

Defining parental involvement: The Israeli case

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Abstract: During the past decade, Israeli parents declared their rights to be involved in their children's education. The term used is "parental involvement", but there is no real agreement on the definition of the term. This paper describes the different opinions and approaches of parents, teachers, students, principals and decision makers, as found and described by Israeli researchers. The development, definitions and boundaries of the term are introduced. Even though the research in Israel is on a Hebrew term and this discussion is in English, the processes involved translate well, as these processes are in a well developed country, based on democracy and Western culture and an education system established under the British Mandate with its historical traces.

Key words: parental involvement; parents; schools; education; Israel

1. Introduction

Israeli students with more involved parents have higher school grades than their peers, which is a good enough reason to encourage parental involvement (Fisher, 2007; Vassallo, 2001). However, in order to understand how "parental involvement" helps and to encourage parents to be involved (and schools to promote their involvement), the term "parental involvement" needs clarification.

During the past decade in Israel, many researchers have tried to define the term "parental involvement". There is no actual agreement about the definition or the real actions that constitute "parental involvement".

This paper will try to examine the different approaches, and compare those of parents, teachers, students, principals and decision makers. Three sections will be introduced:

(1) Historical approach to the term: an historical description of the term beginning with the definitions in the first years of Israel as a free nation and going through today;

(2) Definitions by different groups;

(3) Boundaries of parental involvement.

Then some conclusions will be drawn about the overall picture.

This paper presents many processes and approaches within the Israeli context that would translate well into other contexts, as well as provide a culturally specific understanding of "parental involvement". This specific cultural context, it is hoped, will provide insight, inspiration and new research internationally as well as within Israel.

2. Parental involvement—A developmental approach to the term

In the past few years, the question of whether teachers, parents, students and administrators share the same opinion about the definition of the term "parental involvement" has been raised. On the one hand, it seems as if it

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is not controversial since it seems socially desirable to support parental involvement in education. But deeper research into the term and a variety of educational research show that the term is vague and has many definitions. The spectrum varies between “baking cakes” up to self-management of schools with the parents as supporters, showing that the term defies clear definition, and still has to be examined in order to reach clarity, let alone consensus (Stein & Thorkildsen, 1999).

One can learn about the term through two modes: first, the professional terminology concerning the term; second, the various actions associated with the term.

2.1 Professional terminology

During the past four decades in Israel, there have been major changes in the terminology used to describe the relationship between schools and parents. Israeli society has seen many revisions, among those social ones that apparently have reflected upon the social involvement of parents and the community.

The early 1960s were characterized by “equality in education”, parents were viewed as deterrents to successful integration of children into Israel’s changing society. The perception of the Ministry of Education and the schools staff during these years was “school without parents” (Frankenstein, 1997). Israeli society during the first years of Israel as a new nation was centrally controlled through the capital Jerusalem. Educational policy was mandatory to follow and was carried out by the districts. Professional educators also believed that those parents who had only recently immigrated to Israel after the World War II faced stresses of immigration, and therefore could not contribute to their children’s educational process. The Israeli policy was that school should pass on the heritage of the old-timers to the new immigrants, and therefore parents were not supposed to be involved in the process. Parents neither dared to come to school uninvited nor to criticize teachers or their work. Many parents, who had just recently arrived as newcomers, were not familiar with the language and culture, plus had great respect for educators.

A change of policy developed during the early 1970s. The Ministry of Education started a decentralization process by allocating policy to local authorities and districts. Magnet Schools (art and nature) were established as part of the decentralization process. The establishment of these schools and the fact that were part of a new approach of schools of choice by parents and students, actually brought to formation of “connection between the school and the parents” (Inbar, 1992). This generation of parents recognized its right to present their demands to the educational system. Even so, main decisions were still made in Jerusalem, the capital.

Budget retrenchments by the government led to enlarged parents’ financial contributions to school activities, which in turn increased the parents’ demands on school and reduced the ability of schools to resist or refuse these demands. This enabled parents to have greater impact on their children’s education, and initiated a willingness on the part of teachers to accept this new impact, and with that acceptance, the recognition of parents’ rights and obligations to be partners in the educational process.

