

A Study of Parental Involvement, a Curricular Strategy on the Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Characteristics of Primary School Students

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Abstract: *This article is based on the results of a study conducted on the involvement of parents as a curricular strategy on cognitive and non-cognitive characteristics of primary school students. The results show that the involvement of parents makes a positive impact on the study habits. For last some time, it has been observed that a collaboration of teachers and parents influences the study habits of students positively. If the parents are involved in educational process, the students are motivated towards learning and their achievement is better than other students whose parents do not involve in it. The studies reveal that the parents and teachers should participate in education as partners. The findings of this research show that the students whose parents are involved in the educational process show a better academic achievement. The results indicated that the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement was positive, regardless of a definition of parental involvement. Furthermore, the findings revealed that this relationship may be stronger if parental involvement is defined as parental expectations for academic achievement of their children. Finally, the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement is found to be consistent across different grade levels. However, the strength of that relationship varies based on the type of assessment used to measure student achievement.*

Keywords: Involvement of parents, study habits, school achievement, educational partnership, students' achievements, continuous evaluation, achievement tests etc.

1. Introduction

Parental involvement means different things to different people as it encompasses a broad spectrum of activities ranging from a desire to involve parents in decision-making in the school to that of passing on to them strategies for dealing more effectively with their own children. More specifically, the term includes school tutoring, monitoring effective use of time for study at home, reinforcing behaviours established at school, creating positive home environment, providing material facilities, participating actively in the constructive and welfare activities of the school, participating in decision-making committees, discussing the progress and problems of the children with the teachers, finding out ways and means for managing undesirable and disruptive behaviours, providing guidance for career establishment, taking care of health and nutrition of children, strengthening specific aptitudes and special interests of the children and above all the training of the parents to perform all these activities. The achievement of students, their motivation and well-being in the classroom depends on the involvement of parents to a great extent. A number of researches have given considerable attention to the effect of involvement of parents on the study habits of students studying in the primary schools. This has become a point of concern to the makers of school as well as government policies in India for last few years. This study aims to get more insight in and to identify good practice in relation between the involvement of parents and achievements of students in the school.

2. Key Findings

- 1) Parental involvement is a term that requires dialogue among teachers and parents.
- 2) Parent involvement can have an impact on student learning throughout all grades. Students' study habits, behavior, and attitude towards school can be influenced by parents' interest in primary schools.
- 3) Culture, socioeconomic background, and family characteristics influence the degree of parental involvement, and ultimately the impact it has on student achievement. Minority cultures, lower income families, and single-parent households are less involved in their children's school compared to middle class families.
- 4) Principles of mutual respect and trust are foundational for establishing effective partnership programs.

3. Review of Related Literature

In the recent past, the parents were considered responsible for looking after and upbringing of their wards at home and preparing them to attend the schools. The teachers were held responsible for imparting education to the young children at schools who were sent to schools by their parents. But in the present times the situation has reverted considerably. In general sense the teachers have become the real educators of the children and parents keep a bird's eye on the teaching activities in the schools. Thus, it may be said that imparting education to the young children has become the responsibility of both the teacher and parents on the same lines i.e. the teachers are responsible for imparting education at schools and parents are responsible for educating children at home. There is a great ambiguity in the concept and

definition of parental involvement used in this research and this leads to the conclusion that in studying the phenomenon of parental involvement, a number of factors are taken into consideration. In this regard Long¹ (1986) argues that “parental involvement has positive advantages for children, teachers and parents. By extending the contexts of learning beyond the confines of the classroom and the school the child finds a wider range of constructive learning situations, the teacher develops his or her professional role as a facilitator of learning wherever it takes place and the parent gains skills and confidence to extend his or her child’s learning”. Tembe² (1988), a student counselor of the association, observes that the parents who attend the school feel that what they learn in the school is of great importance in not only improving their relationship with their children but also in improving the behaviour of their children. The students whose parents are involved in the home studies show better interest towards the studies. O’ Toole³ (1989) has suggested the following three necessary pre-requisite skills on the part of the mother, for effective implementation of a parental involvement programme- (a) Understanding of child development: an appreciation that children develop skills in an orderly sequence which is relatively universal. (b) Belief in teaching: the belief that child development can be accelerated, that parent can play a key role in his respect and (c) Opportunity for teaching: the acceptance by parents that changes the environment or their approach could help the child learn.

