

## Parental Involvement in Learning of English Language in Makuyu Zone Muranga County, Kenya

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**Abstract:** *This study analyzed parental involvement in the learning of English language in terms of types and levels of parental involvement in their children's English learning process. The study was based on the premise that parental involvement is a significant factor that influences Second Language development. The study applied Epstein (2001) framework for parental involvement that was developed from many research studies conducted with teachers, parents and students from primary to high school. The study employed descriptive qualitative design. Structured interviews were used to collect data. The target population of the study was parents in 46 public primary schools in the Makuyu zone. Random sampling method was used to identify 30 teachers. The findings of the study revealed that parental involvement in children's English language learning was achieved through "Parenting" type. The respondents rarely participated in their children's learning activities at the community level. The study recommends that schools should organize parent's engagement meetings to expose them to knowledge on the new curriculum, relevant materials and their roles in the new curriculum.*

**Keywords:** English Language Learning, Parental Involvement, Second Language

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### 1. Introduction

This paper intended to explore parental involvement in the learning of the English language in Makuyu zone Muranga County, Kenya. Pugh (1998) observes that parents can provide positive influence on their children learning as family. Makuyu zone is situated in the rural part of Kiambu County thus children are not immersed in an English environment. The pupils may need immediate needs to use and to learn English at home which needs parental involvement. Different scholars define the concept parental involvement. Parental involvement is the totality of interplays which occur between parents and schools to boost children's academic success (Hill, Castellino, Lansford, Nowlin, Dodge, Bates and Petit, 2004). Reynolds and Clements (2005) define Parental Involvement as the manners that parents influence their children. This effect occurred when children were at their house or school and also included the anticipation of their children's academic plan. Bakker & Denessen, (2007) observes that the concept of parental involvement comes from the Language Compensation Programs used in America and Europe during 1960 – 1970. The main objectives of the program were to reinforce people in low socioeconomic status (SES) and the minority people to take good care of their children's academic attainment and to avoid any educational problems. Thus, parental involvement refers to direct and indirect intellectual influences to children from parents' conduct. Parents' beliefs and attitudes towards their children are also regarded as parental involvement (Bakker & Denessen, 2007). Ule, Zivader and Bois-Reymond (2015) also hypothesize the parental involvement as a multi-dimensional structure, consisting of parental educational desires, plans and decisions for their children, and indeed, parental participation at school.

The connection between the home environments and Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) implementation is evident since CBC does not just rely on the classroom teacher but also on the involvement of the parent. Teachers today are no longer the only authoritative source of language but

instead must focus on assisting students in making the best use of content that they may find themselves. Parental involvement includes attending parent education workshop and attending parent-teacher meeting. Home-based parental involvement involves the provision of a secure and a stable environment, intellectual stimulation, supervision of homework and parent-child discussion. Various studies shows that providing such supports and encouragement enable the children to not only engage in the language and learn effectively but also to develop interaction with their parents (Ryan, 1995; Li, 2006; Garcia, 2008; Petchprasert, 2014).

This paper focused on parental involvement in the learning of English language. The analysis and discussions are pegged on the premise that parental involvement is a significant factor that influences second language development. Moreover, parental involvement is one of the most significant factors in children's L2 learning and development. The study may enable parents to know how they can enhance the acquisition of L2 in their children. This study may enable parents to develop their parental involvement provided for their children's English language learning. It is also hoped that this study help English teachers in designing the courses and activities that requires involvement from parents. The study provides relevant information on the implementation of the new CBD in Kenya.

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## 2. Theoretical Framework

The study applied Epstein's (2001) framework for parental involvement that was developed from many research studies conducted with teachers, parents and students from primary to high school. This framework has been widely utilized to help teachers, parents and researchers create effective learning programs for students (Epstein, 2001). Epstein's framework focuses on six types of parental involvement which can be categorized as follows: Type 1 Parenting: This type focuses on a good understanding of parents' abilities in supporting their children. These practices enable children to be positive about themselves and their parents. Moreover, this enables parents to have more understanding in rearing their children. Type 2 is communicating: This type is concerned with the communication between teachers and parents about their children's performance and school lessons. Type 3 is volunteering: The willingness to support teachers, children and other parents is the main point of this type. Type 4 is learning at home: This type concentrates on supporting children's homework and planning for their academic achievement. The preferred activities for this type include helping children with their homework, providing activities that enhance their children's skills and allowing children to join learning programs during the school break. Type 5 is Decision making: This type focuses on the role of parents to make decisions at school. While Type 6 is collaborating with community: In this type, the main focus is on ways to make use of properties and services of the neighborhood in enhancing the curriculums of schools, and their children are learning.