The concept of “parental involvement” traces to the beginning of the 1980s, when community schools were established and more schools of choice were founded (Friedman, 1990). The connotation was a positive one, opposite to the connotation of “parental interference”. During these years, the Ministry of Education acknowledged the fact that a centralized educational system could not deal with the cultural pluralism of Israeli society. More than ever, an overall parental feeling of alienation towards schools developed, and parents felt that school had failed to give the right answers for groups with special needs (Weransky & Schory, 1999).

Further cuts in educational budgets, and parents’ subsequent demands to participate in partial funding of school programs, contributed to more parents wanting to be heard in the educational system. During those years,

two new terms appeared more often in Israel: (1) Firstly, “grey education”, meaning educational activities funded not by the government but by the parents; (2) Secondly, “additional educational program” (Talan) which was actually part of the mandatory law of education in Israel, allowing the school to request additional funds from parents. In each case, parental status inside the educational system grew stronger (Cohen & Cohen, 2001). These changes led to the development of two patterns of involvement: requests for changes inside the frameworks that already existed and requests for changes through creation of new models of schools.

In the mid 1990s, the term “parental collaboration” became increasingly common among educational professionals (Goldring, Shavit & Shapira, 1995; Goldberger, 1996). This change followed social changes throughout Western society, Israeli society included. More power and authority were passed on to parents and the community. With the major change in the Israeli electoral system for premierships, based on personal elections not party connected, the Israeli population felt empowered and therefore parental and communal involvement increased in schools. Parents were not willing anymore to take things for granted, and they observed, monitored and criticized the educational system. Not only political changes influenced the change, but also the facts that more educated and experienced parents were part of the system. Israeli parents believed that if they were born and grew up in Israel, they knew at least as much as the educators. The term interference started to accompany the idea of “parental involvement” as a result again.

Many parents held advanced academic degrees, sometimes higher than the teachers that taught their children. They felt entitled to express their opinion, to demand and to interfere. They believed that there was no reason to stop their involvement when their children enter school, since they were involved in their children’s education since birth. Parents assumed that they understood education, since they themselves had also been part of the educational system when they were children, not to mention the fact that they also graduated from higher education, often with advanced degrees. Their main claim was that education does not take place only in school.

During those years, school took full responsibility for education, even though the actual time that children spent in school during one academic year was only 12%-15% of the total available hours (Goldberger, 1996). In spite of this fact, schools took full responsibility, and this was unacceptable to parents.

During the twenty years between the first years of the 1980s until the beginning of the new millennium, parents took a step back from school because they felt that their opinion and help were asked only about minor issues. Parents stopped showing up for parents-teachers day, because every time they came, issues were repeated and they did not feel “honest involvement”. They expected that if school was interested in honest involvement, less comfortable and pleasant questions should be asked: questions about content, teaching methods, teacher capabilities, etc.

From the end of the 1990s until the present, the term “parents and community involvement” has increasingly appeared in educational discussion and writing (Weransky & Schory, 1999; Fisher, 2007). The local authority in Israel has become much more powerful than in the past. This fact is reinforced by the process of personal elections of mayors, a process that in the past was based on political party affiliation. Parallel to the process of empowering the local authorities, we also see devolution from the governmental offices to the districts. The districts began in the early 1990s a process of accumulating power by getting increased budgets and by deciding upon issues such as distribution of teaching hours and manpower—Issues that in the past were decided centrally by the Ministry of Education.

Today in Israel, parents still do not see themselves as part of the community, and do not think that the geographical community, where the school is located, is responsible for the school. They believe that the

responsibility is theirs and the school's, but not the surrounding community.

