Home-School Collaboration: Strategy for Effective Learning in Pre-Primary and Primary Schools in Awka South LGA of Anambra State

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Abstract

This study examined home-school collaboration: strategies for effective learning in pre-primary and primary schools in Awka South LGA of Anambra state. The study was guided by two research questions. It adopted descriptive survey research design. The population comprised of 3783 pre-primary and primary school parents in Awka South L.G.A. Simple random sampling was employed to select 40 pre-primary school parents and 110 primary school parents from 15 pre-primary and primary school selected for this study, making a total of 150 parents selected for the study. Instrument for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire with 17 items titled 'Home-School Collaboration Questionnaire' (HSCQ) for parents. The instrument was validated by three experts. Cronbach Alpha was to determine the reliability of the instrument and the overall reliability of 0.71 was obtained. Mean was used to analyze the research questions. The findings from the study revealed that Home-school collaboration through homework completion, teaches pupils to work independently and develop self-discipline among others are ways parents involve themselves in the education of their children in pre- primary and primary schools. Findings also revealed that project enhances learning among pupils and that project based learning provides pupils with opportunities to drive home their own learning among others are the strategies parents and teachers use for effective learning in pre-primary and primary schools. Based on the above findings, it was recommended among others that school heads should encourage home-school collaboration in pre-primary, primary schools to give parents opportunities to contribute to the education of their children.

Keywords: Home-school collaboration, parental involvement, pre-primary, primary

Introduction

Starting school is a major life experience for children and their families. It is a developmental milestone for children and their families. In order words according to Weissberg and Dusenbury (2011), both schools and families have essential roles to play in promoting children's positive development and academic performance. When educators and parents work together as partners, they create important opportunities for children to develop social, emotional and academic competencies. Thus, home-school collaboration is the parental involvement in their children's learning process (Emerson, Fear, Fox & Sanders, 2012). It is the working together of both the parents, educators and the school management towards a common goal or a set of goals.

Home school collaboration is a reciprocal process that occurs between the parents and the educators who share in the common decision making regarding mutually determined goals and solutions related to children from whom all parties share interest and responsibility. Therefore, the parents and educators involved in collaboration are pooling their resources together to create a cooperative interdependence relationship. According to Anderson (2010), the learning process and molding of a child and its responsibilities is internally regulated by parents who are at home and externally regulated by the teachers who teach them in school. Regulating children's behaviour according to Bethesda (2012), is an essential part of every day school life. Gorey (2001), also maintained that early childhood is a period when children begin to acquire their personality traits, moral behaviour, habit formation, and social interaction and communication skills. This is why the active participation of parents and educators in the development of behavioral, intellectual and personal skills in the children is very important.

A child's education can be greatly enhanced by their parents' involvement in the classroom and at home. The concept of home-school collaboration is essential for effective learning of children especially at the early stage of development, in order to catch them young (Pianta, 2000). Early learning experiences at home are crucial in creating strong foundations for nursery school and beyond. Different forms of collaboration are used at different times, depending on the needs and developmental stages of the child, the availability of parents and educators, as well as personal preferences matters a lot. That means that both the parents and educators need to be available for the children any time they are in need of them. Both the teachers, parents and children need to have some shared expectations of their own, and each other's roles and responsibilities. Parents have more complete knowledge about their individual child. Teachers are informed about learning and behavior appropriate for the deferent ages and grades of the children. Each of them sees the child in different settings and may have different expectations for performance. Both views need to be valued.

Christenson (2001), stated that it is important for educators and parents to understand the concept of the total learning environment – instructional support, home support, and home-school support- when creating successful learning environments for children. The benefits of home-school collaboration, which extend far beyond the notion of involving parents in activities (e.g., home support for learning, volunteering), according to (Crozier, 2012) are many and varied. They

include the power of shared educational goals for countering information from competing sources such as media and peers. (Desforges, 2003), maximizing opportunities for students to learn at school and at home, building social capital for students through mutual support efforts of families and educators. Also enhancing communication and coordination among family members and educational personnel, maintaining home-school continuity in programs and approaches across school years, sharing ownership and commitment to educational goals in order to increase understanding and pooling of resources across home and school, which increases the range and quality of solutions, diversity in expertise and resources, with integrity of educational programs. In order to achieve this collaboration, Weissberg, & Dusenbury, (2011) identified the following strategies to be followed for effective Learning. Enriching child's home learning environment, attend parent-teacher/students conference, use of homework helper and share information about classroom policies and practices.

