

# Parental involvement in children's education



## **Introduction**

The following dissertation continues from an initial research proposal which was completed in January 2011. The proposal gave a brief overview what will be expected in the research dissertation carried out. Following the proposal a literature review was completed, discussing issues on parental involvement. In the literature review DfES (n. d) recommended that parental involvement in children's learning has a positive impact on outcomes for all children.

Parents are involved in a range of ways in the life of the school, contributing to the social life, the governance and to policy development. In 1989 the government introduced ' The Children Act 1989' which first introduced that parents have a right to be involved in their children's education as they are the prime educators in their children's lives. Furthermore the Children Act 1989 gives the parent's " Parental Responsibility" which sets out the rights and responsibilities clearly of the people who are legally entitled to the child who are caring, bringing up the child and its welfare. However the act encourages partnership between parents, children and the local authority.

It is from this point that the research continues onwards to gain a deeper understanding, from a professional standpoint on, what type of strategies the school that I am currently a volunteer at, are using to involve parents in their children's education. I would also like to see whether the strategies that are being used are effective with the parents. In particular what parents find the most useful way to communicate and least useful way to communicate

with school as a result it enables the parents to play an active and positive role in their children's education.

In order to get to the nature of this subject the following aims were researched:

What strategies are used within the school setting to involve parents in their children's education?

How do the reception class teachers incorporate strategies and interact with parent to involve them in their children's education?

Parents views on involvement in child's education.

The following research report will comprise of four main chapters:

## **Chapter 1 – Literature Review**

Chapter one will discuss relevant key issues that are important within the early years regarding the area of research that has be chosen. Different views from different research and literature will be used giving a justified discussion on parental involvement in children's education.

## **Chapter 2 – Methodology**

This chapter will introduce the methods of data collection that were used and the type of analysis implemented thereafter, with support to theoretical reasons justifying the chosen methods showing issues of concern that can be identified. It will provide samples of data, describing the effectiveness of the chosen methods. Links will be made with research textbooks such as ' Judith Bell', discussing their views on the following methods of collecting data.

Within this chapter it will also detail ethical guidelines that have been followed in implementing the research.

### **Chapter 3 – Results**

Chapter three will present important categories and issues that have emerged, and the development that has taken place. Tables and diagrams will be utilised to ensure the results can be easily interpreted.

### **Chapter 4 – Discussion of Results**

Finally in this chapter the main key issues will be addressed and discussed linking to existing literature and the implications for practice. From this discussion, conclusions will be drawn upon from the results which will inform future practice and areas of research that can be developed upon further in the coming future. Importantly, the discussion will have a link to the overall purpose of the research.

### **Literature Review**

Children have two main educators in their lives, their parents and their teachers. Parents are the prime educators until the child attends nursery or starts school and remain a major influence on their children's learning through school and beyond. There is no clear line to show where the parent's input stops and the teacher's input begins. The school and the parents all have crucial roles to play and the impact is greater if parents and schools work in partnership. (DfES: n. d). Therefore DfES (n. d) recommends that parental involvement in children's learning has a positive impact on outcomes for all children.

Parents are involved in a range of ways in the life of the school, contributing to the social life, the governance and to policy development. The benefits of parental involvement in a child's education have long been recognised.

Parents play a crucial role in influencing the aspirations and achievements of their children. According to Every Child Matters, (2003) (pg18), " Research suggests that parenting appears to be the most important factor associated with educational achievement at age 10, which in turn is strongly associated with achievement in later life. Parental involvement in education seems to be a more important influence than poverty, school environment and the influence of peers".

Whalley. M et al (1996) has mentioned that however the belief that parental involvement is critical in education is well supported in government reports and research. In 1995 Meade pointed out " Whilst significant data indicates that young children benefit when their parents are involved in their education, young child educators are not yet clear just how parental involvement actually benefits children in settings."

