

Parent-Teacher Partnerships for Enhancing Pre-School Children's Education in Uasin Gishu District, Kenya

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Abstract

The Kenyan Government in her partnership policy intends to promote the relationship between parents, teachers and the community in enhancing children's education. This will be possible if: First, parent-teacher partnerships were enhanced in Epstein's six modes of involvement and partners' roles were defined; second, varieties of techniques were employed; and finally, factors that relate to parent-teacher partnerships were appreciated and catered for. A parent-teacher partnership in Kenya was found to be low. Local researches in Kenya reveal minimum levels of parent-teacher partnership in primary and secondary schools. Studies show that the role of the community and parents was low and seemed to be restricted to the provision of finances and facilities. The purpose of this study was to explore parent-teacher partnerships and strategies used to promote these relationships in pre-schools. The study was done in Uasin Gishu District. Epstein's Family, and Community Partnerships theory, Dunst, Johanson, Rounds, Trivet and Hamby's Family Enabling Empowerment Model and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Model of Parental Involvement, guided it. This study used an Ex Post Facto design. The independent variables were rural-urban context, sex, type of school sponsorship, level of education, role definition and strategies used. The dependent variable was parent-teacher partnerships. The target populations were parents and teachers of preschool, pre-school and primary school Headteachers and Ministry of Education Officials. The sample size consisted of 135 parents, 60 teachers, 10 Headteachers, 5 Ministry of Education Officials at the district level and 4 at the national level. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used for data collection. Data was prepared for statistical analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Means, percentages formed part of the descriptive statistics. ANOVA and t-test of independent samples were used and null hypotheses were tested at alpha value 0.05. Findings revealed that the level of parent-teacher partnerships was low. There was a significant difference between parents' level of education and parental level of involvement in parenting, learning at home, communications and decision-making modes. Parents in private and public schools were not found to be significantly different in their levels of involvement in all modes. Teachers in private and public schools differed significantly in their levels of involvement in decision-making and learning at home modes. Parents in private and public schools differed significantly in parenting mode of involvement. Parents and teachers parents' role definition was found to be significantly different in volunteering and decision-making. Headteachers and Ministry of Education officials' differed in parents' role definition in volunteering mode of involvement. Parents and teachers' role definition was significantly different in parenting and volunteering modes. Headteachers and Ministry of Education Officials' differed in parents and Teachers' role definitions in volunteering. The most frequent strategies used by the Headteachers and Ministry of Education Officials were sending letters, organizing workshops on transition, holding parents teachers meetings, holding closing term meetings and providing information about children's progress. The strategies used included sending information to the teachers through DICECE officers, organizing for sensitisation meetings, organizing academic days, open visits by parents, and using class representatives. The roles of key stakeholders included volunteering in children's activities, participation in school decision-making and school policies. It was concluded that parent-teacher partnership is weak. It was recommended that there is need to highlight the roles of stakeholders in the partnerships and appropriate strategies adopted to promote partnerships for harmonious working relationship.

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