Running Head: Head Start Parent Involvement

Head Start Parent Involvement Activities:

Measuring the effect of school based parent involvement activities on parent efficacy in early childhood learning

Khadijat O. Quadri

University of Incarnate Word

December 9, 2012

Parental involvement in children's schooling is an important component of children's early school success (Durand 2011). One research study compared academic achievement of students whose parents are actively involved in their education to that of their counterparts whose parents are not involved and found that regardless of socio-economic status, ethnic/racial background or parents' educational level, parental involvement is associated with higher student achievement outcomes. These findings emerged consistently whether the outcome measures were grades, standardized test scores, or a variety of other measures, including teacher ratings (Jeynes, 2005). A majority of the existing research regarding the impact of family involvement on educational outcomes shows a positive correlation. Barnard (2004) looked at the association between parental involvement in elementary school and student success in high school, and concluded that early parental involvement in a child's education promotes positive long-term effects. Conversely, Bronstein et al. (2005) found a lack of guidance by parents of fifth grade students to be related to poor academic achievement. Hill and Tyson (2009) reported various types of parental involvement to be positively associated with academic achievement through a meta-analysis of 50 studies, with the exception of parental help with homework. Fan and Chen (2001) found that parental expectations for their child's educational achievement have the strongest relationship with students' academic achievement, while home supervision has the weakest relationship. The relationship between parent involvement and educational achievement was also found to be stronger for global achievement indicators such as cumulative GPA rather than for subject-specific indicators.

As a result of these and many other research findings, the Office of Head Start launched a Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework (OHS, 2011). The frame work was developed for programs as a guide to developing Parent involvement activities and parent engagement. The framework includes program-wide strategic planning, program design and management, systems of continuous improvement, professional development for staff, and with governing bodies and parent groups. By following the framework guideline, programs are expected to improve program services, inform community partners about Head Start parent

and family engagement goals and the importance of those goals for school readiness (OHS, 2011). The framework outlined program areas such as program leadership, continuous program improvement, professional development, program environment, family partnerships, teaching and learning community partnerships. The OHS framework argues that programs are more likely to achieve family engagement outcomes and child success when PFCE foundations are in place and parent engagement activities are occurring across impact areas. It is expected that the outcomes from these activities will produce promising child outcomes such as enhanced school readiness skills, sustained learning, and developmental gains across early childhood education and into elementary school (OHS, 2011).

Head Start programs are required to provide a vast array of on campus activities such as nutrition training, parent leadership training, fatherhood initiatives, mental health training, parenting education, home visits, identify family needs and formulate partnership agreements and other on campus activities. With all of the work put into organizing onsite parent activities, programs are unsure if these activities promote parent efficacy. Programs can tell how many parents came to a training or parent event. They can conduct pre and post assessments and surveys after training, but we can't tell if it increased parent efficacy and parent engagement in their child's learning. This paper seeks to explore the following questions;

1. What is the impact of Head Start parent involvement activities on parent efficacy and how much can we attribute increased efficacy to their participation in the activity?

If programs know exactly what activities are more likely to increase parent efficacy, they can focus attention on those activities and build parent activities based on measures that are most likely to produce positive outcomes.

Defining Parent Involvement Activities and the Challenge to Research

What are parent involvement activities and what do they entail? We see it everywhere in the literature – Numerous research points to it as a good thing However, like many terms that line the school improvement landscape, parental involvement is open to various interpretations (Bracke, D., & Corts, 2012). To some, it may simply mean attendance at

parent-teacher conferences. To others it might be the creation of a home environment that supports learning. Simply stated, there is no simple answer to the question because there is little consensus about what constitutes 'being involved.' Is baking cookies for the annual book fair less compelling than helping a child with his daily homework (Bracke, D., & Corts, 2012).? Long and Greene (2008) argue that the concept of parent involvement is underspecified. "It is not always clear what policymakers and others mean when they refer to parent involvement, the conditions that might foster parent involvement, or what factors might help children flourish in school" (p. 3.) So, while perhaps theoretically noble, there are a number of empirical problems that confound the study of parent involvement. As a construct, it is complicated, encompassing a wide range of parent/child/school/community needs, abilities, processes and interests.