Additionally, Desforges (2003) has demonstrated a large body of evidence which points to the link between a parent's involvement in a child's learning and a child's subsequent achievement. The White Paper, ' Excellence in Schools', released in 1997 recognised the need for pupils to get support from parents to ensure they reach their full potential. A number of initiatives since this paper were introduced to encourage schools to involve parents and to encourage parents to become more involved. As stated in the Research Report DCSF-RR034 (2008) (pg18), " In 1999, and again in 2004, the Department for Education and Skills commissioned a Computer-Assisted  
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Telephone Interviewing (CATI) survey of parents of children aged 5 to 16, which investigated the parents' attitudes towards their children's education".

On the other hand Brown P. C (1989) mentions that when parents are involved in their children's education, both children and parents are likely to benefit. Researchers report that parent participation in their children's schooling frequently enhances children's self-esteem as well as their children's academic achievement as parents are actively providing encouragement and support for their children's learning. Another benefit when parents are involved in their children's education is that both parent and children are likely to improve relationships between them as well as it helps parents develop positive attitudes towards school and a better understanding of the schooling process. Despite these advantages, it is not always easy for parents to find time and energy to become involved or to coordinate with schedules for school events. For some parents, a visit to school is perceived as an uncomfortable experience, perhaps a holdover from their own school days. Others may have their hands full with a job and other children. The availability and cost of babysitters are other factors. Recently, teachers and other school staff have made special efforts to increase communication with parents and encourage involvement in children's learning experiences. (Brown P. C: 1989)

Therefore parents who are involved in their children's schooling exhibit increased self-confidence in their parenting and a more thorough knowledge of child development (Epstein: 2001). Researchers have also claimed that parent involvement in their children's early education increases parent's understanding of appropriate educational practices, it improves children's

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educational outcomes, especially literacy; and that it improves parental commitment to schooling. Parental involvement also leads to good relationships between children and between staff and children (Smith & Hubbard: 1988), and good communication between staff and parents is thought to be a prerequisite for high-quality care and education of young children (Hughes & McNaughton: 2000).

Although Moore. S et al (n. d) said that parent involvement in schooling has traditionally taken many forms including parents helping their children with homework, parent-teacher interviews, parent nights, special consultations on student problems, parent councils and parent volunteer help in the school and the classroom. Some evidence suggests that activities of this nature can have beneficial effects on student learning. Involving parents as partners requires an understanding of parent's perceptions of schooling, their aspirations for their children, their approach to parenting, their expectations of teachers and their concept of their role and responsibilities.

On the other hand Russell. K (2005) believed that there are variations in opinions about what constitutes involvement, and what the extent of parental responsibilities in their children's education should be. Some parents are not at all satisfied with current levels of active participation and are keen for change. For example, a small number of parents emphasise the importance of developing a strong partnership with the school and the teachers and see themselves working as part of a team to ensure that their children behave well, perform well and that their needs are met appropriately.

However majority of parents consider that what they are currently doing is all that is required. Parents have fixed assumptions about what level of input is required from them which are difficult to change. Parents have little understanding of how important their role is in supporting their child to do well at school and most labour under the idea that they are playing a secondary role to the teachers. According to Russell. K et al (2005) (pg35) “ Any suggestion at national, local authority or school levels that parents are not doing enough and that they “ must” or “ should” be more involved, is likely to offend the majority of parents. Rather than coercing parents to be involved by telling them what they “ must” or “ should” do, parents prefer the hard facts on what impact they can have and how important their input is”. Then, it can be left to the parents to make their own decisions about what they do based on the evidence with which they have been provided. They are more likely to be encouraged to build on what they currently do if there is clear evidence to show that this will have a positive impact on their own children. (Russell. K et al: 2005)

Brown. P. C (1989) alleged that teachers and parents need to understand that their roles are different and that their activities with children should be different. It is important for teachers to keep the lines of communication open. This involves not only sending newsletters and notes, but also obtaining information from parents. Margaret Lochire, Chief Executive said: “ We need to develop a new approach to the early years in which parental involvement is built into the system as an integral part of ensuring that family learning, early learning and childcare are mutually supporting. Parental involvement in education leads to better results for children in the



early years and throughout school.” (Pre-School Learning Alliance: 2003)  
(pg3)

## **Methodology**

### **Rationale for choice of method**

As this was a small scale project, it was decided to follow the approach of qualitative and quantitative methods which will be discussed throughout this chapter. As stated in Macleod-Brundell. I, (2004), (pg311), “ Quantitative data can be used in conjunction with data collected by qualitative methods”. In this way, suitable methods of collecting data were used to get to the heart of the issues.