Parental involvement in the learning and education of children therefore, means that they should be available for them when needed. According to Weissberg, & Dusenbury (2011), when parents and teachers use similar strategies to foster effective learning, it eases the transition between home and school and create consistency and continuity in expectations for behavior, which enhances not only children's developing skills but also the relationships between children and their parents, teachers and peers. So parents need to be friends, facilitators and teachers in order to encourage learning. Staying in touch with the children's school, overseeing their assignments, helping them prepare for tests and their projects can be a great encouragement. Communication with the concerned educators at school to keep them informed about the children's life at home and getting feedback on his or her academic and other developmental activities is very essential. Parents must not leave everything for the educators; they need to spend maximum time with their children to know about their experiences, problems and progress as it concerns school. Achieving effective collaboration with the school is a particularly important issue for families, as it can help in achieving academic success (Crozier, 2012). Adequate parental involvement throughout their children's school life is the key to these students achieving good results, despite the adverse expectations deriving from their situation. Reynolds (2005), in support that parents' involvement in home-school may be a first step towards their involvement with children's learning and schools may be able to support this kind of involvement in relation to learning. Thus, as in

Henderson & Mapp (2002), home-school relationship is significant in facilitating children's learning for achieving positive result.

Parents' involvement with children's learning at home occurs when parents show an interest in their children's education within the parent-child relationship, talk about learning with their children, model high educational aspirations and successful social and emotional approaches and demonstrate their educational values to their children. Parent's involvement with school activities has impact on children's achievement in connection to learning activities. Schools that are successful in supporting parents' involvement with children's learning are consistently demonstrating improved learning outcomes.

In this home-school collaboration, both the parents and educators share with the children simultaneously the benefit of health, and academic progress in life (Davies, 2011). Parents really need to understand and appreciate the educators in the process of learning in schools and for positive results (Reynolds, 2005). The parents also have the opportunity to recognize numerous hidden skills while working with the children in different areas. The educators alone cannot address all of the children's developmental needs. The meaningful involvement of parents and support of the educators are essential, (Virginia Department of Education, 2002). The need for a strong partnership between schools and families to educate the children is important because when the children heard the same messages from the educators and parents, they understand that they were expected to uphold the same standard at home and at school. Wilt (2008), Lin & Bates (2010), upholds that, "educators can help parents devise learning environments and activities in the home or daily living setting to support and encourage child development. In line with, Moore & Lasky (1999), parents' participation in helping their children with homework, attending parents–teachers-students conference, and having special consultations on their children's problems improves their children's academic achievement. While Hoover-Dempsey, Battiato, Walker, Reed, DeJong & Jones (2001), maintains that parent participation in the school also include the establishment of structures, participate in homework completion, teaching for understanding, and developing children's learning strategies. Home-school collaboration is an important step in supporting a child's positive engagement in the learning and social aspects of school life. Parents and schools have a common goal; to see children develop the skills for life and learning, to see children succeed, and to see children happy. It helps students to develop more positive attitudes towards

school, improved behavour both at school and at home. It also increases homework completion with greater participation in school activities (Reschly & Christenson, 2012). It enhances parental confidence, more positive experiences with teachers and schools. It improved communication with children concerning school activities, and increased confidence in their role of supporting homework completion.