Tezel-Sahin et al (2011) define parent involvement as the investment that parents make in their children. Although parent involvement is regarded as important, there may be some misunderstandings regarding its extent. Parents may tend to perceive parent involvement as merely helping their children do their homework. However, parents can actively participate in the educational activities maintained in school. They can observe children, support the teacher, and take part in school's decision-making process (Carlisle et al., 2005). In parent involvement, parents also perform their skills. In addition to this, they contribute to the interaction between the child and his/her peers as well as maintaining their parental duties by supporting social and emotional development of their children (Yazar et al., 2008). Korfmacher et al, (2008) however defines parent involvement activities as the process of the parent connecting with and using the services of a program to the best of the client's and the program's ability (Korfmacher et al, 2008). The term includes two broad dimensions: participation, or the quantity of intervention a family receives; and engagement, or the emotional quality of the family's interaction with the program. For the purposes of this paper, we will consider the Head Start Federal criteria of what a parent involvement activity means.

Head Start Programs and Office of Head Start (OHS) Mandate on Parent Involvement

Head Start is a federal program that promotes the school readiness of children ages birth to five from low-income families by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development (OHS Website). The program emphasizes the role of parents as their child's first and most important teacher. It seeks to build relationships with parents and families by promoting family well-being, positive parent-child relationships; provide education programs to families, engage parents in transitions; connect families to peers and the community; and train families to develop leadership skills (OHS, website).

Head Start Programs are mandated to engage in a process of collaborative partnership-building with parents to establish mutual trust and to identify family goals, strengths, and necessary services and other supports (OHS, 2011). Based on this mandate, a wide range of parent involvement activities provided by Head Start programs include but not limited to child development and education, parenting skills, family literacy, adult education, home visits, parent leadership opportunities, transitions services, fatherhood initiative, budgeting, crisis support, nutrition, dental, health services, and mental health services (Head Start Performance Standards 45 CFR 1306.33(b)). The purpose of these activities is that if parents are involved in this vast array of activities on campus and in-home, they are more likely be engaged in their child's learning which in turn will most likely sustain development and learning gains of their children (OHS 2011)

Self-Efficacy

Bandura, 1977, 1989 defined self-efficacy as the belief in one's own ability to successfully perform a particular task. A person who is self-efficacious both knows about and persists in a given task until success is achieved. In contract, self-efficacious individuals may have the knowledge needed, but may be unable to persist because of self-doubt (Bugenthal, 1987). Parents who feel efficacious- that is, who perceive that they have both knowledge and competence in their roles as parents-may formulate appropriate developmental goals for their children and carry out prescribed intervention strategies. Conversely, parents who feel inefficacious-that is who perceive that they do not have knowledge or competence in their role as parents may not follow through with prescribed intervention strategies for their children

(Desjardin, 2003). According to Bandura (1989) social learning theory, expectations related to personal efficacy originate from four primary sources. The first and most important is the history pf personal accomplishments (both successes and failures), such as parent responsibilities. The second involves vicarious experiences such as watching others engage in particular parenting activities. The third involves verbal persuasion and feedback from others regarding one's potential for accomplishment in a given task. The fourth means by which self-efficacy beliefs emerge is that of emotional arousal (e.g stress). Individuals anticipate failure when they are inundated by aversive situations. Conversely, lower levels of arousal are more likely to be associated with expectations of success.

Parental Self-Efficacy

Parental self-efficacy is defined as parents' perceived estimations of competence in the parental role and confidence in their own ability to perform each task (Bandura, 1989). Various parenting skills have been found to be associated with parenting self-efficacy beliefs. For example, responsive, stimulating and non-punitive caretaking (Unger and Waudersman, 1985) and positive maternal health (Kwok and Wong, 2000) have been found to be associated with higher maternal self-efficacy. Conversely, maternal depression has been associated with low maternal efficacy (Teti and Gelfand, 1991). In conclusion, parental practices in their children's learning may vary depending on the parent's belief system.

