

Parental Perception Of Early Childhood Educational Involvement: Research Evidence Of The Mfanstiman District Of The Central Region Of Ghana

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ABSTRACT

This study is a quantitative research hinged on the descriptive study paradigm where perspectives of selected parents of pupils at the early childhood level at the Anomabo Circuit “A” in the Mfantseman Municipality of the Central Region of Ghana were sought on how parental involvement is shaped in their localities, the extent of their involvement in their children education, and challenges they confront in this direction. Using descriptive and inferential statistics such as means and standard deviations, findings from the study among others revealed that parents perceived the school as a place for teachers to be in charge; though the results that emanated from the study points to parent participants of this study being involved in their children’s education. On the issue of challenges that confronts parents in the involvement of their children’s education at the early childhood level, also an objective that informed the study, the results among others include; lack of financial resources, and time constraints and busy schedules. Again, as part of recommendations in the advancement of parental involvement at the early childhood level in Ghana, the study among others calls for robust education and prescription of how parents can and should be involved in their children education.

Key words: Early Childhood Education, Parental Involvement, Mfantseman Municipality, Ghana.

INTRODUCTION

The place and role of parental involvement in education especially at the early childhood level definitely has not be in doubt. The common understanding is that parental involvement and strong schools are always together so they are complemented. Indeed, a number of studies such as that by Hester (2009) point to a strong relationship between parental involvement and student achievement. Again, some studies (see; Kernan, 2012; Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003) do place a lot of emphasis on the need for parental involvement especially at the early stages of the child’s development.

Parental involvement as a concept has received a number of varied definitions and descriptions. For example, according to Jesse (1996, p.2), “parental involvement is reading to preschool children. It is getting children ready for school every morning. It is volunteering at the school. It is serving on collaborative decision-making committees, and it is lobbying legislatures to advocate for children”. Fan (2011, p.29) also describe parental involvement as; “..... parental aspirations for their children’s academic achievement, parents’ communication with their children about education and school matters, parents’ participation in school activities, parent’s communication with teachers about their children, and parental supervision at home”. Although defining parental involvement has been somewhat intuitive in nature, Epstein (1995) developed a theoretical framework using a typology to identify six levels of how parents can actively participate in their children’s education, and these six levels can be analysed and measured. The six levels of parent involvement as prescribed by Epstein (1995) include; a) helping parents understand child development and have confidence in their parenting, b) communication between parent and school, c) parent involvement in school volunteer opportunities, d) parent involvement in home-based learning, e) parent involvement in decision making regarding school, and f) involvement in school-community collaborations.

Stemming from the above descriptions relative to what constitute parental involvement in education, it is clear that there is the lack of consensus on what should be described as accepted description of what constitutes parental involvement, hence a determination of how parents of the study area present parental involvement as pertains to their socio-cultural environment, that is the Mfantseman Municipality of the Central region of Ghana is worth pursuing. This inquiry it must be emphasized is extremely important and deserving because of the limited and/or lack of research on the question of parental involvement especially at the early childhood educational level in a country such as Ghana, where undoubtedly early childhood education can best be described as being in its embryonic stage.

Early Childhood Education is defined by The United States National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2005) as the age before eight. It is the period from birth to 8 years (UNESCO, 2000). In most countries such as Ghana, it is the foundation stage where children develop their potentialities and capabilities for the future. Definitions of early childhood care and education differ around the world. The more industrialized nations consider early childhood to be the period from birth through age eight (Essa, 1999; Wortham, 2000), while developing nations focus on birth through age six (Eville-Lo & Mbugua, 2001; UNESCO, 2000). Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a term that refers to educational programs and strategies geared towards children from birth to the age of eight (UNESCO, 2000). It is the process or approach deliberately intended to effect developmental changes (physical, cognitive, social and emotional) for those below the age of 8 years and the foundation stage referred to earlier (Ampadu & Ofosu, 2007).

