

## Double the Effort: How Counselor-Parent Partnership Encourages Child Education

Amal Taha Fahoum<sup>1</sup>, Manar Najjar<sup>2</sup>

Sakhnin College for Teacher Education, Israel<sup>1,2</sup>

### Abstract

*The participation of parents in their children's educational environment is a dynamic process which has become very significant to the study of education and child development. Our research question looked at this process but within the context of Arab schools in Israel and focused on the perspective of the educational advisor. The purpose of this research was to describe and analyze the perspective of educational advisors towards parents' involvement and the effect it has on the educational environment of the child. The question at the center of this study is therefore what effect does parents' involvement in their children's schooling have on the educational environment in the Arab community? And more specifically, whether that effect is positive for the environment of the child. In conducting this research, we interviewed 12 Arab elementary teachers. Those interviews were later transcribed and analyzed and yielded a number of conclusions. First, teachers believe that parents' involvement is necessary to create a healthy educational environment. Second, a partnership between the educational advisor and parents positively affects the child's self-confidence, and his or her academic achievements. Third, parents' involvement has a positive effect to a certain extent; over-involvement would harm the child's educational environment. Fourth, in spite of the rise in parents' involvement, there is not a strong partnership between them and the educational advisor. As a result, most cases of involvement occur when the child is facing trouble. Overall, educational advisors in Arab schools think parents' involvement is necessary for creating a healthy educational environment for the child.*

**Keywords:** education, parental involvement, childhood development, counselors, Arab, Israel.

### 1. Introduction

The study discusses the involvement of parents in school from the perspective of educational counselors, and its impact on the creation of an optimal educational climate at school. This issue has not been studied before, especially in the Arab society. Parents nowadays, demand their right to influence their children's climate at school. During the process, the connection between parents and the school begins to take on a deep and wide dimension, which increased parental involvement. In addition, it is perceived as significant for the entire educational system's effect on their children.

The lightening of relations between parents and their children and the aspiration for appropriate achievements that will enable their children to develop professionally in the future, are changing the reality in which parents' involvement in the decision making process is necessary.

### 2. Literature Review

Parents' involvement has been gaining a momentum in recent years, in both Israel and the entire world. It is a central concept that serves as a tool for describing the nature and quality of the parents-counselor relationship, which includes a wide range of activities aimed at filling the gap between perceptions of home and school.

Parents' involvement is also important for improving the quality of the educational climate and for promoting students' academic success ([1] Noy, 1999). Parental involvement is influenced by a direct, personal, and high quality relationship between the children's families and school staff. Therefore, teachers' attitudes are a very important factor in encouraging parental involvement ([2] Caplan et., al, 2002).

#### 2.1. Levels of Parental Involvement

There are levels of parental involvement in existing literature. The first is a passive level where parents maintain a relationship based on mutual relations with school. The second is an active level where parents get involved in schools educational activities and extracurricular activities ([3] Friedman and Fisher, 2003). This involvement contributes to all parties in the educational process:

children, parents and staff, that work together in order to improve the student's academic achievements, their level of motivation to learn, their self-image, and to reduce disciplinary issues.

In addition, academic counselors and teachers can benefit from that involvement in a variety of areas, such as physical assistance, education, and creativity (Noy, 1999). This enables the principal and school staff to better understand both the nature of the community and students' needs in order to build appropriate curricula.

## **2.2. Parental Involvement in the Arab Society**

One of few studies to examine the parental involvement in Arab Society ([4] Abu Yunis, 2007) argues that parental involvement in Arab society is lower than that of parents among Jewish society, and this stems from several factors, but mainly that there is a difference in parents' perception of parental roles, and what is required to fulfil parenting requirements. Another factor is the perception of Arab society of the role of teachers as more knowledgeable and wise than others, which therefore impairs parents from getting involved (Abu Yunis, 2007).

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1. Purpose and Question of the Study**

The study's purpose is analyzing, describing and interpreting the perceptions and attitudes of educational counselors regarding the impact of parental involvement on school climate. Because of this purpose, the research question is "How, in the educational counselor's opinion, does parental involvement affect the educational climate in school?"

### **3.2. Research Methods**

This study uses the Qualitative methods of extensive interviews. The main research tool was semi-structured interviews of twelve Arab advisors. After collecting the data through categories, the interviews analyzed according to the stages proposed by ([5] Givton, 2001).

### **3.3. Field of study**

Public schools in Arab society in Northern Israel. This study attempts to examine the perceptions of school counselors regarding the impact of parental involvement on school climate.

### **3.4. Study Population**

The sample includes 12 Arab teachers from public schools in the north of Israel – their interviews were closely analyzed. From the counselors who participated, 11 of them were female and one male.

### **3.5. Reliability and Validity of the Research**

Interviews conducted with twelve counselors in their workplace in order to validate this study ([6] Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995), while maintaining basic moral principles, honesty, justice and respect for human beings.

## **4. Findings**

The counselors saw parental involvement as a legitimate and necessary matter. Parents' involvement is multidimensional; it consists of a variety of behaviors, attitudes and expectations. Parent's perception can be divided into two categories, the first is looks at the positive effect of parental involvement on the educational climate, and the second looks at the negative impact. Involvement has a direct impact on the educational climate which in turn depends on the nature and the willingness to cooperate effectively. When the involvement is in its right dosage and according to known and accepted goals on both sides, both the educational staff and parents' influences will be positive. When the involvement is excessive and over-mixed, the effect will become negative. The parents' socioeconomic level and education, and parenting styles are factors that dictate parental involvement in Arab society. Another component is regarding the factors related to school; the principle's position, the educational staff and school policy. Third, the factors related to the child, which are usually negative factors that force parents to become involved.