The changes in the terms that have been used regarding the relationship between parents and school during the past four decades can be summarized in Figure 1 below:

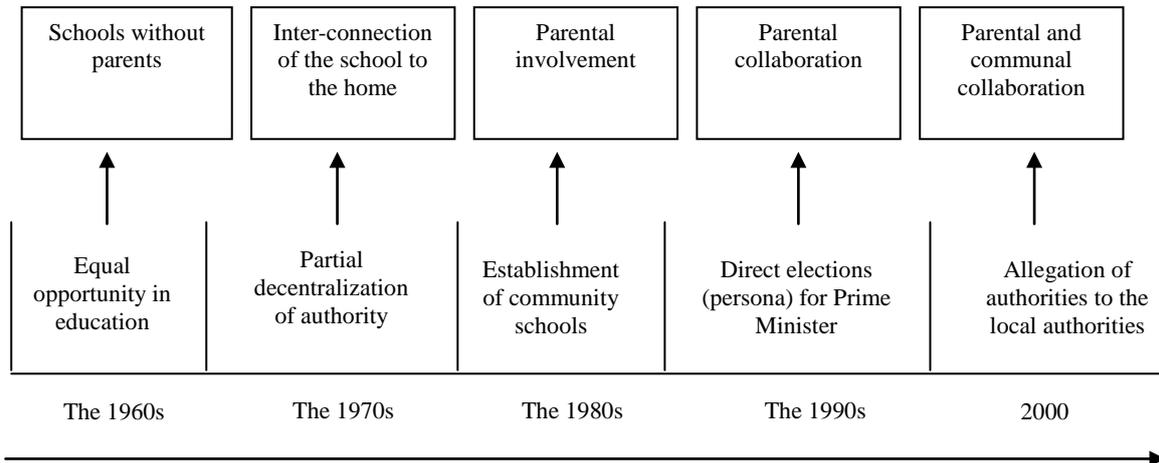


Figure 1 Terminology of parental involvement

2.2 Definitions of the term “parental involvement”

One can find in the literature a wide variety of definitions of the term “parental involvement”. Notwithstanding, we could not find consensus and the term is unclear. It is most interesting to observe different definitions according to population: principals, teachers, parents, students, local authorities and government policy makers. Thus, “parental involvement” could be interpreted diversely according to the group (Wanat, 1997). All groups have been empirical tested: principals (Shevach, 1977), teachers (Perez, 2001), parents (Friedman & Fisher, 2003) and students (Lazar, Guttman & Margalit, 2000). Yet, one conclusive study has not actually researched all groups together. Such research would enable a better understanding of the populations’ views at a given time, particularly with a unified methodological approach to each population.

2.2.1 How do teachers define parental involvement

Israeli teachers perceive parental involvement at two main locations: at home and in school. At home, involvement includes activities that are connected directly with processes of learning, mainly helping with homework. School involvement is categorized by activities in the classroom, and includes mainly responsiveness to teachers’ requests for help in the classroom (this is not connected to pedagogy). Three clear domains are included in school involvement. The first includes financial aid, meaning subsidizing educational activities (enrichment programs, etc.), raising and collecting funds. The second domain is administrative, which includes accompanying field trips, giving a one-time lecture (Moshe-Levi, 1999) and taking part in school activities when parents are invited, such as parents-teachers day, school plays, etc. (Treger, 1999). The third domain is political, meaning taking part in policy making, such as recruiting teachers and pedagogical committees. However, it has to be said that teachers definitely do not favor such activities. The activities that belong to the third domain could be connected indirectly to learning processes: distribution of responsibility between the teachers and the parents (Lazar, Gutman & Margalit, 2000). Most Israeli teachers support financial and administrative involvement, but they tend to see policy issues as their responsibility and only theirs. They see teaching as a profession, and therefore support parental involvement in narrow issues, such as cultural and enrichment activities. They resist any involvement concerning teachers’ recruitment or posting, and any kind of involvement in defining the schools

credo (Moshe-Levi, 1999).

Recent studies in Israel (Trabelsky-Hadad, 2003) show that 67% of teachers believe that parental involvement has become negative interference and 54% are actually afraid of the parents. They have expressed that this fear affects their abilities within the classroom. They also fear that they will be fired if just do everything to please the parents. The Israeli teachers also believe that parental over involvement brings out negative behavior to the students. They feel that the parents neither believe in them nor in the Israeli education system. They think that parents see them only as service providers, and that causes stress (Friedman, 1992).