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is the type of formal education meant for those who are within the age group of 0-8 years where formal teaching and caring of young children is undertaken by people other than their families or in settings outside their homes (Bredekamp, 1987). Bredekamp continues by stating that early childhood education is a period when child-centred interactive methods are used to help a child develop. The author argues that it is a time in the lives of children deemed as remarkable for total development because these years lay the foundation for subsequent learning. Research has shown that the development of intelligence, affective and social relation

occurs in the early years of a person's life (Evans & Gruba, 2000). Abilities to think, speak, learn and reason are all rooted in the first three years of life (NAEYC, 2005). Consequently, the foundation for the development of personal values and social behaviour has been found to be dependent on the care given to children in their early years (Rutter, Giller & Hagell, 1998), and that the earlier a child's parent become involved in his/her education, and that involvement being sustained, the bigger the payoff (Eldridge, 2001). It is on this note that this study attempts to elicit the perspectives of parents from the study area; Anomabo Circuit "A" of the Mfantiman Municipality of Ghana, on how in their perspectives parental involvement is shaped in their area, the extent of their involvement, and challenges that they confront in such activities.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Once early childhood education became part and parcel of mainstream Ghanaian formal educational enterprise, then it became necessary for the need for effective and efficient early childhood educational practices. Successful early childhood education all over the world has survived on collaboration and corporation among other factors between the school, and home with parents being the lead players at home. A number of studies (see; Kernan, 2012.; Coleman, 2012) point to the benefits that are accrued in the child's educational development when there is the needed collaboration and engagement between the school and parents. This notwithstanding, there is also evidence of parents lacking knowledge of what and how to be involved in their children's education (Chavkin, 1989; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Moore, 1991). Informed by this challenge, it becomes imperative and necessary to undertake a study of this kind; parental perception of early childhood educational involvement to determine the extent to which parents appreciate and understand the what and how they can be involved in their children's education in an environment (Ghana) where early childhood education can conveniently be described as gaining roots.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature for this study is reviewed in three areas; what constitutes parental involvement, benefits associated with parental involvement, and challenges accompanying such enterprise.

Parental Involvement Defined

The term parental involvement in children's education is used very often in educational discussions and is conceptualized based on the context of these discussions. Coleman (2012), defines parental involvement as, "parent engagement in learning activities, mostly although not exclusively in the home. Involvement is not limited to actual learning tasks. It includes the notion of the 'curriculum of the home' - the patterns of habit formation and attitude development that prepare a child for academic learning through the years of schooling" (Coleman, 2012, p. 2).

For Hill (2009), parental involvement manifests in "the participation of parents in regular, two-way and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities" (p.4). The author further adds that parental involvement in education involves "parents' interactions with schools and with their children to promote academic success", (Hill, 2009, p.6).

Also, Harris, Andrew-Power and Goodall (2009) postulates, that the terms parental 'engagement' and 'involvement' although often used interchangeably may mean different things. The authors state that "parents can be 'involved' in school activities without being 'engaged' in their children's learning". For them, "parental involvement means parents coming into the school either informally

(e.g. to bring children to school or to provide some information for the school) or formally (e.g. for parents evening meetings or adult learning classes) whereas parental engagement occurs where parents are actively involved in supporting learning in the home through extension or support activities, homework or online activities” (p. 12).

Larocque, Kleiman, and Darling (2011) describe parental involvement as family involvement, defining it as “parents’ or caregivers’ investment in the education of their children” (p. 116). Another way of defining this term would be “the ways that parents support their children’s educational experiences and academic achievement” (Suizzo, Mooney, & Moss, 2012, p. 534). Parents involvement in their children’s education according to Suizzo, Mooney and Moss can be embodied in a number of ways and on multiple levels. For them, some parents can be highly involved at the school level, i.e. volunteering in the classroom or school, championing field trips or events, and communicating regularly with the teacher. Others may be involved more at the home level rather than the school level by helping with homework or providing time set aside each day for their child to do their homework, but not volunteering or communicating frequently with the school and its staff.

Myeko (2000), refers to parental involvement as a process through which parents meaningfully participate in the various educational activities of their children. Likewise, Nye, Stanley, and Kemple (2006:1) define parental involvement as “the effective engagement with their child outside of the school in an activity which centres on enhancing academic performance”. The authors place emphasis on activities out of the school, such as trips to the zoo where the child is learning something, or when parents play games with their children. For Dekker and Lemmer (1993:153), parental involvement is an all-embracing term that is used to describe a wide variety of activities that range from occasional attendance at school functions to intensive effort to help parents become better teachers of their children. Parental involvement activities have also been represented as existing along a single continuum that extends from home-based activities to school-based activities, and finally to home-school collaboration (Shores, 1998, p.79). At one end of the continuum are at-home activities, such as reviewing report cards, ensuring school attendance, and monitoring homework. Shores’ (1998) use the phrase “limited capacity for involvement” (p.13), which implies some parents do not have the ability, resources or time for more involvement, and that these activities are not as important for children’s success. In the middle are traditional at-school activities, such as attending parent-teacher conferences and volunteering. At the other end are more collaborative at-school activities, such as planning classroom activities with teachers and participating in policy-making activities. These activities give parents more power and influence over how the school is run.