Parent Involvement Activities and Parent Efficacy

Harris, A., & Goodall, J. (2008) argue that there is a clear difference between involving parents in school activities and engaging parents in learning. While involving parents in school activities has an important social and community function, it is only the engagement of parents in learning in the home that is most likely to result in a positive difference to learning outcomes. Harris and Goodall (2008) came to the conclusion that parental engagement in children's learning in the home makes the greatest difference to student achievement. Due to emerging policies, most schools are involving parents in school-based activities in a variety of ways but the evidence shows that there is little, if any on parental efficacy and subsequent learning and achievement of preschool children.

Although parent involvement is a complex process that often transcends geographic

boundaries, researchers have often characterized involvement into two subtypes: home-based

and school-based (e.g., Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). Home-based involvement is generally

defined in the literature as interactions that take place between the child and parent outside of

school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). These parental behaviors generally focus on the

individual child's learning-related behaviors, attitudes, or strategies and include parental

activities such as helping with homework, reviewing for a test, and monitoring the child's

progress. School-based involvement activities generally include activities typically undertaken

by parents at school that are generally focused on the individual child, such as attending a

parent–teacher conference, observing the child in class, and watching the child's performance

in a school club or activity. School-based involvement behavior may also focus on school issues

or school needs more broadly, such as attending a school open house or volunteering to assist

on class field trips (Green, et al, 2007). Dalun's (2011) research showed that engagement at

home to have a positive impact on student achievement, but participation in school activities

did not significantly affect student achievement (Dalun, Z et al., 2011). Additionally, most

research focus on parent engagement in the home and very little has been done to explore

activities organized in school for parents.

Measures

Kathleen and Howard (1997), argue that parents with a stronger sense of efficacy for

engaging in their children learning will be those most likely to decide that involvement will yield

positive outcomes for their children. They found linkages between parental efficacy and

parents' focus on the value of effort, rather than school involvement activities, as critical to

children's school success. The pioneering work of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995; 1997)

surfaced the motivating factors by which parents become involved in their children's education:

parental role construct, self-efficacy and perceptions of school invitations.

Chrispeels and Gonzalez (2006), argue that parent education programs can boost the socio-cultural capital of Latino families and change parental involvement behaviors that may ultimately improve student performance. Through a pre-post assessment design, the researchers examined the effects of a parent education program conducted in five elementary schools in California. Their study showed that after participating in the program, 388 Latino parents changed their attitudes and behavior toward involvement. The substantial effect sizes found in this study indicate that culturally sensitive education programs may be a promising way to promote Latino involvement. Findings indicate that parental involvement is multidimensional and multifaceted. Using Structural Equation Modeling, the study provided two models that seek to explain the involvement process of Latino families before and after participating in the program. The study shows that knowledge is a powerful predictor for involvement.

Jeynes (2007) used a meta-analysis in addition to 52 studies, to determine the influence of parental involvement on the educational outcomes of urban secondary school children. Statistical analyses were done to determine the overall impact of parental involvement as well as specific components of parental involvement. Four different measures of educational outcomes are used. These measures included an overall measure of all components of academic achievement combined, grades, standardized tests, and other measures that generally included teacher rating scales and indices of academic attitudes and behaviors (Jeynes, 2007). The results indicate that the influence of parental involvement overall is significant for secondary school children. Parental involvement as a whole affects all the academic variables under study by about .5 to .55 of a standard deviation unit. The positive effects of parental involvement hold for both White and minority children.

Cronan (1994) measured the effects of community literacy training on Head Start parents. Measures used include use of surveys, demographic variables, reading behavior comprehension and the Gates-MacGinite reading test was used to measure parents' ability to read prose passages. The discouraging conclusion is that the only way to bring about reliable improvements in cognition and behavior is to build a continuous behavioral track that reaches

from early childhood to the time that the final results are achieved—for example, until the individual reaches his or her educational goals. The schools, although they are designed with this goal in mind, are not able to achieve this result without a great deal of help from families, help that may be harder for low-income families to supply. It appears that continuous supplementation of the education supplied by schools will be necessary if low-income children are to approximate their full potential.

