

PARENTS INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN SCHOOL LIFE

Bahouty Saker,
doctorate student, ULM

Аннотация

Участие родителей в жизни детей в целом и в системе образования в частности, является процессом, набирающим всё большие обороты в последние годы, как в мире, так и в Израиле. Понятия "участие", "вмешательство" и "вовлечение" являются центральными понятиями, служащими инструментами для описания характера и качества отношений между родителями и школой.

Abstract

Parents' involvement in the life of their children in general and in the education system in particular is an accelerating process in recent years both in the world and in Israel. The concepts "participation", "intervention" and "involvement" are central concepts serving as tools for description of the character and quality of relations between the parents and the school.

In recent years it has been possible to find a large number of studies presenting parents' involvement at school life of the children as a growing social phenomenon [6].

The term "parents' involvement" is in fact an overall name, which is given to many varied actions which parents execute with their children- or with people connected to the education of their children, form and informal simultaneously (for example, teachers, kindergarten teachers, nannies, youth movement or class instructors etc.). The goal of these actions of the parents, is improvement of the educational achievements of the children, improvement of their optimal sensation etc [5].

The connection between the school and parents and parental involvement at school can be expressed in a wide variety of actions, like routine involvement, parents' meetings, report on the student's progress in studies, regularity in his attendance in studies etc. The interaction can be even more complex, like development of structured programs including a large number of subjects and fields of action. In an examination of the essence of the involvement of parents, it was found that the family has direct influence on the student, in the light of its economic and social situation. The goal of development of the contact between the school and the community (for the family) is chiefly in order to raise the achievements and the motivation to learn and also, to develop and educate good citizens [3].

Friedman [3] notes that in the professional literature vagueness exists as to the definition of the concept of involvement and the difficulty arises in placing the thin border between supportive involvement and destructive involvement. Friedman continues and claims that the studies supporting parents' involvement claim, that it increases the efficiency of the educational work, reinforces the school, improves educational achievements, causes raising the self- image, reduces discipline problems and raises the parents' satisfaction.

Parents' involvement in the education system is an accelerating social process in recent years both in the world and in Israel. In this paper, two fields of knowledge are combined: sociology and

education, how worldwide and local- Israeli social changes influence the education system in its communal context, that is the involvement of parents in the fields of the school systems. The concepts "participation", "intervention" and "involvement" are central concepts serving as tools for description of the character and quality of the relations between the parents and the school. These concepts present different levels of contact between the parents and the school, levels between whom the differences influence both the school climate and also the school culture. Creation of a positive climate at school influences students, teachers and parents, when the responsibility for creating this climate is placed on the three of them.

Parents' involvement in schools is a process penetrating into new fields. Among most of the specialists the recognition is growing, that wide and significant parents' involvement, helps to improve the quality of the school and influences for the better the achievements of its students [5, 6]. This recognition is growing also among parents. "The interaction between the parents and the educational establishment are characterized by vagueness and internal conflict: it seems to the parents that the school does not clarify to them what it expects from them whereas it is unclear to the school what the parents expect from it. This conflict constitutes a source of misunderstanding and difficulties, and in not a few cases also disputes and clashes. There is a gap between the parents' conception and the teachers' conception of the emphases and the fields of common action which are important to both sides. The parents feel that by means of their involvement they will help in improvement of the achievements of their children. The teachers, on the other hand, feel every so often threatened by the parents as in their opinion the parents do not notice the border between the permissible and the forbidden in the involvement in their work and often cross it blatantly" [3]. The trend prevailing today is to encourage parents' involvement in education and the policy of the Ministry of Education is to open the schools to more involvement of the parents. Accordingly it is important to investigate this issue. Moreover, finding the connection between the potential for involvement in practice will enable schools to discover the weak point in their relations with the parents and to improve the quality of the connection of the parents with the school [3].

If in the past it was possible to treat cooperation between teachers and parents as a desirable goal, as a fitting possibility, as "cream" of education, so today cooperation is necessary and essential. Without it the teachers and parents, each one alone and both of them together, will not be able to realize their educational responsibility towards the children". The assumption is that parents can have a valuable contribution and influence on school contents and processes and on the functioning of their children and their success at school, and teachers can have a contribution and influence on the capacity of parents to fulfill their job as parents. This mutual influence can be realized in a consistent and ongoing process of dialogue and joint problem solving of teachers and parents.

This paper tries to understand the principles guiding parents' relationship with the children, their involvement in schools, both in activities of their involvement and also in characteristics of their involvement, the common causes and reasons for parents' involvement. Consequently the goal of this study focused on the connection between the variables of parents' involvement, socioeconomic situation, and social educational achievements of the children. We want to estimate the phenomenon in Israel bringing the reference to both sectors-the Arab and also the Jewish one and to examine the differences between them on the domain of parents' involvement in children social and school life [4].