Informed by the above definitions it can be concluded that parental involvement in summary is represented as the interrelationship between parents, teachers, learners and the community at large, in a manner that encourages parents to support and participate more actively in school activities, including curriculum support, extra-curricular activities, helping children with homework, and creating a positive home school environment. Parents involvement in their children’s education undoubtedly is a shared responsibility, in which the school and other community agencies and organizations should demonstrate commitment and support in getting parents involved in what goes on in both inside and outside the school relative to the educational development of their children.

Benefits of Parental Involvement

Research on the benefits associated with parental involvement in children's education spans from beneficiaries' academic achievement, promotion and enhancement of children's level of confidence as well as dedication to school work, and effective and positive relationship between the school and home. These conclusions are summed in the observation of Levine (2002), where the author argues that parental involvement at home and at school should be encouraged because of the following associated benefits; sending positive message to children about the importance of their education, parent(s) being informed of their child's performance, the school being able to accomplish more, children's self-esteem being enhanced, parent/child relationships being improved, academic achievement of learners being improved, parents developing positive attitudes towards schools, and children being successful in school both academically and behaviourally.

Some studies on the benefits accompanying parental involvement have suggested that a parent's involvement in school raises student achievement (Brandt, 1989; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Tingley 2006; Anderson & Minke, 2007). Hence, teachers are called to be mindful of the valuable resource that parents provide within the spectrum of students' achievement gains (Lazar, et al., 1999). Indeed, a 1987 United States of America national survey on parental involvement in schools also found that the educational status of a child's mother to be positively related to the level of parental involvement (Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Successful students are nearly almost always supported by their families, while conversely students who are less successful struggle without parental support (Epstein & Jansorn, 2004).

Benefits associated with parental involvement as argued in some studies go beyond increasing student achievement. Parent involvement in a child's school has been shown to improve student attendance, behaviour, homework completion, and grades. This observation is shared by Epstein and Jansorn (2004), when the authors argue that "when schools have well-developed partnership programs, families become involved and students become more positive about school and learning" (p. 23). Again, it is also argued that parent participation in school models the importance of school to their children (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). Children whose parents are involved in school may infer that their parents value school. These children may believe their parents have the expectation that they are expected to be successful in school (Gutman & McLoyd, 2000). Gutman and McLoyd found that students often perceive their parents' school involvement as evidence of continued parental expectation of their successful school performance and of parental acceptance of some responsibility for that performance. Parent-initiated contact with the school may also reinforce the students' identification with the teachers and their acceptance of the student role (p. 18).

Additional benefits from positive parent involvement in children's education include higher grades, test scores and graduation rates, better school attendance, increased motivation, improved self-esteem, lower rates of suspension, decreased student use of drugs and alcohol, fewer instances of violent behaviour, and greater enrolment rates in post-secondary education (Ingram, Hedges & Bone, 2007). Parent participation has also been linked to student efficacy for learning (the student's belief he or she can do the work), self-regulatory knowledge (the student's belief he or she knows how to do the work), and beliefs about the importance of education (the student's desire to do the work) (Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2005).

The benefits associated with parental involvement in learner's education can be summed up in the observation of Cordry and Wilson (2004), where the authors argue that parental involvement is important because the parent is deemed as a child's first teacher and the only teacher that will stay constant through the child's lifetime. Therefore, the parent will know a lot more about his/her child's interests, dislikes, and needs than a teacher, and can help a teacher better understand his/her child in order to provide the best curriculum possible. Hence, the authors argue for parent(s) and teacher(s) constant communication.