Most interviewees noticed that parents' involvement in schools is low to moderate, and often only mentioned in parent-teacher, academic achievements, and school activities. This involvement does not focus on substantive matters but is limited to problems, as well as achievements and



activities that parents invited to. The public schools' attitude in Arab society nowadays encourages parental involvement. This is usually achieved by the academic staff and it is often limited to social rather than pedagogical issues. Giving an important role to the educational counselor in developing a relationship of involvement and cooperation between parents and schools.

All interviewees noted that there is a significant role in developing parental involvement at school, by encouraging it through activities, workshops and seminars, which contributes to the educational climate and the wellbeing of students. According to the data, the counselor is responsible for maintaining relationships and connections with parents, who both care about the safety of students and the optimal educational climate. These all can happen by fostering parent-teacher meetings, consulting with parents, encouraging parental visits by nurturing the training system between the school and the parents.

## 5. Discussion

An educational climate is supposed to give the learner the belief that the school holds a sense of security, respect and caring. The literature describes the school's climate as the final product of the group's activities, in which students, teachers and principals work together to achieve a balance between the organizational, personal and systemic aspect of school. Such a balance includes shared values, social beliefs and social standards (Friedman and Fisher, 2003). When schools have an optimal educational climate, they are considered to be a place where students can develop and advance in situations of stress and cope with obstacles by acquiring values of tolerance, interpersonal communication, and the ability to learn and develop best ([7] Erhard, 2001).

It was found that parental involvement in school is minimal among Arab society. But despite the gloomy picture, counselors believe that in Arab society, schools are undergoing a process of change in relation to parental involvement and its importance to education. In Israel, and in the Arab society in particular, educators and community members are trying to develop participatory processes and frameworks of cooperation based on educational models that define areas of partnership among students and pave the way for them to ensure long-term success. In the counselors' point of view, in order to avoid negative effect of involvement, effective parental involvement is required, and also training to achieve the optimal interaction and positive attitude between teachers and parents.

It was found that counselors are aware of the contribution of effective parental involvement, because it contributes greatly to strengthening the status and strengthening self-image and confidence when the children's parents intervene and participate in the educational process with school ([8] Bar-Lev, 2007). For the students' sake, and in order to create a positive school climate (Bar-Lev, 2007). Counselors also believe that school principals have an important and even decisive role on the level of involvement. They spend a lot of their time establishing relationships with community leaders, parents and organizations within and outside school community. According to counselors' point of view, a change in school's perception needed in order to achieve success and improvement in the student's achievements. The principal's vision is an expression of the school's worldview, and the central purpose for which it exists. It is a "glue" that connects people to each other and to the organization. It creates feelings of mission and hope, and establishes daily activity on moral positions. ([9] Sergiovanni, 2002).

To conclude, in the Arab society, there is a phenomenon of parental involvement, but it is still at an insufficient level, which requires school to plan a strategy for effective involvement under the supervisor of an advisor. Counselor plays an important role in increasing the involvement in the positive direction, so he is required to give the management an action plan for parental involvement.

## References

- [1] Noy, B. "School, Home and their Relationships." *Fifty Years of Israeli Education* (1999): 815-834.
- [2] Caplan, Judith, Deborah Perkins-Gough, and Shanara McKinnon. *Essentials for Principals: Strengthening the Connection between School and Home*. National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2001.
- [3] Friedman, I., and I. Fisher. "Parents and School: Attitudes and Levels of Involvement." Jerusalem: Henrietta Szold Institute (2003).
- [4] Abu Yunis, H. – in Hebrew
- [5] התלמידים של ראיתם ומזוויות ההורים של מבטם מנוקדת הספר בבית הורים מעורבות תרומת, ח. יונס אבו (2007). לחינוך החוג: דרבי אוניברסיטת, "מוסמך" תואר לקבלת מחקר עבודת..
- [5] Givton, D. "Grounded Theory." *Genres and Traditions in Qualitative Research* (2001).
- [6] Hammersley, M., and Paul A. "Insider Accounts: Listening and Asking Questions." *Ethnography: Principles in Practice 2* (1995): 124-156.



- [7] Erhard, R. – in Hebrew ארהרד, ר. אקלים חינוכי מיטבי ערכה-מיטבי חינוכי אקלים ר. ארהרד (2001) ולפיתוח למחקר היחידה ייעוצי פסיכולוגי
- [8] Bar-Lev, A. – in Hebrew בר-לב, א. א. הספר בית ואקלים התלמידים הורי. (2007).  
[http://www.bet-yatziv.ac.il/data/elchanan/elhanan\\_parents2.html](http://www.bet-yatziv.ac.il/data/elchanan/elhanan_parents2.html)
- [9] Sergiovanni, T. J. – in Hebrew ובאני'רג, ת. ג. אבי-תל. ומעשיים עיוניים היבטים -ספר בית ניהול. ת. ג. ובאני'רג (2002). הפתוחה האוניברסיטה