## 3. Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design. Descriptive research design describes a thing, situation or phenomena and seeks complete and accurate description of a situation at hand (Cresswell, 2012). The study was carried out in Makuyu zone due to declining standard of performance in English at the primary level which should worry many teachers and stakeholders in the education sector. The target populations for the study were parents of public schools in Makuyu zone. There are 46 public primary schools in Makuyu Zone. 30 parents were randomly selected to participate in the study. Structured interviews were used to collect data on parental involvement in their children's learning of English language. The researcher developed a set of questions on their background information, their role of in their children's learning of English language, and HLR. Structured interviews were important for this study since they allowed the researcher to collect information with ease from illiterate parents.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

The results were interpreted in terms of level as shown below:

Percentage	Level
85-100%	Very High
69%-84%	High
52%-68	Moderate
36%-51%	Low
10%-35	Very low

#### 4.1. Level of parenting

The researcher used close-ended statements to explore the types and levels of the respondents in parental involvement in their children’s English language learning. The use of percentages revealed the levels of the respondents’ parental involvement in their children’s English language learning.

**Table 1: Level of parenting**

Item	Statements	No of parents 30	Percentage	Ranking	Level
1	Encouraging your children to understand the importance of learning English	27	90%	1	Very High
2	Observing your children’s English language development in every skill	20	67%	3	Moderate
3	Accepting and willing to help your children to improve their problems in English language learning	27	90%	1	Very High
4	Knowing the English skill(s) that your children are good at and willing to support your children in that skill (s)	20	67%	3	Moderate
5	Encouraging your children to practice English in daily life	24	80%	2	High
	Average		394=79%		

The results in Table 1 above shows that 90% of the respondents encouraged their children to realize the importance of English language learning, which is interpreted as high level. The results also show that in item 3 90% (high level) of the parents are accepting and willing to help their children to improve their problems in English language learning. The above item was very high regardless of the level of background of education and socioeconomic factors. 67% (moderate level) of the respondents encouraged their children to practice English in daily life. A moderate level was also reported in item 4; knowing the English skill(s) that your children are good at and willing to support your children in that skill with 67% of parents only. The score may have been moderate due to the level of education of parents and their proficiency in English. However, 80% (high) of the parents reported that they encourage their children to practice English in daily life. This was due to parental attitudes towards the learning of English Language.

Therefore, the mean score of this section was 79%, which could be interpreted as a high level of “Parenting” type of parental involvement in supporting their children in learning English. The results were high since the respondents perceive the high significance of English language hence leading them to have a very positive attitude towards English language. Most of them reported that it was important for their children to learn English because it would be useful for work-related activities. The findings of this

study are close to (Pino-Juste & Rodríguez-Lopéz, 2007) study in Colombia whose results also showed that parents hold learning English in high esteem, and that they expect their children to start learning it at an early age and express how it can be beneficial for the children's future.

#### 4.2. Level of learning at home

The second section focused on the level of learning at home. The study was set to establish the level of learning at home as shown in table 2 below:

Table 2: Level of learning at home

Item	Statements	No of parents 30	Percentage	Ranking	Level of involvement
1	Assisting your children in their English homework	20	67	2	Moderate
2	Exchanging opinions about learning English with your children	12	40	5	Low
3	Preparing a proper home environment for learning English	18	60	4	Moderate
4	Helping your children to set a goal in learning English each term e.g., getting higher grades, arranging a reading plan	24	80	1	High
5	Arranging time for your children to do and review their English homework	20	67	3	Moderate
	Average		314=63		

The results in Table 2 above revealed that the majority of the respondents set goals in learning English with their children each term 80% this was regardless of their level of education and their level of proficiency in English language. 67% of parents provided assistance in their children's English homework. These results were in close relation to the level of proficiency of parents in English language. While 37% of the parents reported that they were fair in English only 13% reported that they were good. 67% of the parents also arranged time for their children to do and review their English homework and prepared a learning atmosphere at home for their children. The last level of parental involvement is about exchanging opinions about learning English with their children (40%). Most parents expressed that they lacked knowledge on how they could enhance the learning of English language. The average score on the involvement of parents in the learning of English language is 62.8 which indicate respondents have a moderate level of learning home.

#### 4.3. Level of Cooperation with School

The study also sought to establish the level of cooperation with school as a type of parental involvement in their children's English Language Learning. The results are presented in table 3 as shown below:

Table 3: Level of Cooperation with School

Item	Statements	No of parents 30	Percentage	Ranking	Level of involvement
1	Being a part of the schools' parents committee and attending meetings at the school	12	40	4	Low
2	Talking with your children's	20	67	3	Moderate

	English teacher and other parents in planning the curriculum of English				
3	Coordinating with English teachers to solve the problem of your children's English learning	22	73	2	High
4	Being a part of the team that can implements the school policy in enhancing the English language learning of your children	6	20	5	Very low
5	Knowing your children's English grades at school	24	80	1	High
	Average		280=56%		

The results in table 3 show that the highest percentage (90%) indicated that the respondents knew their children's English grades at school. Furthermore, the respondents coordinated with English teachers to solve their children's problems in learning English (73%) and also talked with their children's English teacher and other parents in planning the curriculum of English. Further, 40% of parents were a part of the school committee and attended school meetings. However, only 20% of parents reported to being a part of the team that can implement the school policy in enhancing the English language learning of your children. The mean score of this section was 56% and it showed that the respondents had a moderate level of "Cooperation with school" type of parental involvement in their children's English learning.