Challenges of Parental Involvement

Literature reviewed for this study on the subject of challenges/barriers relative to parental involvement in children's education provide a number of them (see for example; Flood, Lapp, Tinajero & Nagel, 1995; Tinkler, 2002). The barriers include but not limited to items such as, the school environment, work schedules, and differing home and school cultures. Parent involvement barriers are divided into five categories according to Tinkler (2002), which are; "school environment, culture and language, educational level of parents, psychological issues, and logistical issues" (p. 8). School environment barriers according to the author refers to barriers that parents confront as a result of how the school operates. Culture and language barriers are as a result of the school and family having different cultures and/or languages. Educational level of parents can also influence their amount of parent involvement. Psychological issues refer to personal mental/health problems. Logistical issues are issues that usually relate to money, time, and circumstances. The author argues that it is important to know the barriers to parent involvement so that when a teacher or school is trying to get parents involved, he/she can account for the barriers, and try to set up such systems for parent involvement that will have the fewest barriers conflicting. Instead of designing meetings around what educators assume are the needs of their school population it would be best to design programs around the actual needs of the families (Fredericks & Rasinski, 1990). For example, Frederick and Rasinski are of the view that if a school system knows that its population has trouble getting childcare, speak a different language than most of the school staff, is not able to attend meetings during the day, then the school will have to provide evening meetings with parents with an interpreter.

The literature reviewed again provides multiple reasons why parents may have difficulty in being involved in their children's education. Such barriers may include parents' lack of knowledge about how to help with schoolwork or support learning at home, parents' negative attitudes about school, societally pervasive barriers such as lack of time and money, single parenthood, lack of teacher training in parent involvement, teachers' negative attitudes and inaccurate assumptions about parents (Ingram, Hedges, & Bone, 2007). Some research has shown that family demographics also play a big role in determining if parents will be involved in their child's schooling (Crozier, 1999; Kohl, Magreth, Rasinski, 2000). "Demographic characteristics, such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and cultural background, and other parental characteristics are systemically associated with parental school involvement" (Hill & Taylor, 2004, p. 162).

Both parents and teachers face challenges when they do not share the same culture. Cultural differences can create barriers to parent-teacher relationships (Witmer, 2007). Indeed, according to Colombo (2006), "Parent/teacher relationships are formed with relative ease when groups share a common culture, language and background. Relationships that must bridge cultures and languages, however, require more effort to create and sustain" (p. 315). To gain full parental

support, schools need to respect the culture of all families (Hoover-Dempsey, et al. 2001). Again, on the question of cultural differences being an obstacle to effective parental involvement, Hill and Taylor (2004) make the following observation:

“Often, teachers who are different culturally from their students are less likely to know the students and parents than are teachers who come from similar cultural backgrounds; culturally different teachers are also more likely to believe that students and parents are disinterested or uninvolved in schooling” (p. 162).

In a study conducted by Colombo (2006), the author indicates that culturally and linguistically diverse parents will always want to be involved in their children’s education and participate when invited by a teacher. It is therefore the school’s responsibility to reach out to students and parents of all cultures and make them feel welcomed in the school. This includes providing interpreters and inclusion in school planning and goal setting. Parents and teachers who speak different languages can be one of most challenging barriers to overcome (Sheldon, 2003). In this regard, Sheldon found that:

“Schools may be faced with the challenge of making sure that parents who cannot read or understand English have access to the information in languages or forms they can understand. Also, schools may be faced with the challenge of providing ways for all parents to contact and communicate with teachers and administrators so that information about students flows in two directions – from school to home and from home to school (p. 197)”.

Some studies have also shown poverty as a significant barrier to parents being involved in their child’s education (Hill & Taylor, 2004; Payne, 2008). Parents of higher socio-economic status are more likely to be involved with their child’s school and do advocate for their children than parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Stemming from the above, the authors are of the position that:

“Impoverished families are less likely to be involved in schooling than wealthier families, and schools in impoverished communities are less likely to promote school involvement than schools in wealthier communities. Consequently, the children who would benefit most from involvement are those who are least likely to receive it unless a special effort is made (p. 163)”.

