipped teachers with the knowledge and skills so that they can manage the communication with parents in a harmonized way.

In a discussion about parent-teacher consultation in early years setting, Mtahabwa (2009) found that teachers in PPE had a shortage of training skills to consult parents to get involved in the learning of their children. The study adds that teachers and parents are important link between school and home. Therefore, teachers are supposed to be trained on guiding parents and advise them on better ways to support their children's learning at home and by participating in school activities of their children.

A study conducted by Baek (2010) revealed that some PPE schools lack collaborating activities with community because neither school nor parents have time to know one another and plan good things for the learning of their children. In that situation, parents missed to spend time to their children's education. Consequently, when a child performs poor teachers blame parents and parents blame teachers. This implies that creating collaborating activities is inevitable so as to bring school and home together to support child's learning and positive engagement of parents in the learning of their children.

Overall, this study locate more emphasizes on parental involvement in the learning of their children in PPE. Thus, parental involvement would lead to improvement in PPE practice. Based on the findings that opportunities for children's learning are strengthened as the connections between teachers and parents are acknowledged and respected as well as creating a conducive atmosphere for mutual contact between teachers and parents. So, that parent can be able to visit school, cooperate and contact with teachers regularly for their children's learning progress. It is therefore recommended that policy makers should integrate PPE with parenting styles so as to raise awareness and equip parents with knowledge on the vital role of participating in the education of their children. In so doing, every parent can be engaged, supported and be responsible in the study of their children.

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