#### 4.4. Level of Volunteering

Another indicator for parental involvement in their children's English Language Learning is level of volunteering. The study established the level of parental volunteering as shown in table 4 below:

**Table 4: Level of Volunteering**

Item	Statements	No of parents 30	Percentage	Ranking	Level of involvement
1	Volunteering to be coordinators for English teachers and other parents	8	26	3	Very low
2	Volunteering to be coordinators between English teacher and students	10	33	2	Very low
3	Participating in the school's activities about English language learning	26	87	1	Very high
4	Being a guest teacher or inviting experienced English teachers to teach English	1	3	5	Poor
5	Being a guest teacher or inviting experienced English teachers to teach English	2	6	4	Poor
	Average		155=31%		

Table 4 above shows that the respondents supported English language learning at their children's school at the highest mean score (87%) by participating in the school's activities about English language learning. Parents reported that they participated in terms of material, providing time for their children at home and by being in touch with the teachers of their children. 33% of the parents volunteer to be coordinators between English teacher and students while 26% volunteered to be coordinators for English

teachers and other parents. Only 6% of the parents volunteered to be a guest teacher or inviting experienced English teachers to teach English at your children’s school and 3% volunteered to a guest teacher or inviting experienced English teachers to teach English at your children’s school. This is because the respondents were a teacher by profession. The average mean score for this section was 31%, which indicated that the respondents had a very low level of “Volunteering” type of parental involvement in their children’s English language learning.

#### 4.5. Level of Collaborating with Community

The last section sought parental involvement in their Children’s English Language Learning within the community. The results are presented in table 5 as shown below:

**Table 5: Level of Collaborating with Community**

Item	Statements	No of parents 30	Percentage	Ranking	Level of involvement
1	Encouraging your children to participate in English learning activities	0	0	0	Poor
2	Taking your children to learn English at the library, museum and learning center	6	20	2	Very low
3	Arranging activities that enhance English learning for students e.g., helping with homework, storytelling and providing cartoons or movies in English	14	47	1	Low
4	Collaborating with the community in arranging English learning activities	0	0	0	Poor
5	Giving advice about English language learning to other parents	0	0	0	Poor
	Average		67=13		Very low

This section presents very low parental involvement due to lack of awareness by parents and lack of resources. The highest score in this section was 47% that entails parents arranging activities that enhance English learning for students in their community such as e.g. helping with homework, storytelling, talking and songs and providing cartoons or movies in English. The parents reported that they were aware of songs and cartoons that would enhance the learning of their children’s English as some teachers could direct them to provide them.

For instance, one parent from a private school reported that they were asked to expose their children in PP1 to the following cartoon; *Dora, crybabies* and *Masha and the bear*. Only 20% of the respondents reported that they take their children to learn English at the library. All parents reported that there were not aware of any museum and learning center in their community. Moreover, all parents reported that they were not aware of English learning activities in their community thus they could not give advice about English language learning to other parents in the community. Thus, the mean score of this section was 13%, which showed a very low level of “Collaborating with Community” type of the respondents’ parental involvement in their children’s English learning.

#### 4.6. Level of each Type of Parental Involvement in their Children’s English

The findings of the study show the level of the respondents' parental involvement in their children's English learning of each type of involvement is summarized in the table 6 below:

**Table 6: Level of each Type of Parental Involvement in their Children's English**

Item	Type of parental involvement	Mean	Ranking	Level of involvement
1	Parenting	79	1	High
2	Learning at home	63	2	Moderate
3	Cooperation with school	56	3	Moderate
4	Volunteering	31	4	Very low
5	Collaboration with community	13	5	Very low
	Average	242=48%		Low

Table 6 above indicates that the type of parental involvement in their children's English learning that the respondents were most involved with was "Parenting" type (mean score = 79%), which can be regarded as a high level of involvement. On the other hand, the type of parental involvement that the respondents were least involved with in their children's English learning was "collaboration with the community" type (mean score = 13%), which was a very low level of parental involvement. This was due to lack of awareness. The total mean score of the respondents' parental involvement in their children's English language learning was 48%, which can be regarded at a low level.

## 5. Conclusion

The study concludes that parental involvement in their children's English language learning was achieved through "Parenting" type while they rarely participated in their children's learning activities at the community level. The study concludes that a well-designed parent-child sharing training program may impact positively on the learning of English language. Further, positive parental engagement behaviors in language learning such as parents' motivation and support in their children's learning English enhances the learning of English language.

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