The mutual trust among the parents and teacher is a crucial factor for the establishment and maintenance of forms of partnership in educational set up. In elementary schools the involvement of parents and their contacts with teacher are far better than in middle schools or in high schools. As the children grow older, there are less contact among teachers and parents resulting in a decline in the level of trust between parents and teachers. Hoover-Dempsey, KV & Sandler, H.M.⁴ (1997) are of the opinion that “Home school communication is an important factor for the establishment of good relations among parents and teachers”. According to this hypothesis, the quality of the home-school communication seems to be a better predictor of trust than the frequency of home-school contacts or demographic variables. The keyword to establish a better relation between parents and school is open communication. The recent studies have also revealed that the parents who take care of their wards perform their parental duties in a better way. Christian, K., Morrison, F. J., & Bryant, F. B. (1998)⁵ concluded that “the parents who are active in parental participation tend to be more involved in activities of the community”. In the studies conducted by Morrison Gutman L. and McLoyd V.C. (2000), they concluded that “the parents show better adjustment in the society that help their wards in their studies”⁶. Desforges and Abouchaar⁷ (2003) have the view that “although the parental involvement seems to have a more positive effect than the parental participation on the development of children, both the forms are closely related”.

On the other hand there are some other scholars also who criticize the better communication and relationship among parents and teachers. They opine that such a partnership among teachers and parents can affect the school

achievements of students in an adverse manner. While discussing the possible limitations concerning the philosophy of parental involvement in a developing country context Ogunkoya (1982), Thorburn (1983) and Kohli (1986)⁸ point out that overwork, poverty, severity, severe social tensions and sheer exhaustion can make parental involvement a demanding prospect. In his studies Lareau, A. (1997)⁹ concluded that “there is a feeling of disregard in the minds of teachers for the parents. The teachers expect that parents should respect their professionalism and their decisions in the class room. The parents are treated as illiterates by the teachers and some- times misbehaved also. This makes a negative role of educators in the minds of parents”. Thus, position of parents and teachers on behalf of child is different. On one side, as parents are characterized of having love, affection and many other aspirations for their child and on the other side the involvement of teachers can be characterized by professionalism and knowledge about the children which is based on their experience.

4. Objectives of the Study

The following objectives were laid down for the present study.

- 1) To compare the performance of the students at the end of the experimental session of the school subjects i.e. Mathematics, General Knowledge, Social Studies and Extra-curricular activities in a special reference to parental involvement.
- 2) To compare the level of study habits at the end of the experimental session of two groups of students- one being fully supported by parental involvement and other without involvement of parents in education of children.
- 3) To compare the aggregate performance at the end of the experimental session of two groups of students-one being fully supported by parental involvement and other without involvement of parents in education of children.

5. Hypothesis

The hypotheses formulated and tested in the present study are as under:

- 1) The two groups of students- one being supported by parental involvement and other without involvement of parents in education will differ significantly at the end of the experimental session with respect to their performance in each of the following school subjects:
- 2) Mathematics, (b) General Knowledge (c) Extra Curricular Activities and (d) Social studies
- 3) There will be a significant change from beginning to the end of the academic session in the level of study habits of each of the two groups of students- one being supported by parental involvement and other without effective involvement of parents in education
- 4) The two groups of students- one being supported by parental involvement and other without effective involvement of parents in education will differ significantly at the end of the experimental session with respect to their level of study habits.

6. Methodology and Design of the Study

“The subject design based on matching of two groups” has been adopted in the present study in which manipulation of the package of selected curricular strategies i. e. involvement of parents is the independent variable whereas performance on the achievement tests, study habits and attitude inventory are the dependent variables. In addition to these, the intelligence, socio-economic status, previous knowledge of the students in different school subjects and level of study habits before the application of the treatments have been considered to be pertinent control variables. The first two variables were controlled while selecting the treatment groups needed for the study whereas the latter were controlled by adopting the technique of analysis of covariance.

7. Sampling

The subjects of the present study have been drawn from a pooled sample of 120 students selected from ten Hindi medium primary schools situated in rural areas of Hapur Block. Before selecting the sample, the schools were matched on the variables of minimum number of students in class V, number of teachers in each school, physical facilities, use of teaching skills by the teachers, evaluation procedures adopted, level of parental Involvement, and provision for increasing study habits of the children.

