

Chapter 37: Supporting Learning

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Abstract: This paper explores how using simple technology tools such as Makey Makey and Little Bits motivate and increase student achievement in the area of science and math. A review of the literature finds that teachers need to incorporate innovative methods through technology in math and science classrooms to make the students enjoy the learning experience. The research also discusses the advantages of using technology, such as Makey Makey, in the classroom to keep students engaged which will help in increasing student achievement. In other words, with the use of certain technologies, increased student attendance, and increased engagement will create and conduct monthly workshops to train teachers about these tools. The principal will observe teachers and students to measure the success of the use of these technology tools used to enhance the instruction needed to benefit student engagement and achievement. The initial focus will be on Makey Makey and Little Bits tools due to their ease of use and the enjoyment that students have while engaged in them.

1 Introduction

In recent years educational organizations have witnessed a noticeable change in their roles and relationships with stakeholders. The school is one of the most influential organizations. There are influential elements that have not been well utilised in the past. Among these are the parents of students. Their impact on their children's learning is significant. Given the importance of parents' role, schools need to take steps to increase parent participation and to support their children at home.

One of the best education systems in the world is seen in New Zealand, where the researcher was immersed in Buckland's Beach Primary School in Auckland city. The presence and interaction of the school's parents was very prominent. Parents supported the teacher's work and helped the school move towards its goals (Buckland Beach School, Auckland, 2018).

Saudi schools suffer from weak parental involvement in the school community because the parents do not know anything about the school curriculum. The school plays its role in educating the students, but this role also requires the support of the parents, so it is important schools increase parent participation in supporting learning.

The researcher found that this idea could be advanced by the establishment of a framework through which parents can support the learning of their children at home, as well as open the way for parents to work systematically with the school to achieve its goals.

By working in their children's school or participating in decision-making, parents will feel part of it, and therefore support the goals the school seeks to achieve.

This report seeks to answer the following question:

How do we help parents become supportive of learning?

This question has three sub-questions:

- What role does the school play in supporting parent involvement?
- What types of support can parents provide?

- How can schools work closely with parents?

2 Literature review:

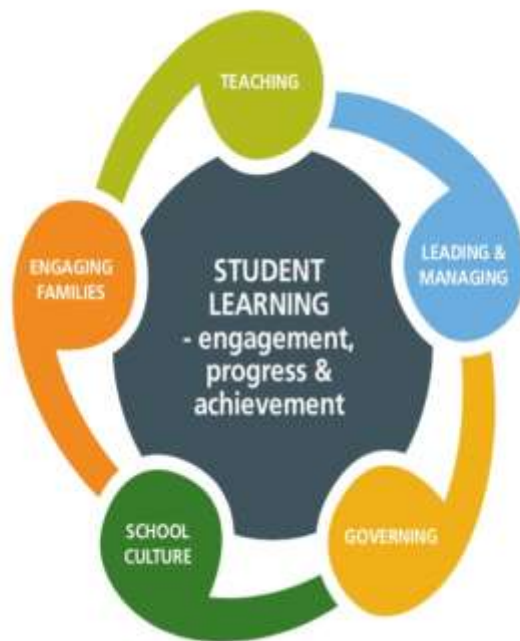
To answer these questions, the researcher reviewed New Zealand education literature.

There are many official documents produced by the New Zealand Ministry of Education emphasizing the role of parents. The ministry is aware of the importance of this role. Many parents move from being critical of the school to part of the educational process as a result of their involvement. Parents often work as teachers for their own children at home and thus feel that school success is their success as well, as they strive to help their children achieve their goals. Teachers often provide parents with resources to help teach their children at home.

In high performing schools, at the start and the end of each semester, parents, teachers and students meet to discuss the student's report and the level of progress. A plan is developed with the help of parents to support further learning at home, and to try to address shortcomings at school. (ERO, 2018).

Communication between the teacher and parents has been enhanced in many ways. A common way is the use of Google Apps, and the program Seesaw so that parents are informed about the work of their children and the opinion of the teacher. Teachers use Seesaw (an online tool) to provide feedback and comments on each child's work. It is worth noting that this approach is possible in the Saudi environment. Most students have smart devices and have the ability to read and write well.

The ERO has developed six dimensions through which the success of the school (teaching, leadership, management, school culture, family involvement) is judged, and schools are therefore seeking greater participation from families (ERO, 2018).



The Six Dimensions of School Success (ERO, 2018).

In addition, schools in New Zealand provide booklets for parents to support their children's learning at home in reading, writing and mathematics, as well as the criteria for the curriculum so parents are aware of how they can support their children. (Ministry of Education NZ website, 2018)

New Zealand schools are governed by a Board of Trustees. Parents can participate in board elections, enhancing their participation in school. They can also attend meetings of the Board, review its agenda, and see the results of the meetings. As a result, parents feel that they are part of the school community, with a role in governing the school. (ERO, 2018)

Most New Zealand schools have parent groups or a PTA that parents can join. These groups of parents want to support the running of schools in practical ways. These coordinate classroom parent-assistants, organize school events, raise funds and create assistance for a strong school community. (PTA, 2018)

Through immersion in school classes, volunteer parents assist the teacher in the classroom to supervise student groups, organize teaching aids, and teach some simple skills. Some of the parents were also seen taking part in school trips, based on parent interests or skills. For example, a firefighter who was involved in a trip brought first aid kits and taught the students some first-aid skills. (Buckland's Beach Primary School, NZ, 2018).

3 Methodologies

The researcher spent six months immersed in New Zealand schools during 2018 during which time he made observations within classrooms and worked side by side with school leaders, deputy principals and various other staff in the school. Interviews and discussions were also held about organizational structure. He attended meetings with parents, as well as meetings of the school board. The researcher visited more than ten schools in Auckland city, to get a bigger picture of the work being undertaken across New Zealand.