Teachers also feel that principals do not back them up concerning parental issues. Their main thought is that the principals fear to confront the parents when there is a conflict. Therefore, when teachers know that the principal will not back them up, they give up in advance. As they say, they do everything just to return home safely.

An interesting connection was found between teachers' self-esteem and their approach towards parental involvement. Moshe-Halevy (1999) found that the higher the self-esteem is, the more supportive they are of parents' involvement, but only in matters that concern giving a hand in the classroom, taking part in school committees or social activities.

It has been found that the amount of criticism towards parents is higher in elementary schools than in high schools. The reason for this could be due to the fact that levels of involvement are higher in parents with elementary-aged children, and therefore the amount of criticism is higher as well. Studies also emphasize that one of the reasons for teacher burnout is parents (Friedman, 1990; Perez, 2001), so it is not surprising that the teachers are not enthusiastic about parental involvement.

2.2.2 How do parents define involvement

During the past few years, Israeli parents are convinced that it is their right to be partners and to be involved in every aspect of their children's education. They do not consider what they call "service giving", for example, accompanying field trips, collecting school fees or hanging pictures on the wall of the classroom, as parental involvement. For them, financing extra curricular programs or giving a hand as handymen is decidedly not parental involvement. They demand their place at the table and oppose limits to parental involvement. For parents, involvement includes anything that has to do with their children's time at school, and they want to be involved in all decision-making processes, starting with determining standards for security issues and continuing with curriculum, staff and even who will be nominated principal (Friedman & Fisher, 2002; 2003). Also, determining or preparing enrichment programs, choosing their children's school, criticizing the curriculum, hiring or firing a teacher, and placing teachers in classrooms—For them, all these are considered the terrain of parental involvement.

Parents believe in two levels of involvement: the classroom level and the school level. They completely understand their place when their own children are considered. They will defend them fiercely if they feel that injustice has been done. There are times when parents show a hostile attitude towards teachers, even to the level of demonization. Parents also tend to relate negative character traits to teachers. More than once parents have said that the only thing that interests teachers is their salary raise and school vacations. Many parents do not perceive teachers as professionals, and sentences such as "anyone can teach" or "look who actually goes to teacher colleges" are often heard (Katzenelson, 2001). If those are the parents' opinions, it is understandable why parents want to take part in every aspect of their children's education: They simply do not trust the teachers. Some parents believe that by being part of PTA, they gain power and authority, especially with all that concerns control over

payments. Sometimes they even fear that not only will teachers prevent their children from learning, but they also may actually cause them to fail (Omer, 2002).

Concerning the pedagogy level of the schools, sometimes the parents are not exactly sure what the school's purpose is, especially in high schools. On the one hand, they expect schools to provide knowledge and prepare the students for government-mandated matriculation exams. On the other hand, they complain that schools have become "grade factories". The parents expect schools to achieve two objectives: preparing students for the matriculation exams and helping their interpersonal development. Moreover, they criticize loudly when teachers neglect one of the two.

Parents have a tendency to be nostalgic about the ideal teacher that they used to have when they went to school: authoritative and enthusiastic with a superior character. They forget that they actually make this comparison from the point of view of an adult that is trying to idealize the past. This comparison is not always fair, because not only do parents today have a different point of view, but also many of them came from different countries, different social processes and different youth cultures.

Many parents see schools as a convenient babysitting service while they are at work (Katznelson, 2001). Still, they hope that their children will learn to read and write, learn basic math, and maybe succeed in their matriculation exams. They especially hope that school will cause no damage. The rest, so they believe, could be accomplished at home. But in order to prevent any possible damage that could be caused to their children, they have to be constantly aware of what happens in school and make sure that the school is fulfilling its basic functions.