First and foremost, ethical considerations were made in terms of protecting the rights of both the children and adults involved in the research. This involved written permission that was gained from the head teacher as well as sending out written permission to the parents of the children within the Year 1 class to explain the motive behind the research and why the researcher was carrying this research out. The choice of participating was upon the parents to be involved as part of the research as well as their children as well as having the right to withdraw from the study at any point was made clear. The children will be informed within the class also as well as the class teachers and permission from the head teacher will be sought.

Full confidentiality was adhered to for this study and all the data and information collected was securely stored. When recording interviews, names were altered in order to protect the individuals involved; all documents were stored securely ensuring confidentiality. As stated in

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Roberts-Holmes. G (2005), (pg61), " Gaining the participants informed consent to carry out the research is part of building trust in the relationship between yourself and the participants". It was made clear that a copy of the research will be available for the school once completed so that the teachers and parents can be able to look at the research.

As the data collection spanned two year one classes interviews with the teachers and questionnaires for the parents were fitted in within the normal constraints of the school timetable.

At the outset different range of methods was utilised in order to gather data. The methods that were used were both quantitative and qualitative methods. These were:

Semi-structured interviews

Questionnaires

Taped transcripts

Each method that was used had its advantages and disadvantages.

## **Design**

## **Participants**

## **Materials**

## **Procedure**

## **How the data was triangulated**

Collecting data by a variety of methods ensures that triangulation of data can be completed and that validity of the research is achieved; one data

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source may support the findings of another (Roberts-Holmes. G, 2005).

Therefore Roberts-Holmes. G, (pg40), (2005) believed that " Triangulation is the research practice of comparing and combining different sources of evidence in order to reach a better understanding of the research topic".

Triangulation also allows researchers to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from both primary and secondary sources.

## **Semi-structured interviews**

There can be structured or unstructured interviews, structured interviews allows the participant to answer a set of questions that have a limited number of answers that they can say whereas unstructured interviews are interviews where the participants can answer the questions freely without the limited choice of answers. The method chosen was a semi-structured interview which is similar to an unstructured interview. As it mentions in Roberts-Holmes. G, (2005), (pg109), " In the semi-structured interview and unstructured interview the focus is shifted away from the researcher with the fixed interview schedule and towards the issues and interests of the research participants". It also enables the interviewer to explain the question asked further if necessary if the participant is unable to provide an answer. A disadvantage could be if the researcher is asking a question that has inappropriate language used that the participant would not understand for example slang or jargon. Only use those words that the participant would find easy to understand and respond to. Semi structured interviews can be time consuming as the data needs to be collected as well as transcribing and analysing the data

Although there are disadvantages there can be advantages of semi-structured interviews too. By using this method it allows the interviewer to capture how the following person/people think and feel on a particular topic as well as it provides the interviewee the opportunity to go into as much depth as they feel. Through using this format it is easier to follow and allows the interviewer to respond to the situation to follow the relevant lines of the enquiry.

## **Questionnaires**

Before sending out the questionnaires to all the parents who agreed to participate within the research the researcher sent out four pilot questionnaires to the parents of two children from each year one class. This was done so that the researcher could see whether the questions that were written in the questionnaire were in sentences that the parents would be able to understand easily. As mentioned in Bell, J, (147), (2005) " The purpose of a pilot exercise is to get the bugs out of the instrument so that respondents in your main study will experience no difficulties in completing it". By using questionnaires as a research method it provides both quantitative and qualitative data which can be analysed. " Questionnaires are a popular method of gathering data" as it mentions in Macleod-Brundell, I, (2004), (pg320). Some advantages of questionnaires are that all the questions that are in the questionnaire are the same which enables the researcher to easily compare all answers together. When carrying out these questionnaires these can be carried out in large groups to get more sufficient and a good response rate is anonymity and confidentiality is adhered. Although questionnaires have advantages it also has disadvantages, the

return of the questionnaires may vary as sometimes researchers have low response rates which can be due to a number of reasons. According to Moser. C. D et al, (1974), (pg150), “ Non response is a problem because of the likelihood – repeatedly confirmed in practice – that people who do not return questionnaires differ from those who do”.