To the Teachers: Increases job satisfaction, improves communication and positive relationships with families. It also Increase confidence in management of behavioural and learning challenges which leads to the development of positive partnership of homes and schools. Developing effective partnerships across homes and schools first requires an understanding and belief that parents and teachers are doing the best they can within the constraints of policy, time, life demands, knowledge, experiences and personal or work based resources. In developing positive partnerships families and educators work together as 'active and equal partners who share responsibility for the learning and social successes of all students' (Bethesda, 2012). Home-school partnerships are focused on setting joint goals for a child and ensuring consistency and continuity in how these goals are achieved across home and school. Hornby (2011), states that positive partnerships are ongoing and responsive in recognition of the ever-changing learning and social demands on children as they move through their education careers.

Statement of the Problem

Successful learning and education of children depends on the effective partnerships of the home and school involvement. Observation shows that the high number of working and busy parents today affects this partnership. It is assumed that many children in pre-primary and primary schools are left alone in the hand of school teachers by their parents for learning and education. Such children are sent to school in the morning and are returned home at evening by the parents, on reaching home both parents and children are worn-out. As a result of busy schedules of the parents they do not have time to attend to children's homework or check what the children were taught in the school and know where and how to contribute to their learning. This may account for poor achievement of pupils in pre-primary and primary schools. The goal of enhancing children's competence, participation, and positive learning and social behaviours cannot be achieved by teachers alone and requires active partnerships with families. As the home has a great influence on the child's psychological, emotional, social and economic status. The home affects the individual

since the parents are the first socializing agents in the child's life, and when this aspect is being neglected by the parents due to busy schedule which also affects the academic performance of the children. In other words, the children who experience poor home-school relationships and receive conflicting messages between homes and school settings are at higher risk for academic failure than children who witness positive home school relationships. This study therefore focused on investigating home-school collaboration: strategy for effective learning in pre-primary and primary school in Awka south LGA, Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

Specifically, the study sought to;

1. Examine ways parents involve themselves in the education of their children in pre- primary and primary schools in Awka South LGA
2. Find out the strategies used by the parents and teachers for effective learning in pre-primary and primary of their children in Awka South LGA.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study

1. What ways do parents involve themselves in the education of their children in pre- primary and primary schools in Awka South LGA?
2. What are the strategies used by the parents and teachers for effective learning in pre-primary and primary of their children in Awka South LGA?

Method

This study examined home-school collaboration: strategies for effective learning in pre-primary and primary schools in Awka South LGA of Anambra state. The study was guided by two research questions. It adopted descriptive survey research design. The population comprised of 3783 pre-primary and primary school parents in Awka South L.G.A. Simple random sampling was employed to select 40 pre-primary school parents and 110 primary school parents from 15 pre-primary and primary school selected for this study, making a total of 150 parents selected for the study. Instrument for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire with 17 items titled 'Home-School Collaboration Questionnaire' (HSCQ) for parents. The instrument was validated by three experts. Cronbach Alpha was to determine the reliability of the instrument and

the overall reliability of 0.71 was obtained. A 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points, Agree (A) = 3 points, Disagree (D) = 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point were used to answer the research questions. Arithmetic mean was used to analyzed the data collected. A mean of 2.50 and above was agree while a mean below 2.50 is disagree.

Results

Research Question 1: In what ways do Parents involve themselves in the education of their children in pre- primary and primary schools?

Table 1: Mean Scores on ways parents involve themselves in the education of their children in pre- primary and primary schools.

S/N	Ways parents involve themselves in the education of their children in pre- primary and primary schools	$\bar{X}$	DECISION
1	Parents assist their children in homework completion	2.74	Agree
2	Attending parents' teachers meeting in order to follow the academic activities of the school.	3.11	Agree
3	Always do their homework	2.10	Disagree
4	Providing conducive environment at home for learning	2.76	Agree
5	Encouraging children with plays	3.01	Agree
6	Language development	2.82	Agree
7	Visiting their children in school	3.00	Agree
8	Parent's communication with the teachers help to ascertain information about school programs	2.65	Agree
9	Parental involvement in procurement of their children's academic and learning materials also encourages effective learning	3.01	Agree

Table 1 above showed that the respondents agreed to all the items except item number 3 which have mean score of 2.10. The mean score is below 2.50 which is the bench mark for agreement. Every other items have mean score of above 2.50. This shows that all the items listed are the ways parents involve themselves in the education of their children in pre- primary and primary schools except item number 3.