It is interesting to see that parents, when compared to teachers and the Ministry of Education, are the only group to distinguish between active involvement and passive involvement. From the parents' point of view, this is not a hierarchical partition. In the past ten years, parents do not think that one type of involvement is preferred, or that it is a hierarchical involvement, as described in earlier works of several researchers (Noy, 1984, 1999). Parents do not talk about better involvement as actual activities done in the school, and less preferred involvement as when parents are not active, but are aware of what is happening in the school. Researchers are aware that parents could be involved passively and actively, and there is no preference for either kind (Fisher & Friedman, 2009; Waxman Fisher, 1998). Waxman Fisher defined passive involvement as that the parent does not participate in activities at the school, but nevertheless feels involved. This passive involvement is expressed, for example, by knowing: the social relations among students in the classroom; the academic staff; the social activities that are done in class or in school; the curriculum; the social-demographic structure of the class; the problems of violence; pupils' school grades; and the decisions made by the school staff. Active involvement is visible and is expressed by actual activities done in school: giving a lecture, initiating different school or class activities, meeting with the principal in matters that concern the whole school, taking part in class or school PTA, and being part of the decision making process. A parent can do both: knowing the curriculum on the one hand (passive involvement), and yet initiating school activities (active involvement) on the other hand.

The research that dealt with parents' point of view of parental involvement, determined that parents expect mainly that schools will: respect them, support (emotionally) families when needed, acknowledge their needs, be honest with them and give them a comfortable environment when they come to meetings (Fisher & Friedman, 2009; Wanat, 1997). Teachers' accessibility and informal communication with parents are both very important to parents.

In Israel, formal regulations for electing parental delegations and regulating their activities were set in the

Israeli Director General Code of By-Law administrated by the Israel's Ministry of Education (May, 1996):

(1) Class-level delegation (class council)—is elected by democratic elections, and usually conducted during the first parents-teachers meeting of each academic year. Each delegation consists of three parents;

(2) School-level delegation (known as PTA or School Parents Council)—the members are those from the class councils, as each class nominates one representative for the school council. This forum elects the chairman of the school council;

(3) Organizational parental delegation—the school parents' council elects democratically, five to nine members. There has to be a representative of each age stratum.

In Israel, there are also national parents' councils, and the representatives are chosen from the organizational parental delegations. These councils are initiated only by the parents and not by the Israeli Ministry of Education.

Today in Israel, PTAs can be found in 90% of the secular and Jewish orthodox elementary schools, and in 25% of the Arab schools. Most of the PTAs' agenda is fund raising for extra curricular cultural programs. Most of the PTAs are not authorized to be part of the pedagogy decision-making process. The goals of the national councils include matters such as cancellation of payments of parents, lengthening of the school day and ways to improve teachers' status.

2.2.3 How do principals define involvement

It is difficult to be definite about Israeli principals' perception of the term "parental involvement", especially as the research on this population dates back to the 1960s. Still, it has been found that teachers and parents definitely do not share a common perception of what is the principal's part in this issue (Treger, 1999). Studies that focus on principals and/or teachers as subjects and try to connect between the management styles, the principal's opinions and the actual levels of parental involvement, have shown that if principals demonstrate positive attitude towards parental involvement and school policy welcomes parents, the levels of parental involvement will be higher (Shevach, 1997; Treger, 1999). Shevach (1997) found that principals known as the "considerate" type are pro-parental involvement. Principals that are known as "task oriented" show negative approaches towards the parents. It has also shown that there are times that some principals declare support for parental involvement, but when it comes to actual actions, they withdraw their support. Supporting parental involvement is usually due to social desirability (Shevach, 1997). As opposed to research where the subjects were principals, in research where the subjects were parents, there was no real evidence of any connection between the principal's management style and the parents' willingness to be involved or their actual involvement (Waxman Fisher, 1998). The literature shows that even though most principals agree on the importance of parental involvement, they do not share the same opinions of what this involvement actually consists of. The abstruseness of the definition of "parental involvement" also prevents this involvement.

In general, it could be said that in the beginning of the new millennium, most Israeli schools were not interested in seeing parents as partners of the educational process. Schools often felt that supporting this partnership could be interpreted as weakness and they were not sure of what authority should be given to the parents (Taron, 2004).