After this, two equivalent groups have been formed using subject to subject matching on the variable non-verbal intelligence. These groups are also matched of the variable of socio- economic status with respect to their means and standard deviations. Finally, each treatment group consists of 60 students. Two groups of students have been prepared – one group consisting of the students who got full involvement of parents and second group of those students who are unable to get any parental involvement.

8. Delimitations of the Study

The present study was delimited in the following aspects:

- 1) The study is confined to 120 students of class Vth studying in 10 primary schools situated in Hapur block.
- 2) The curricular activities viz. ensuring parental involvement, continuous evaluation of students, motivating the students and teaching skills were included in the package programme.
- 3) The component of continuous evaluation of students was delimited to administering and scoring units test, providing results, reporting the results to the parents and providing remedial instructions where required.
- 4) The component of parental involvement was restricted to (a) discussing students problems and progress in classroom with parents in and outside the school, (b) inviting the parents to school on auspicious occasion, and (c) reporting students' performance to parents.
- 5) The component of motivating the students was restricted to providing knowledge of their performance

on the unit tests, displaying their performance through progress charts and awarding prizes in the form of teaching learning materials.

9. Tool Used for the Study

Following tools were used to achieve the objectives formulated for the present study:

1. Achievement Tests

Four achievements tests, one for each teaching subject namely Mathematics, Gen. Knowledge, Social Studies and Extra-curricular activities were constructed by the investigator.

2. Study Habits and Attitude Inventory

For measuring the level of study habits of the students, a study habits and attitude inventory developed by LN Dubey and Archana Dubey (Jabalpur) was used by the investigator.

3. Interview schedule on Parental involvement

In order to secure information regarding the involvement of parents in the studies of their children, an interview schedule for the parents of the children was prepared by the investigator.

10. The Experiment

The experiment was conducted in the following phases:

Phase I

Keeping in view the objectives of the study, the investigator practiced each of the selected curricular activities in actual classroom situation for a period of 10 days.

Phase II

In this phase, the achievement test in Mathematics, Gen. Knowledge, Social Studies and Extra-curricular activities were administered to the two treatment groups.

Phase III

This phase was confined to the actual conduct of the experiment. At this stage, the two groups were assigned randomly to different treatments and the treatment groups were designated as experimental group and the control group. Experimental group was taught all the subjects by the investigator using effectively all the selected curricular activities that mainly involves to ensure parental involvement in the studies of their children. The students of control group were taught normally without ensuring the parental involvement.

Phase IV

At the completion of all the instructional units in the four school subjects, the achievement tests in Mathematics, Gen. Knowledge, Social Studies and Extra-curricular activities were administered to the two treatment groups.

Description of sample

Table below presents the summaries of the averaged means and standard deviations across the two imputed datasets for all variables. Descriptive statistics show that students reported higher Achievement in Mathematics ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 0.83$) and Social Studies ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 0.83$) than other subjects. In extra-curricular activities ($M=4.40$, $SD=0.59$) the achievement was higher than General Knowledge. A mean of 3.80 and a standard deviation of 0.76 were found for Gen. Knowledge on a Five- point

scale. Although the differences seem to be small, it is noteworthy that students on average felt more interested and more confident about their ability in Social Studies than in Mathematics.

Table: Mean and standard deviation of variables.