Research Question 2: What are the strategies parents and teachers use for effective learning in pre-primary and primary schools?

Table 2: Mean Scores on strategies used by parents for effective learning in pre-primary and primary schools.

S/N	strategies used by parents for effective learning in pre-primary and primary schools	X	DECISION
10	Motivating for learning at home and in school	2.78	Agree
11	Provision of enriched leaning environment	3.02	Agree
12	Home school collaboration.	2.88	Agree
13	Use of punishment.	1.84	Disagree
14	Parents participation in parent teacher conference	2.64	Agree
15	Involving parent/teacher in mutual relationship to improve learning	2.89	Agree
16	Parents and teachers involvement in school decisions making	2.68	Agree
17	Use of good language of instruction by parents and teachers	3.20	Agree

Table 2 above showed that the respondents agreed to all the items so listed as the strategies parents and teachers use for effective learning in pre-primary and primary schools except item number 13 which have mean score of 1.84. The mean score is below 2.50 which is the bench mark for agreement. Every other items have mean score of above 2.50. This shows that all the items listed are the strategies parents and teachers use for effective learning in pre-primary and primary schools.

Discussion

The findings in Table 1 revealed that parents assist their children in homework completion, attending parents' teachers meeting in order to follow the academic activities of the school, providing conducive environment at home for learning and encouraging children with plays among others are the ways parents involve themselves in the education of their children in pre-primary and primary schools. These findings are in line with that of Weissberg & Dusenbury, (2011), who posits that parents had to partner with school of their children to ensure that certain difficulties are diagnosed of a child and thus, gets information on strategies to handle such difficulties. In line with the above, Crozier (2012), posits that in recent time, parents have realized the need to be

practically involved in their children's academics. From home, they assist their children do their homework, participate in parent teacher meetings to know the plans of the schools towards their academic development of pupils as well as, contribute significantly towards academic goals in such schools. Similarly, Okeke (2014), posits that parents' involvement in their children's education is more cherished when parents' partners with the school management to ensure that the right instruction and discipline are provided for their children.

Findings in Table 2 revealed that motivating for learning at home and in school, provision of enriched leaning environment, home school collaboration, parents' participation in parent teacher conference and involving parent/teacher in mutual relationship to improve learning among others are the strategies used by parents for effective learning in pre-primary and primary schools. These findings are in agreement with that of Adams & Christenson (2000), who posits that positive and proactive relationships between parents and teachers not only facilitate learning but makes the school a second family to the child; the school in this form, enforces mutual relationships that are reinforcing and directed toward improving a children's learning. Also, findings are in line with that of Onyemerekeya (2004), who posits that for parents to ensure that their children are catching up with the desired instruction both in school and at home, parents need to motivate their children to maintain behaviours. These motivations could be verbal, non-vernal and giving of gifts. These findings agree with that of Mansour and Martin (2009), who posits that a quality home environment and parental support contributes towards a student's motivation for academic achievement and learning, which can in turn increase interest in and satisfaction at school. Similarly, are in consonance with that of Odeh, Oguche and Ivagher (2015), who posits that an enriched environment is synonymous to learning and a path to children's expression to nature than a poor environment liable to cause harm. Odeh et al maintained that when children are exposed to an enriched environment, there is learning performance among pupils because such environment is rewarding.

Conclusion

The home-school collaboration strategies is core to children's learning and needs to be embedded for effective learning in schools and at home. The understanding of the nature and importance of the school-home relationship informs the work of the school, and homes respectively.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended as follows;

1. School heads should encourage home-school collaboration in pre-primary, and primary schools to give parents opportunities to contribute to the education and learning of their children.
2. School heads in private and public schools should adopt the home school strategies for effective learning at home and school.
3. Parent should adopt certain strategies to help to solidify their children's academics foundation for future academics.

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