The rationale places us before a very profound viewpoint about the phenomenon of parents' involvement in the Arab sector, of course this phenomenon was investigated a little in layers of Arab society, one should see this study as a beginning for understanding of this phenomenon among parents, it is reasonable to suppose that the positions of the Arab parents do not match the positions of the Jewish parents from an abundance of reasons, both connected to social values and norms, also connected to parents' education and also connected to the socioeconomic situation [2].

The school is a complex organizational system. This system includes the school itself, its headmaster, the teachers, the auxiliary staff and the students, and the community belonging to it. Whilst the school is well planted in public consciousness- the community of the school is less

familiar, and in Israel its community gained superficial and profound attention only in the four last decades. The core component of the school community is the families of the children learning in that school, and to a certain extent also their close neighbors.

The interest of the education researchers, sociologists and psychologists, in the school community derives from several reasons. The community is a very important social array outside the school walls, from which the students draw values, norms, knowledge and cultural patterns of behavior. The family is known to have direct influence on the students, this, amongst others, by means of its economic and social situation supplying opportunities and motivation. The connection between the school and its community can be on various levels [2]. On the basic level this connection can focus on routine communication, whose interest is the progress of the student in his studies, regular attendance at school, successes and difficulties and regular meetings with the parents, defined as "parents' meetings". The connections between the school and its community can be more complex, take place on a number of planes and include a large number of subjects and fields of action.

The connection between the school and its community and the relations between them can be conceptualized in terms of social and consciousness distance [2]. According to this conceptualization, the connection between the school and parents and its community is intended to regulate the consciousness distance between the partners to the education of the child, when the distance is conditional on the viewpoint (mainly of the school) on the importance of the community and the parental home for the school goals.

Parents' involvement at school is one of the prominent and important measures linked to school effectiveness. Many researchers claimed that, the values of parents need to be taken into account whilst assessing the school climate, as the parents constitute a part of the community surrounding the school [2,3]. Besides, various officials in the school system do not perceive the concept uniformly. Teachers see parents' involvement in help to the school by sending the child on time to the school, presence in parents' meetings, help in preparation of homework and filling request of the teacher on various matters. Parents see involvement in reception of ongoing information on the progress of their children, in being accepted with openness and sympathy at school and in the class, and in reception of information how they will be able to help their children to advance. Already for a long period, the parents have sought also to influence in various fields at school [6].

The involvement of parents can be expressed on two main planes: the first plane is the activity done by the parents at home and linked directly to the learning processes like help in homework, direction of the student and his instruction, supply of learning means like books and computers etc. The second plane is the field of activity of the school, in which the parents' involvement can be expressed mainly in actions connected to shaping the school policy and in the informal activity of the school [6]. Parents' involvement is an overall name for many varied actions which parents execute with their children or with significant other people linked to their children, like cooperation with the school for the sake of raising educational achievements among their children [2].

The subject of parents' involvement in education is an individual case of "participations of citizens", an idea which started in the Greek city- state where the idea of participative democracy was born which does not suffice with representation of the public by means of their democratically elected envoys but seeks to transfer part of the decisions to the hands of the public. As a continuation of this idea, we can talk about the concept of "civil society" and distinguish two schools: the one, seeing in civil society a separate space of action from the state and the second school, identifying civil society as an independent space of action serving as a counterweight to the state and to its institutions. The basic assumption of these schools is that public participation in decision taking is a fitting and desirable process. It is fitting due to the need in the modern democracy to answer the desires of the public whilst operating processes of democratization and it is desirable- due to the growing practical need of decision takers to execute an agreed policy of wider parts of the public and thereby to ensure the acceptance and implementation of the solutions which will be chosen [4].

In recent decades there has been more reference to the positive influences of the involvement of parents at school in the academic achievements of their children and in many schools they make attempts to deepen it [1]. Studies found that the more involved parents are at school and in learning, so the better their children function and the higher academic achievements they reach [1]. It is possible to divide the parents' involvement at school into several models which change according to the school policy and the various cultures. The models are found in a continuum, between passivity and activeness from the point of view of involvement and they focus on the relations of forces prevailing so that usually the parents lack the power and the educationalists have the power [2].

The first model deals with parents as observers, and according to it there is a clear border between the school and parents and the roles are well known and defined. Decision taking and fixing policy are found solely in the hands of the teachers, and the parents function as passive observers of the school work from the side out of the belief that it does its work in the best way.

The second model deals with parents as a resource, and in it there is a greater extent of parents' involvement. The school sees in parents a material and spiritual resource which can benefit and advance the school. The parents' contribution can be at the class level or at the school level. At the edge of the continuum the communicative- dialogue model is found, based on a liberal educational viewpoint and dealing with parents as equal partners in educational action at school. In this model the accessibility to teachers is great and the parents are permitted to be involved and to influence, to express their opinion and to act for the sake of change [4]. It seems that in the future parents' involvement will grow, and already today it is clear that the parents accept more significant roles for themselves than the classic stereotypes which it is possible to identify in the model of the parents as observers, and they range on the continuum in the direction of the more active models [1].

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