Barriers to parents of lower socio-economic status being involved in their child’s education include inflexible work schedules, lack of resources, transportation issues, and stress. These parents typically have less education than their more affluent counterparts. This often causes them to feel negatively towards the school, or feel incapable of questioning the school (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Schools often make assumptions that parents cannot or do not wish to access school-based resources (Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2001). Less affluent parents may have different expectations of teachers and schools than their more affluent counterparts (Hoover-Dempsey, et. al. 2001). Parents from low socio-economic background tend to believe their role in their child’s education is to get their child ready for school. They believe their responsibility is to physically get their children to school and make sure they behave appropriately. These parents accept school decisions readily. “Working-class parents tend to be more deferential towards the professionalism of teachers, and less likely to intervene in the schooling process, on their children’s behalf” (Crozier, 1999, p. 316). Upper middle-class parents, on the other hand, see themselves as having a more significant role in

their child's education. They believe it is necessary to intervene on their child's behalf when necessary. More affluent parents exert more control over their child's education than parents from lower socio-economic status (Hoover-Dempsey, et. al. 2001).

Parents examined in a three-year study in Britain by Crozier (1999) were found to be supportive of their child's secondary school education. Yet less affluent parents were less apt to get involved in school decisions. In the above study, parents of all children reported they would like more information about what their child was doing in school, as well as how they could help their child specifically with homework. More affluent parents, however, were more capable of accessing this information, and also intervening on their child's behalf. Less affluent parents, on the other hand, assessed the parent-teacher relationship as a "division of labour". These parents felt they needed to be supportive of the school, but should not interfere with the school's decisions. "There was amongst these parents an overwhelming sense of trust placed in the professionals to fulfil their role" (p. 319). Other reasons listed for not intervening in their children's education included a lack of time, a need to care for other children, work commitments, worry of ramifications against their children if they did express concerns, and not wanting to put too much pressure on the teacher. Parents involved in the study reported concerns such as assignments not being graded, their child's potential not being fulfilled, and their child's lack of motivation. Yet less affluent parents were still reluctant to go to school to question teachers. In the just described study, Crozier (1999) presents the foregoing conclusion:

"(Parents) were very reliant upon the teachers' professional judgment to inform them of any problems. Then, if there were any problems, they waited to be told how they might help and would do so. Such a view was not blind to reality. Parents are aware that teachers are not always, or even frequently successful in their endeavours, but they take the view that if the teachers can't do it, then they themselves would stand no chance of doing it" (p. 321).

While the literature just reviewed on the subject of challenges and barriers associated with parental involvement in children's education point mostly to socio-economic status, language barrier, as well as education, these observations cannot be deemed as conclusive, since the literature again is split when it comes to this subject. This assertion is evidenced in the debate where several studies have found a correlation between socio-economic status and parent involvement (Hill & Taylor, 2004; Payne, 2008), with others questioning such a premise (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2001; Anderson & Minke, 2007; Green, et al., 2007). For example, Anderson and Minke (2007) are of the opinion that, "Parents' resources did not influence their involvement in decision making; parents' self-reported level of resources was unrelated to all types of involvement" (p.319). Parental involvement is more of a function of parental beliefs and school outreach than of family demographics (Sheldon, 2003). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) found that; "family status variables do not explain fully parents' decisions to become involved in their children's education, nor do such variables explain the linkages between parents' involvement and child and adolescent school outcomes. Status does not determine parents' thinking, actions, or influence related to their involvement in children's schooling" (p. 7).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive survey design using the quantitative inquiry approach to determine parental involvement in early childhood education using the Anomabo Circuit "A" at the

Mfantiman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana as the study area. Using the quantitative approach, it helped to quantify data that was collected on the perspectives of parents concerning their involvement in their children's education and what that meant, barriers to their involvement, and proposals relative to the ways parental involvement in early childhood education can be encouraged.

The targeted population for the study consisted of parents of Primary Two (2) classes of public (Government) schools at the Anomabo Circuit "A" in the Mfantiman Municipality in the Central Region. Also, the study focused on pupils in Primary Two only because it was assumed that parents with wards in Primary Two would have experience in child educational involvement based on their history (that is being involved in children education from Kindergarten to Primary One). This experience should provide them a fair idea of the significance of their involvement in their children's education and what it takes to accomplish such task. Moreover, Primary Two is part of Early Childhood Education as practiced in Ghana (0-8years) and therefore was deemed suitable for the study.

Data from the Central Regional Directorate of the Ghana Education Service showed that as of 2020, there were 12 public Primary Two schools in the municipality with 282 pupils and 282 parents at the Anomabo Circuit "A" at the Mfantiman Municipality. It is worthy of mention that in all the schools, no parent had two or more children in Primary Two. The study population constituted parents who had their children in Primary Two of the various schools in the Anomabo Circuit 'A'.