Doyle and Zhang (2011) conducted research on parents' experiences as participants in a family literacy program. Specifically, they examined parents' motivation to participate, their expectations of the program and their valuation of the program including their perceptions of change in themselves and/or their children. This study used parent-to-parent interactions and facilitator support, the program aimed to increase children's literacy by enhancing parents' knowledge and strategies for fostering their children's literacy development. Two program models were offered—a parent-only model and parent–child model. All major components of program design and implementation including program content, duration, materials, and facilitator training were consistent across programs. Each session of the program focused on an aspect of emergent literacy identified in the research as direct or indirect contributor to later conventional literacy development (Doyle and Zhang, 2011). This study has shown that participation structure does impact parents' decisions to enroll in programs and remain in them. Clearly, parents' perceptions of how they or their children would be involved, affected enrolment and ongoing participation. For practitioners, this suggests that in planning for recruitment of families, parents' pre-program beliefs and expectations—as well as practical matters, such as the ease of implementing program activities—must be taken into account. Giving parents a choice of program types may be the ideal approach; however in practice it may be necessary to choose one model. The findings of this study suggest ways that practitioners can enhance program uptake and engagement. These are important considerations if programs are to meet the needs and interests of the families they serve (Doyle and Zhang, 2011).

Conclusion

This paper considered the impact of onsite parent involvement activities on parent efficacy. There are a vast number of research studies that lean towards the conclusion that parental involvement is multidimensional and multifaceted and point to the need to understand the differences between in home parent engagement and in school parent involvement activities. The paper also discussed parent efficacy based on Bandura's Social Learning Theory and concluded that parental practices in their children's learning may vary depending on the parent's belief system. Some studies suggest little to no impact on parent efficacy for parents who participated in onsite parent activities. Other research studies indicate that activities that are knowledge based and culturally sensitive are more likely to increase parent efficacy in child's learning. An in-depth study of mandated Head Start parent activities is needed to determine the impact of these activities on parent efficacy.

References

Durand, T. M. (2011). Latino Parental Involvement in Kindergarten: Findings from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study. *Hispanic Journal Of Behavioral Sciences*, *33*(4), 469-489. doi:10.1177/0739986311423077

Jeynes, W. H. (2005). Parental involvement and student achievement: A meta-analysis (Family Involvement Research Digest). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project. Retrieved October 23, 2012, from http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/publications_resources/publications_series/family_involvement_research_digests/parental_involvement_and_student_achievement_a_meta_analysis

Barnard, W.M. (2004). Parent Involvement in Elementary School and Educational Attainment. Children and Youth Services Review, 26, 39-62.

Bronstein, P., Ginsburg, G.S., & Herrera, I.S. (2004). Parental Predictors of Motivational Orientation in Early Adolescence: A Longitudinal Study. Journal of Youth and Adolescence,

34 (6), 559-575.

Christenson, S.L., Rounds, T., & Gorney, D. (1992). Family Factors and Student Achievement: An Avenue to Increase Students' Success. School Psychology Quarterly, 7(3), 178-206.

Fan, X., & Chen, M. (2001). Parental Involvement and Students' Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analysis. Educational Psychology Review, 13(1).

Hill, N.E., & Tyson, D.F. (2009). Parental Involvement in Middle School: A Meta- Analytic Assessment of the Strategies That Promote Achievement. Developmental Psychology, 45(3), 740-763.

Korfmacher, J., Green, B., Staerkel, F., Peterson, C., Cook, G., Roggman, L., & ... Schiffman, R. (2008). Parent Involvement in Early Childhood Home Visiting. Child & Youth Care Forum, 37(4), 171-196. doi:10.1007/s10566-008-9057-3

Christenson, S. L., & Hurley, C. M. (1997). Parents' and school psychologists' perspectives on parent involvement activities. School Psychology Review, 26(1), 111.