Even in the year 2008, some Israeli principals still are not sure what the real role of a PTA is. They believe that they should be the only ones to make decisions concerning schools, even in matters such as school uniform or dress codes, body piercings, etc.

2.2.4 How do students define involvement

Very few studies concern how students define parental involvement. Those that do look at this question

usually connect the parents' wish to be related with their children's desire (Lazar, Guttman & Margalit, 2000). A connection has been found between children's desire for their parents' involvement and their age. Younger children, especially in the lower elementary classes, prefer their parents' involvement unlike students in middle or high schools. This finding also meets the parent's desires to help their children in the younger classes, possibly because the parents feel more comfortable with the curriculum of their younger children.

Some have tried to explain this because adolescents wish to be independent, and, therefore, object to their parents' involvement (Moshe-Halevy, 1999). In general, children prefer both parents to be involved at home (homework), but there is a clear preference for mothers' involvement in more direct relationship with schools (receiving information from school or taking part in school activities). This finding matches traditional parents' roles. When students say that they want their parents to be involved, they usually mean direct involvement that concerns only them. They do not want their parents to take any part of indirect involvement, such as influencing the curriculum (Lazar, Guttman & Margalit, 2000).

In the last few years, new approaches have emerged, where high school students find ways to defend their rights without their parents' help. Up until a few years ago, the students used to approach their parents for support in various school issues. However, now they act on their own with independent initiations. Following the passage of the Israeli students' rights law (2000), adolescents felt that they could lead change, not necessarily with grown-up help (Itzhaki, 2000; Trabelsky-Hadad, 2004). For example, in 2004 when overnight field trips were canceled, students protested against this decision. It came even to the point where the national Israeli students' organization organized a national high school strike (Trabelsky-Hadad, 2004).

2.2.5 How does the Israeli Ministry of Education define parental involvement

Definitions of the Israeli Ministry of Education are found in the Israeli Director General Codes of By-Law administered by the Israel's Ministry of Education. In 1996 a special Code of By-Law was established, "School and the Parents". It states that the educational system sees parents as full partners in the educational process. As parents are the legal guardians of the children, they have the responsibility for educational and social advancement. The Ministry of Education believes that parents should be allowed to take part in their children's education. As said there, it should be clear that the teachers are the professionals and therefore they have the responsibility for the learning, social and emotional advancement of the students. The Ministry of Education emphasizes in the by-law that it should be thoroughly understood that parents need to respect the teachers' professional autonomy and to allow them to act with their own discretion.

Added in the Code of By-Law is a section that remarks that it has to be remembered that having a dialog with parents does not decrease the teacher's professionalism, but, on the contrary, requires a higher professional level on behalf of the teachers. Parents and teachers set an example for the students, therefore it must be an example based upon mutual honor and respect and meaningful communication.

Even though it is not spoken out loud, the Ministry of Education seeks to prevent outsourcing intervention, and their position could be interpreted as if they see the parents as an "outsource" intervention. Actually, despite their statement of full partnership, they see parents as silent partners and prefer the involvement only at home.

In the Code of By-Law of 2002, it is written that parents have the privilege and obligation to be involved in their children's education. Thus, there is no real definition of what exactly this involvement is. This lack of definition prevents clarity. Nevertheless, there are three main issues that the Israeli Ministry of Education believes parents should be involved with: PTA, parental fees and issues concerning informal education. An interesting fact is that, by law, parents in Israel are permitted to choose 25% of the school curriculum, but only if there is an

agreement of 75% of the parents. Even though it is written in the obligatory laws of education (administered in 1953), neither the Ministry of Education nor the schools dare to point this out to parents.

The Ministry of Education decided in 2004 to administer written standards as part of its plan for improvement. One of the standards concerned working procedures of elementary schools, and became effective on November 1, 2006. In this standard, a special sub-section, “Standard 6”, was formulated. Standard 6 deals with the mutuality between the community (including, of course, parents) and the schools. The main issues in this standard are instructions to schools concerning the establishment of partnerships between schools and parents, communication channels, and defining the boundaries of parental involvement. The standard also mentions schools as a communal cultural, social and ideological center. Even though the standard was supposed to increase the clarity of the term “parental involvement”, the term is still unclear and undefined. Yet, it does emphasize three major domains:

(1) Parents should be part of defining the school vision and setting the goals and objectives in order to achieve it;

(2) Permanent forums and committees should be established for that will enable the parents to be part of the decision-making processes;

(3) Relationships with the community should be established so that needs will be defined, and a voluntary lay-leaders database should be created.