With respect to sampling and sampling procedure, the purposeful sampling approach was used where all 282 parents were sampled through the distribution of self-administered questionnaires with accompanying letters via pupils stating the objectives of the study. In all, 186 questionnaires were returned filled.

Instrument for data collection as indicated was a self-administered questionnaire divided into four sections consisting of; demographic information of participants, with the last three sections being questions on information relative to how parental involvement is shaped, how it is practiced, and challenges associated with such practices. With regards to data analysis, data obtained was analysed using mean of means, and mean of standard deviation based on the responses recorded for each of the items on the questionnaire. Computation of obtained data was done using the Statistical Package for Service Solutions version 21 (SPSS), with coding of items done in line with the Likert scale that guided the questionnaire (1=Disagree; 2=Uncertain; and 3=Agree).

Research Questions

Guided by the objectives that shaped this study, and the accompanying problem that the study sought to address, as well as the literature reviewed for the topic, the following research questions are addressed:

1. How do parents perceive their involvement in their children's education at the Anomabo Circuit 'A' of the Mfantiman Municipality?
2. To what extent are parents in the study area involved in their children's education at the early childhood level?
3. What challenges impede parents' involvement in the education of their children at the Anomabo Circuit 'A' of the Mfantiman Municipality?

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This study sought to determine parental perception of how parental involvement is shaped, and the extent to which this is realised, as well as accompanying challenges to such a programme. In this direction, 186 parents of Primary Two (2) pupils of an educational circuit in Ghana volunteered to participate in the study. Below are the demographic details of participants as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demography of Parents (n=186)

Variable	Subscale	No.	%
Gender	Male	59	31.7
	Female	127	68.3
Marital Status	Married	131	70.4
	Single	55	29.6
Age	20-29 years	58	31.2
	30-39 years	90	48.3
	40-49 years	26	14.0
	50+ years	12	6.5
Educational Level	No Formal Education	24	12.9
	JHS	50	26.9
	SHS	42	22.6
	Tertiary	70	37.6
Employment Status	Employed	28	15.1
	Unemployed	83	44.6
	Self-employed	75	40.3

Source: Field Data, 2020

Clearly majority of participants of the study as presented in Table 1 above were female (n=127), majority married; 70.4%, and a higher number falling between the age bracket of 30-39years (n=48.3). It is also evident in the demographic details provided that most of participants have some form of formal education with 37.6% having tertiary education.

Addressing Research question 1, participants responded to five questions aimed at eliciting their perspectives on the role and place of the school vis-à-vis their involvement in their children education. Responses are provided in Table 2 below:

Table 2: School - Parent Relationship (n=186)

Statements	M	SD
I think the school is a place for teachers to be in charge.	2.85	.73
I think that the school needs to do more to involve parents in their children's school activities.	2.80	.55
I am satisfied with how the school involves me in matters pertaining to my child in the school.	2.15	.69
I am uneducated so I am unable to express myself so I do not even bother to get myself involved in school matters.	1.39	.75
Even when advice is given, the school doesn't take them.	1.75	.76

Source: Field Data, 2020.

Scale:1=Disagree,2=Uncertain,3= Agree., Mean of Means = 2.04, Mean of Standard Deviation = .69.

A look at Table 2 points to the fact that relative to the five questions that informed Research question 1, clearly the mean of means on the question of the school being a place for teachers can be described as Agree (M=2.85), and the call for the school to do more to involve parents (M=2.80). Again, with a mean standard deviation of 0.69, the results clearly point to the fact that though there were disagreements among participants on this important issue such differences could not be very wide. What is more revealing regarding Research question 1, is the Uncertainty of responses (M=2.15) on the extent to which parents are involved in the education of their children. Indeed, this response can be described as unanimous since the standard deviation for that question is exactly the same as the mean standard deviation that guided the question.

In all, it can be concluded from the responses of participants relative to the nature of parental involvement as being shaped as one of the school being in charge with parents wanting to support, but even then, when it comes to the nature of support required of parents, in line with some of the literature postulate, there is lack of certainty as evidenced in this study as to how this should be fashioned.