4 Results

After the completion of the immersion of the researcher in New Zealand schools, and with reference to the researcher's experience of education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the researcher believes that the key learnings from this project will be able to be applied in the Saudi environment.

Although some difficulties were noted in the New Zealand environment that could have limited the cooperation of parents, New Zealand's education has succeeded in overcoming them. An example of this is seen in the enrolment of international students who do not speak English as well as New Zealand born students. According to deputy principal Moira Rowlands the school succeeded in appointing representatives of some non-English-speaking nationalities to the Board of Trustees to help integrate families. (Moira Rowlands, deputy principal, Buckland's Beach Primary School). Such difficulties as detailed above do not exist in the Saudi environment, and therefore can be counted among the strengths in the implementation of this project.

Analysis and suggestions for action in KSA

The main aim of this project is to encourage parents to be part of their children's learning. Many parents in Saudi Arabia, do not participate in the education of their children but there are ways in which they could become involved: For example – supporting homework.

Parent involvement could include three dimensions:

- 1) **The role the school plays in promoting parent involvement.**
- 2) **Types of support parents can provide.**
- 3) **Work closely with parents as partners** Details of each dimension are detailed below:

1- The role the school plays in promoting parent involvement:

Schools in Saudi Arabia could offer ideas to help parents teach their children in ways that are similar to those used in New Zealand's education. This would include printing a booklet that includes ideas from the school curriculum that the student could use to help their studies at school, and focuses on the basic subjects (reading - writing - mathematics).

It could also include the criteria by which student success can be evaluated in each school year. Parents could work to help their children to meet these criteria, because they understand what their children are required to achieve.

In addition, information could suggest games that support learning skills in each subject, and parents can support their child as they practice at home. Parents can use free time such as the weekend and holidays to support their child.

The school could also set up workshops for parents to educate them about the goals that the student must achieve, and guide them as parents teach their children at home. Workshops would also inform them of what the teacher is doing. As a result of the workshops, parents will know the right ways to teach their children.

2 - Types of support parents can provide:

- **Volunteering:** Parents should be allowed to volunteer in schools, but chosen according to skills and abilities. It is possible for parents to participate in the classroom, especially in light of the increase in the number of students. Parents should be encouraged to ask teachers what can be done in this field.

Parents also can help to organizing school trips and support the school at events as well. The school could send a message to parents with the date of the trip or event details, and ask who has the ability to help as they do in New Zealand schools.

- **School board:** According to the Saudi Schools Organizational Guide, there is a school board and schools need to increase the interest of parents in being involved.

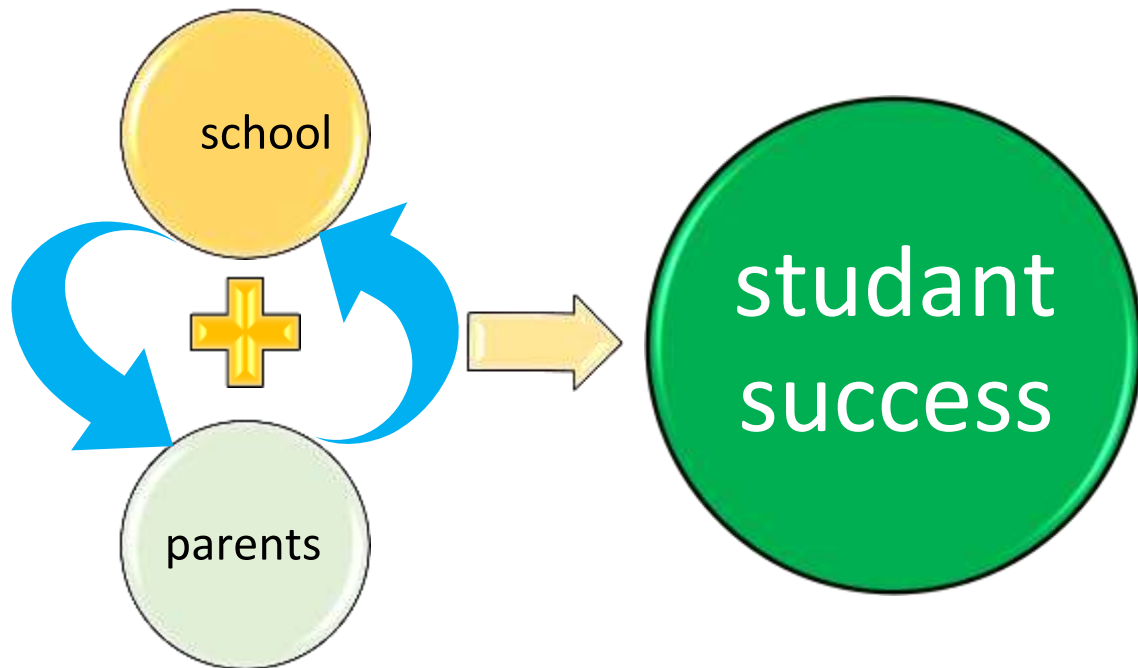
Parents should also look at the Board's meetings timetable and try to attend. At the meetings parents can state their opinion about decisions issued by the board. As a result, parents will become more actively involved in their children's schools, and not only as school critics.

3- Work closely with parents as partners:

The school and the parents should work as partners – a relationship that goes in both directions so that it is clear to each of them what will be provided for each student.

Schools should set up a meeting with all parents at the beginning of the semester, to discuss students' goals and agree on these.

Teachers should also give information that helps parents to teach their children at home. At the end of the semester parents and teachers can then meet each other again to discuss the students' report and take a look at the extent to which the goals are achieved. A new plan can then be developed to address the student's weaknesses.



Reference

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