The intention is that the voluntary programs would be addressed to the community as a whole, and not only for school purposes. Students would be part of the voluntary programs, as well as the forums and committees.

3. Between involvement and interference—The involvement boundaries

Many times, teachers, principals and decision makers say that they support involvement but reject interference, which for them has a negative connotation. One can ask if interference is actually negative. In Hebrew, the words “involvement” and “interference” are very similar. Usually those who distinguish between the two terms mean that as long as the parent is involved in non-curricular issues (such as organizing fairs, baking cakes or helping with the decoration of the class room), it is positive and accepted involvement (Goldberger, 1996). However, as soon as a parent starts asking questions concerning the curriculum, teaching methods, unsuitable teachers, etc., it is said that the parent interferes. As some scholars have said, there could not be real involvement without interference. Yet, the wider view is that interference indicates active actions while involvement indicate passiveness (CHEN & Odry, 1995).

Perhaps it should be asked what the boundaries of parental involvement are. However, as there is no clear agreement, as mentioned above, about what parental involvement is, therefore, it is almost impossible to determine its boundaries. For years, Israeli parents drew themselves away from schools because they felt that they were welcomed only for minor issues, and felt unwanted. They stopped coming to parents-teachers nights because each year they heard the same things over and over again (Goldberger, 1996).

Some researchers thought there should be well-determined boundaries (Goldring, Shavit & Shapira, 1995). Others thought that there should only be boundaries concerning the right of privacy and ways of communicating (Goldberger, 1996). When right of privacy is concerned, there is no reason to involve parents in issues such as health or mental problems of children other than their own. When ways of communication—for example, if parents approach school in a violent verbal or physical manner—offenders should be prevented from entering the school (Goldberger, 1996). However, determining the boundaries of involvement depends heavily on defining

parental involvement, which has been poorly done at best to date.

4. Summary

Finding mutual definitions enables coordination of the expectations of all involved. The school staff should define, together with the parents and the students, what the preferred involvement is and if it is acceptable for all partners. Only after a mutual definition can one decide on actions. Nevertheless, all groups involved should first know the actions and boundaries that each other group includes in its definition of “parental involvement”.

As a summary of this paper on Israeli literature, Table 1 displays a summary of the actions that have been listed by different researchers as part of “parental involvement”, Table 1 compares the perception of involvement among different groups in Israel: parents, students, teachers, principals and policy makers (Ministry of Education). It elaborates different activities and the agreement or disagreement upon each activity.

Table 1 Involvement domains: parents, students, teachers, principals and Ministry of Education

Domain	Parents			Young children k-6			Teenagers middle and high schools			Teachers			Principals			Ministry of Education		
	consider as involvement	do not consider as involvement	support	consider as involvement	do not consider as involvement	support	consider as involvement	do not consider as involvement	support	consider as involvement	do not consider as involvement	support	consider as involvement	do not consider as involvement	support	consider as involvement	do not consider as involvement	support
Involvement in school																		
1. Taking part in class PTA	+		+	+		+	+			+		+	+		+	+		+
2. Taking part in school PTA	+		+	+		+	+			+		+	+		+	+		+
3. Choosing the school		+	+		+			+			+		+		+	+		
4. Accompanying field trips		+		+		+	+			+		+	+		+	+		+
5. Organizing school fairs	+		+	+		+	+	+		+		+	+		+	+		+
6. Helping out with class events		+		+		+	+			+		+	+		+	+		+
7. Showing up for teachers-parents nights		+			+			+		+		+	+		+	+		+
8. Visiting classes during the day	+		+	+			+				+		+				+	
9. Visiting school once a week	+		+	+			+				+		+				+	
10. Giving an opinion about the amount of home work	+		+	+		+	+				+		+				+	
11. Teaching a class	+		+	+		+	+			+		+	+		+	+		+
12. Organizing an event for the whole school	+			+		+	+				+		+					
13. “Adopting” a new comer		+		+		+	+		+		+		+				+	
14. Found raising class fees		+			+			+		+		+	+		+	+		+
15. Founding informal programs		+			+			+		+		+	+		+	+		+
16. Found raising school fees		+			+			+		+		+	+		+	+		+
17. Physical help to the class or school		+		+		+		+		+		+	+		+	+		
18. Initiating informal activities	+		+		+			+		+		+						