## **Taped Transcripts**

Tape-recordings, rather than writing the interview down, is an important research interview habit to develop because it allows you to do your main job, that is, active listening. Tape-recording allows you the space and time to focus upon the discussion with the research participant. (Denscombe, 2003). As stated in Roberts-Holmes. G, (pg122), (2005) “ with a tape recorder you get everything that was said and with its transcription you will be able to carry out a thorough and reflective analysis”.

There are some disadvantages of using taped transcripts where a problem may arise when the research participant doesn't feel comfortable with the interviewer recording their voice. In this situation it is best to ask the participant their consent before conducting the interview. Another disadvantage is that writing up or transcribing the tapes could take up a lot of time for instance as mentioned in Roberts-Holmes. G, (pg121), (2005), “ A half an hour of tape recorded interview can take two hours to transcribe”.

## **Results**

## **References**

Bell. J, (1999), 4th Edition, Doing Your Research Project – A guide for first time researchers in education and social science, Open University Press

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Whalley. M, (2001), Involving Parents in their Children's Learning, Paul Chapman: London.

Appendices

Appendix

One

## **Research Proposal**

**Student's name: Rizwana Ahmed**

**Personal Identifier: 10213377**

Title: Parental Involvement in Children's Education

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### **Introduction:**

The reason why I have chosen this particular area of research is to see from a personal and professional standpoint, what type of strategies the school that I am working at, are using to involve parents in their children's education. I would also like to see whether the strategies that are being used are effective with the parents. In addition I would like to see whether the parents are participating with their children's education at home using the strategies that the school has created.

### **Aim of Research**

By completing this research it will hopefully provide me an insight of what strategies are being used and their effectiveness within the setting. It will hopefully help me implicate changes in future practices, to how the strategies can be improved further or developed on so that parents are receiving their full entitlement to be participating within their children's education.

### **Research Questions**

What strategies are used to involve parents in their children's education?

How do the teachers incorporate strategies and interact with parent to involve them in their children's education?

## **Basis of Literature Review**

Children have two main educators in their lives, their parents and their teachers. Parents are the prime educators until the child attends nursery or starts school and remain a major influence on their children's learning through school and beyond. There is no clear line to show where the parent's input stops and the teacher's input begins. The school and the parents all have crucial roles to play and the impact is greater if parents and schools work in partnership. (DfES: n. d)

Therefore DfES (n. d) recommends that parental involvement in children's learning has a positive impact on outcomes for all children. Parents are involved in a range of ways in the life of the school, contributing to the social life, the governance and to policy development.

The benefits of parental involvement in a child's education have long been recognised. Parents play a crucial role in influencing the aspirations and achievements of their children. According to Every Child Matters, (2003) (pg18), " Research suggests that parenting appears to be the most important factor associated with educational achievement at age 10, which in turn is strongly associated with achievement in later life. Parental involvement in education seems to be a more important influence than poverty, school environment and the influence of peers".

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and research. In 1995 Meade pointed out “ Whilst significant data indicates that young children benefit when their parents are involved in their education, young child educators are not yet clear just how parental involvement actually benefits children in settings.”

### **Proposed Methodology :**

The research setting is a local community school within Rochdale who have overall children that are aged between 3 – 11 years old. The participants that will be involved within the research will be the parents of the children in Reception class and the class teachers of the class.

Both qualitative and quantitative data will be used to gather the data; the methods that will be used are questionnaires, interviews and tape recordings. The questionnaires will be given out to the parents and the interviews will be conducted with the teachers within a Reception class in an informal way. The tape recordings will be taken place when interviewing the class teachers to ensure that the data is accurately recorded. When interviewing the children in small groups I would give them the opportunity to express themselves about the way they feel regarding parental involvement in their education. The methods suggested will hopefully be the right and best way to collect the relevant data needed for this research study and the proposed questions.