Smith, A. L., Romski, M., Sevcik, R. A., Adamson, L. B., & Bakeman, R. (2011). Parent Stress and Its Relation to Parent Perceptions of Communication Following Parent-Coached Language Intervention. Journal Of Early Intervention, 33(2), 135-150. doi:10.1177/

Jeynes, W. H. (2007). The Relationship Between Parental Involvement and Urban Secondary School Student Academic Achievement. Urban Education, 42(1), 82-110.

Cronan, T. A., Walen, H. R., & Cruz, S. G. (1994). The Effects of Community-Based Literacy Training on Head Start Parents. Journal Of Community Psychology, 22(3), 248-258.

Cronan, T.A., Cruz, S.G., Arriaga, R.I., & Sarkin, A.J. (1996). The effects of a community-based literacy program on young children's language and conceptual development. American Journal of Community Psychology, 24(2), 251–272.

Doyle, A., & Zhang, J. (2011). Participation Structure Impacts on Parent Engagement in Family

Literacy Programs. Early Childhood Education Journal, 39(3), 223-233. doi:10.1007/s10643-011-0465-x

Dalun, Z., Hsien-Yuan, H., Oi-man, K., Benz, M., & Bowman-Perrott, L. (2011). The Impact of Basic-Level Parent Engagements on Student Achievement: Patterns Associated with Race/Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status (SES). Journal Of Disability Policy Studies, 22(1), 28-39. doi:10.1177/1044207310394447

Bracke, D., & Corts, D. (2012). PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND THE THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR. Education, 133(1), 188-201.

Long, J. & Green, S. (2009). No parent left behind: A two-year student of parental involvement in an urban primary school. Unpublished paper. University of Notre Dame, Office for Undergraduate Studies.

Harris, A., & Goodall, J. (2008). Do parents know they matter? Engaging all parents in learning. Educational Research, 50(3), 277-289. doi:10.1080/00131880802309424

Green, C. L., Walker, J. T., Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (2007). Parents' motivations for involvement in children's education: An empirical test of a theoretical model of parental involvement. Journal Of Educational Psychology, 99(3), 532-544. doi:10.1037/0022-0663.99.3.532

Christenson, S. L. (2004). The family–school partnership: An opportunity to promote the learning competence of all students. School Psychology Review, 33, 83–104.

Christenson, S. L., & Sheridan, S. M. (2001). School and families: Creating essential connections for learning. New York: Guilford Press.

Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Walker, J. M. T., Sandler, H. M., Whetsel, D., Green, C. L., Wilkins, A. S., & Closson, K. E. (2005). Why do parents become involved? Research findings and implications. Elementary School Journal, 106, 105–130.

Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (1995). Parental involvement in children's education:

Why does it make a difference? Teachers College Record, 97, 310-331.

Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (1997). Why do parents become involved in their children's education? Review of Education Research, 67, 3-42.

Kathleen, V. H., & Howard, M. S. (1997). Why do parents become involved in their children's education? Review of Educational Research, 67(1), 3-42. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/214118637?accountid=7139

Tezel-Sahin, F., Inal, G., & Ozbey, S. (2011). PARENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES FROM PARENTS' POINT OF VIEW. International Journal Of Academic Research, 3(6), 421-425.

Carlisle E., Stanley L. & Kemple K.M., (2005). Opening doors: understanding school and familyinfluences on family involvement. Early Childhood Education Journal, 33(3), 155-162.

Yazar A., Çelik M., Kök M. (2008). Aile katılımının okul öncesi eğitimde ve 2006 okul öncesi eğitim programındaki yeri [The importance of parent involvement programs and its place in curricula before 2006] Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi, 12(2), 233-243.

Desjardin, J. L. (2003). Assessing Parental Perceptions of Self-Efficacy and Involvement in Families of Young Children with Hearing Loss. *Volta Review, 103(4), 391-409.*

Bandura, A. (1989). Regulation of Cognitive Processes through perceived self-efficacy. *Developmental Psychology, 25, 729-735*

Bandura, A. (1982). Self-efficacy in the Human Agency. *American Psychologist, 37, 122-147*

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review, 84, 191-215*