

Chapter 19

School–Family–Community Partnerships and Their Influence on Student Achievement in Public Secondary Schools in Ilemela Municipality, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

In Tanzania, public secondary schools, family, and community partnerships are considered to be low and students' performance in academic and discipline continues to be poor. The objective of this study was to investigate whether school-family-community partnerships in public secondary schools influence students' achievement in Ilemela Municipal. The study employed mixed research methods where questionnaires and interview were used to collect data. The total sample size was 141. Descriptive statistics analysis and thematic analysis was used, and the findings revealed that partnerships have great influence on students' achievement. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training make policy reforms to encourage a national wide involvement of families and community in school development activities to ensure quality provision of education which will enhance best socio-economic returns.

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INTRODUCTION

Education continues to be the area of great concern in every country. It was believed for many years that education is the key for development of individuals and their nations. Skills and knowledge acquired through education shape individual mind-set to be able to solve various problems and discover new ways of living for the betterment of society. Nola and Irzik (2005) assert that education is a tool through which individuals acquire skills that empower one life and become productive member of the community. Also Bell-Gam (2003) as cited in the conference paper of Olumese, Okukpon & Clark (2009) that education is concerned with the transmission of knowledge and acquisition of skills that will capacitate the individual not only to survive in the society but also to contribute to the future development and transformation of the economy. This is the reason why education is referred as an investment by the families and community. Whereby, all parties must be involved in the whole process of education of their children for students 'achievement at different levels.

According to Jones and Hazuka (2012) over 20 years there has been an increased emphasis on the importance of partnering with families and communities to enhance students 'achievement in school. Most recent research have moved from the term "parental involvement" to "family involvement" to recognizes the wider family roles in supporting children education (Long, 2010). Starting from family to community level every level is obliged to ensure children get access to quality education. They are involved in various ways such as financing of education, UNESCO and OECD (2002) suggests typical sources of financing education which are; government or public which is always the largest contributor, income generated by schools, external grants, loans channelled via government accounts or direct o institutions), households (mainly parents), private organizations (NGOs), local administration and local communities. Literature insist on a better word than parental involvement which is School-Family-Community Partnerships so as not to leave school to parents but also to involve other members of the family and community in the development of the child (Epstein, 2001).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided by the theory of Overlapping spheres of influence developed by Joyce L. Epstein in 1987. The theory hold that the external structure of theoretical model of overlapping spheres of influence shows a pictorial of the major three spheres representing family, community and school which students learn and grow that may be pushed together or apart by different forces; time, characteristics, attitudes, interactions, philosophies and practices of a family and those of a school and community. The model locates students at the centre and recognizes they are active and main actors in their education in schools. School-Family-Community Partnerships may be designed to engage, guide and motivate students to perform better. The theory presents an assumption that if children feel cared for and encouraged to work hard by family, community and teachers, they are more likely to perform better in learning how to read, write, calculate and use their talents effectively. Thus, the theory emphasizes on the reciprocity of among teachers, student and family relationship (Sanders & Epstein, 2005; Deslandes, 2001; Epstein, 2011).

It was through time dedicated to help students, practices by school, family and teachers attitudes and community and teachers philosophy over education matters. When schools partner with families they pull two main overlapping spheres of influence which is very important to student success (Long, 2010).

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