### **General Ethical Issues:**

To cover any ethical issues that arise I will be sending out letters to the parents of the children within the Reception class to explain the motive behind the research and why I am carrying this research out. The choice of

participating will be upon the parents to be involved as part of the research as well as their children as well as having the right to withdraw from the study at any point will be made clear. The children will be informed within the class also as well as the class teachers and permission from the head teacher will be sought.

Full confidentiality will be adhered to for this study and all the data and information collected will be securely stored. Any names used will be changed to protect the identity of those individuals involved. A copy of the research will be available for the school once completed so that the teachers and parents can be able to look at the research

## **Timetable**

### **November 2010**

1. Write up research proposal.
2. Get permission from head teacher.
3. Send out consent forms to parents.

### **December 2010**

1. Write up literature review.
2. Make a start on the introduction.
3. Devise questionnaires for parents.
4. Devise interview questions for the teachers.

## **January 2011**

1. Hand out the questionnaires to the parents who have responded back and are willing to participate in the research study.
2. Set up small sessions to interview the class teachers within Reception.
4. Write up methodology.

## **February – March 2011**

1. Collect the data back from the parents (questionnaires).
2. Write up results and analyse them.

## **April 2011**

1. Write up discussion.
2. Write up conclusion.

## **May 2011**

1. Start making finishing touches to the dissertation.
2. Submission of dissertation.

## **References:**

Bell. J, (1999), Third Edition, Doing Your Research Project – A guide for first time researchers in education and social science, Open University Press

Coleman. M and Briggs. R. J. A, (2002), Research Methods in Educational Leadership and Management, SAGE Publications: London

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Whalley. M, (2001), *Involving Parents in their Children's Learning*, Paul Chapman: London.

Appendix

Two

## **Consent Form – Head teacher**

Thursday 21st October 2010

Dear Mrs Burrows,

As you are aware I am currently preparing a research proposal based upon parental involvement within children's education. To do this I shall need to interview some members of the staff which will be carried out with the Reception class teachers. All research that will be carried out will be within the Reception Class. I will be collecting the data needed in various forms such as interviews, and questionnaires. All information that will be collected

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will remain strictly confidential and the name of the children will not be mentioned in any of the paperwork. There will be no extra involvement of the children, as I will be gathering my data within the normal constraints of the school day. I hope that carrying out this research will meet your approval.

It would help enormously if I could be allowed to use a tape recorder to support my interviews; this would assist with write up of the informal interviews after the event. I would explain fully to the children what I am doing and gain their permission to participate. I have also sent out consent letters to the parents for their permission for their children to participate within the research. Full confidentiality will be maintained at all times and tape recordings will be destroyed once the interviews have been recorded. A full copy of the completed research will be given to you, so that its validity can be ensured. I hope this request doesn't seem obtrusive and look forward to learning from the members of staff and the parents, to improve my own practice.

Thank you

Yours sincerely

Miss Ahmed

Appendix

Three

## **Consent Form – Parents**

Thursday 21st October 2010

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am currently a student at Leeds University, studying my BA (HONS) in Early Years Childhood Studies. As part of these studies I will be carrying out a research dissertation. This will be carried out within your child's class Reception. I have chosen to conduct my research into parental involvement in their children's education.

I will be collecting the data needed in various forms such as tape recordings, interviews, and questionnaires. All information that will be collected will remain strictly confidential and the name of the children will not be mentioned in any of the paperwork. On completion of the research dissertation and completed data collection the school will be presented a copy of the report which will be available to parents and your child's school. There will be no extra involvement of the children, as I will be gathering my data within the normal constraints of the school day. I hope that carrying out this research will meet your approval; you and your child can withdraw from the study at any point.

Please sign and return this form if you agree to have your child participate in the study as well as yourself. Please do not hesitate to talk to me if you have any concerns.

Thank you

Miss Ahmed

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CONSENT SLIP

I give/do not give my permission for my child to take part in the studies.

Name of child \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix

Four

**Parent Questionnaire**

As you are aware I am currently doing my research dissertation on Parental Involvement. I would be grateful if you would please fill in this questionnaire. All information that is given will remain confidential.

Do you as a parent play an active part in your child's school life?

Yes No

(Please Circle)

If yes, how?

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If not any specific reasons?

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What do you think you could do to support your child's education

At school?

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