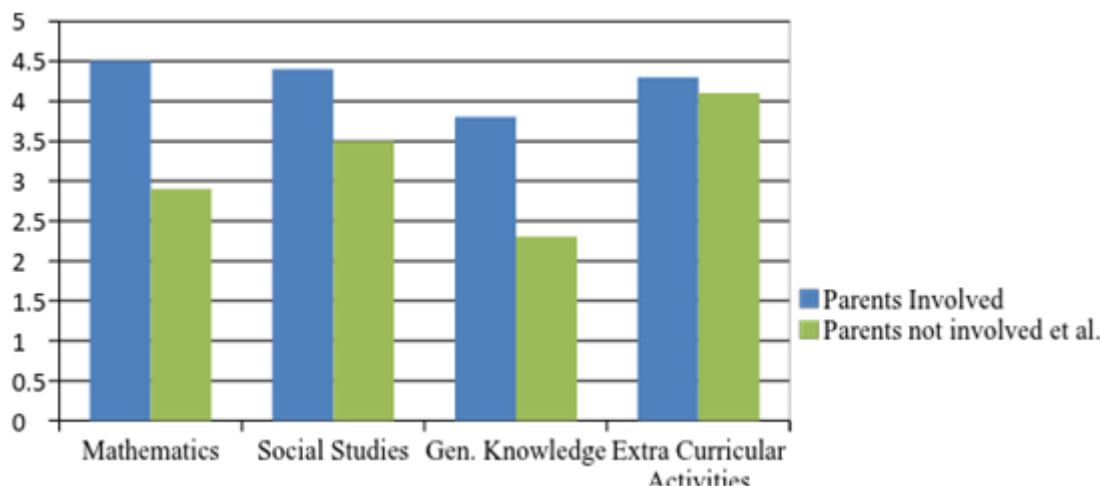
SD	M	Variable
0.83	4.50	1. Mathematics (parents involved)
0.82	4.50	2. Social Studies (parents involved)
0.76	3.80	3. General Knowledge (parents involved)
0.59	4.40	4. Extra Curr. Activities (parents involved)
0.31	2.92	5. Mathematics (parents not involved)
0.48	3.51	6. Social Studies (parents not involved)
0.66	2.31	7. General Knowledge (parents not involved)
0.23	4.10	8. Extra Curr. Activities (parents not involved)
		Note: All values of average estimates for two sets of data.

The parent variables were also rated on a five-point scale. Parents reported the highest averages for participation in Social Studies and Mathematics with their children ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 0.82$), which indicates that they were on average 'sometimes' involved. On the basis of the five-point scale, parents reported that the average that they

provided advice to their children was 2.28. In addition, the parents also involved in Gen Knowledge reading ($M=4.40$). However, the parents involved in extra-curricular activities seemed to have a greater variance among parents with involvement in other activities.

11. Analysis of the Data

A chart was prepared based on the comparison of the performance in different school subjects as well as the level of study habits of two treatment groups under study at the end of the academic session. In order to study the change from beginning to the end of the academic session in the level of study habits of each of the two treatment groups, t-test was used. Four student variables were rated on a five point scale i.e. students' achievement in Mathematics, General Knowledge, Social studies and Extra Curricular activities. Highest involvement of parents was noticed in extra-curricular activities. The performance of students whose parents were involved in study was best on the study habits. Below is the diagrammatical representation of experiment:



12. Findings

On the basis of the analysis and interpretations of data the following conclusion were laid down.

- 1 The students who have got parental involvement in educational program achieve higher in the subjects of Mathematics and Social Studies in comparison to those who could not get parental involvement.
- 2 The students who have got parental involvement perform better in extra-curricular activities in comparison to those who do not get parental involvement.
- 3 The students who have got parental involvement in education achieve higher in aggregate in comparison to those who could not get parental involvement. It may be mentioned that the students of did not differ significantly from that of the students of control group with respect to their performance in Social Studies and in extra-curricular strategies at the end of the experimental session.
- 4 The students who have got parental involvement in

education exhibit better study habits and more favourable attitude towards study in comparison to those who do not get parental involvement.

- 5 In case of General Knowledge the group which gets parental involvement performs better than the group of students that gets no involvement of parents.
- 6 When the students of experimental group are taught with the parental involvement, they exhibit significant positive change from beginning to the end of the academic session with respect to their level of study habits and attitude.

13. Conclusion and Suggestions

This article is based on a research study conducted to get an insight into the relationship between parental involvement and students' achievements in the primary schools. From the research, it is evident that parental involvement has a strong positive impact of the academic achievement, his social behavior, learning motivation and study habits of students. The involvement of parents in the form of helping

the children in completing homework or in participating extra-curricular activities motivates the children positively. However, it may be noted that the nature and intensity of parental involvement in the education of primary school students differs under different conditions. There is positive correlation between parental involvement and students' achievements in social studies and in contrast to it, there is negative correlation between parental involvement and achievement of students in mathematics.

During last decade, it is noticed that it is a joint responsibility of both the teacher and parents to impart education to the students. This education partnership is necessary to give an effective education to the students. So mutual trust and equality among teachers and parents may prove to be an important element for this educational partnership. Differences in power, expertise and background may play a disturbing role in this partnership. So it is the professional responsibility of teachers and school to establish this educational partnership with the parents.

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