(to be continued)

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19. Members of pedagogy committees	+		+		+			+		+			+			+		+
20. Developing formal educational programs	+		+		+			+		+			+					
21. Criticizing formal educational programs (before staff and management)	+		+		+			+			+	+	+					
22. Hiring and firing staff	+		+		+			+			+		+					
23. Hiring and firing principals	+		+		+			+			+		+				+	
24. Placement of teachers in classrooms	+		+		+			+			+		+				+	
25. Interfering with inappropriate behavior of teachers	+		+	+		+	+		+		+		+		+	+		+
26. General criticizing of teachers	+		+	+		+	+				+		+				+	
27. Been familiar with the social relationship in the class	+		+		+			+			+		+				+	
28. Been familiar with the staff and teachers	+		+		+			+			+		+				+	
29. Been familiar with the class and school social activities	+		+		+			+			+		+					
30. Been familiar with the formal educational programs	+		+		+			+			+		+				+	
31. Been familiar with the class demography	+		+		+			+			+		+				+	
32. Acknowledging violence in class or school	+		+		+			+		+		+	+		+	+		+
33. Been familiar with the class grades	+		+		+			+			+		+				+	
34. Knowing the staff and management decisions	+		+		+			+			+		+					
35. Meeting with the principals about school issues	+		+		+			+			+		+				+	
36. Being part of the decision making process	+		+		+			+			+		+					
Involvement at home																		
1. Helping with homework		+		+		+	+											
2. Checking book notes		+		+		+	+			+		+	+		+		+	
3. Involvement with discipline issues	+		+	+		+				+		+	+		+		+	+
4. Helping to prepare for exams		+		+		+	+			+		+	+		+		+	+
5. To support the children when conflicts with teachers occur	+		+	+		+	+				+		+				+	
6. To be involved while appealing for a grade	+		+	+		+					+		+				+	
7. To review exam papers after receiving the grade		+		+		+					+		+				+	

As we can see in Table 1, which is actually a “shopping list”, there are thirty-six domains of school involvement and seven domains of home involvement. Parents support all domains that are connected with pedagogical involvement (formal educational programs, pedagogy committees, etc.) while teachers are against these domains. The reason is obvious: Teachers see them as professional issues and parental involvement in those domains will undermine their status. Principals are willing to support parental involvement in pedagogy, but apparently the reasons are based only on political correctness, as their actions often do not match their words. While teachers see fund raising as part of parental involvement, the parents do not, and think it is exploitation and improper.

5. Conclusion

As can be seen from this paper, one cannot find a consensus concerning the term “parental involvement” among the relevant groups involved with education. Even if there are some actions that are agreed upon, it is certainly not unanimous. This paper demonstrates the lack of clarity for the term “parental involvement”. Not only is the term unclear, but also it is defined differently among the stakeholders: parents, teachers, students, principals and decision makers.

It has been said that parental involvement in some ways is like marriage: When one of the spouses makes all the decisions and the other spouse is not part of this decision making, conflicts will arise and dissatisfaction will be the norm (Fisher, 2007). Such conflicts could lead to breaking up a marriage. In parental involvement, as well, if only one side (staff and management, on the one hand, or parents, on the other hand) decides without involving the other, then conflicts will be created that could actually lead to disaster. This does not mean that the teachers have to accept all that is said by parents, or vice versa, but it does mean that all sides concerned must be committed to hear one another out (Fisher & Friedman, 2009).

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