Research question 2 sought to determine the extent to which parents have been involved in their children education. In this direction, again informed by the literature reviewed, parents responded to a number of questions (8 questions). Results are provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Parental Involvement Activities (n=186)

Statements	M	SD
I attend PTA meetings.	2.85	.73
I review my child's school work.	2.80	.77
I volunteer in my child's classroom/school activities.	1.27	.84
I visit my child regularly in school to find out from teachers how he/she is coping.	2.89	.90
I take part in decision making in the school.	2.78	.86
I talk to my child's teacher about his/her difficulties at school.	2.81	.72
Provision of learning support materials.	2.87	.54

Source: Field Data, 2018

Scale: 1=Disagree, 2=Uncertain, 3=Agree., Mean of Means = 2.61, Mean of Standard Deviation = .77

Results as presented in Table 3 indicate that, though responses of parents' relative to Research question 1 was that the school had the responsibility or was charged with children's education, the means of means as presented in Table 3 (2.61) clearly shows that parents agreed to most of the questions posed to this research question. Again, the mean of standard deviation of .77 indicated that respondents differed significantly regarding their agreement of the whole phenomenon. For example, on the question of attendance of Parent Teacher's Association (PTA) meetings, the results show that most parents agreed to the question, thus with a mean score of 2.85 and a standard deviation of .73, it could be concluded that the mean falls within the scale of 3 (Agree).

Again, when parents were asked whether they review their children's school work, they agreed to the statement. Here, a mean of 2.80 and a standard deviation of .77 were obtained for this item showing that respondents agreed to the statement. Also, a look at results in Table 3, points to the

fact that parents disagreed on the question of whether they volunteered in their children's classroom/school activities. This is evidenced by the mean score of 1.27 and a standard deviation of .84 for this item. The mean is approximately 1, showing that the respondents disagreed. Regarding the statement "I visit my child regularly in school to find out from teachers how he/she is coping", majority of parents agreed to the statement. This can be seen from the mean score of 2.89 and a standard deviation of .90 that were realized. This result falls within the findings of Knopf and Swick (2007) where the authors opine that many parents are ready to move beyond normal ideas of parental involvement to a higher level that fosters a collaborative relationship between the school and home.

Again, addressing Research question 2, the extent to which participants participated in decision making of schools was also sought. The findings show that there was a mean score of 2.78 and a standard deviation of .86 recorded for the item "I take part in decision making in the school". This means, majority of parents agreed to this statement. This finding conforms with a study by Baker and Soden (1998), where the authors arrived at the conclusion that parents wanted to be more involved in decision making regarding curriculum, procedures, and school policies.

On the question of whether parents talked to their children's teacher about their child's/children's difficulties at school, also part of Research question 2, majority of respondents agreed to the statement. This is evidenced in the mean score of 2.81 realized. This finding deviates from a study by Mann (2006) where the author is of the opinion that parents do indeed have different understandings of involvement, suggesting a better dialogue needs to exist between school and home if parents and teachers are to be on the same page. The study went on to state that, parents' ideas of parental involvement often stemmed from their previous schooling experiences, citing their own parents' lack of involvement due to fear of getting in the way of what the teacher was trying to accomplish.

Guided by the results that emanated from responses to the second research question of this study, it is convenient to conclude that to a large extent, parents were involved in the education of their children, this is because parents attended PTA meetings, reviewed their children's school work, and visited their child/children regularly in school to find out from teachers how they were coping. Also, parents took part in decision making in the school, and talked to their children's teacher about the difficulties that their children faced in school. However, it is also revealing that parents did not volunteer in their child/children's classroom or school activities. Perhaps, this may be as a result of the fact that, they perceived teachers to be in charge of the school as evidenced in their responses in Table 2.

On the issue of challenges and/or barriers that hinders parental involvement in the education of their children; that is Research question 3 of this study, the results points to two major variables; financial constraints, and busy schedules. These findings can be found in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Challenges/Barriers to Parental Involvement in Children's Education (n=186)

Statements	M	SD
Lack of financial resources.	2.86	.85
Not enough information from teachers.	2.14	.75
Feel unwelcome in classroom at times.	1.27	.73
Time restraint/busy schedules.	2.83	.80
Single parent.	1.05	.89
Language barriers.	1.19	.84
Low educational background.	1.20	.92

Source: Field Data, 2020

Scale:1=Disagree, 2=Uncertain, 3= Agree., Mean of Means = 1.79, Mean of Standard Deviation = .83

On the question of barriers to parental involvement in children's education results obtained points to a mean of means of 1.79 and a mean of standard deviation of .83. Clearly, these results are indicative of the fact that most parents' responses relative to the questions posed can be described as Uncertain.

When respondents were asked whether lack of financial resources was a challenge to them, majority of parents agreed to the statement with a mean score of 2.86. This finding is in tune with the observation of Tinkler (2002), where the author argues that logistical issues that usually relate to money, time, and circumstances were some of the challenges affecting parental involvement in their children's education.

Again, on the question of whether teachers did provide parents with enough information being a challenge, a mean score of 2.14 and a standard deviation of .75 were obtained for the item. In this regard, it meant a greater majority of parents were uncertain as to whether teachers provided them with enough information concerning school matters. Also, results found in Table 4 shows that, a significant majority of parents disagreed to the statement; "I feel unwelcome in the classroom at times" (mean score: 1.27, standard deviation: .73). As to whether parents were faced with time constraint/busy schedules, a mean score of 2.83 and a standard deviation of .80 were realised. By implication majority of parents agreed that time constraint was a challenge they faced in the education of their children. In addition, majority of respondents disagreed to the statement of "Single Parent" being a barrier to parental involvement. With this, a mean score of 1.05 and a standard deviation of .89 was realized. This finding contradicts that of Ingram, Hedges, and Bone (2007) where the authors are of the opinion that single parenthood, lack of teacher training in parent involvement, teachers' negative attitudes and inaccurate assumptions about parents were barriers to parental involvement in the education of their children.

Based on the results provided on the question of challenges associated with parental involvement in early childhood educational development at Anomabo Circuit 'A' it can be conveniently concluded that among all the different challenges that have being articulated in the different literature on the topic of parental involvement in education, what stands out in the study area as evidenced in the responses provided by participants are; lack of financial resources, and time constraints/busy schedules .

CONCLUSION

The objective of this study primarily was threefold; first to determine how early childhood parents in a municipality in the Central region of Ghana perceived how parental involvement in early childhood education is shaped? Secondly, to determine the extent to which parents are involved in the educational development of their children. And lastly, to determine in the estimation of parents what challenges they are faced relative to their involvement in the education of their children.

Clearly, the findings and results of this study points to the fact that participants of this study generally view teachers as the front liners tasked with the responsibility of educating their children. This view definitely is not at variance with what some of the literature on parental involvement have postulated on this subject (see; Hill & Taylor, 2004., Crozier, 1999). Again, it is also evident in the findings of this study that parents in this study lack a clear understanding and appreciation of what is expected of them when it comes to being involved in their children education. This finding again affirms the position of Ingram, Hedges, and Bone (2007) on this subject. Furthermore, the results of this study regarding involvement of parents in their children's education within the context of activities that they are engaged in can be deemed as encouraging. The irony however, is the disconnection between parents' position of the school being a place of control by teachers or teachers being in charge, and they being involved. This disconnection warrants future research. In addition, it is also interesting that with the myriad of factors that mitigates against parental involvement as presented in a number of literature on this subject, what stood out in this study were lack of financial resources and busy time constraints. This finding can be attributed to the relative level of education of participants and employment levels. This notwithstanding, future inquiry into this subject is worthy of pursuing.

Based on the foregoing conclusions drawn out of the findings of this study, it is the recommendation of this study, that schools and players within the educational enterprise of children especially at the early childhood educational level need to make it a duty to educate and at best make available to parents what and how they can be involved in the education of their children. Clearly, the findings of this study supported by different studies on this subject point to the fact that most parents are willing and wanting to be involved in their children education, but lack the knowledge on the how to go about such activity.

Again, regarding busy schedules of parents also a challenge identified by participants of this study, though reasons assigned to such a phenomenon was not provided in this study, it is however the recommendation of this study that parents be made to understand and appreciate the importance and relevance of early childhood education to the successful educational development of the child. Such an initiative is very necessary because undoubtedly, early childhood education in Ghana can be described as being in its embryonic stage, and its benefits to the child relatively is not very much appreciated by the public. Hence, an education of parents on the importance of early childhood education to the development of the child will definitely inspire parental involvement.

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