

**Action Research Study
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Title of the Study: Improving Students' Achievement Through Parent Communication
Location or Institution Roda Bent Jassem Secondary School
Abstract <p>This action research purpose was to improve the academic achievement of a group of students from two classes of grade 11 by communicating to their parents. Thirty students from a secondary school in Qatar and their parents participated. Those students showed low grades in the end of the first semester tests of Arabic and English. Teachers said that those students parents never communicate to school or ask about their children academic level, so the teachers , the social worker and me communicated to those students parents and provided information about how they can assist learning at home. Several methods were used to involve the parents in their daughters education such as two-way communicating tools, weekly students reports, participating in school activities and parents-teacher conference. A variety of techniques were used such as pre and post surveys for parents and for students, interviews with Arabic and English teachers, pre and post tests in Arabic and English. The parents demonstrated a large increase in their involvement in their daughters education. The posttest results showed improvement in all of those students academic level. The students benefited from their parents involvement in their education and became better academic achievers.</p>
Grade Level: secondary
Data Collection Methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two pre-surveys for parents.• Pre-survey for students. • Two post surveys for parents.• Post survey for students• Interviews with Arabic and English teachers.• Pre-tests in Arabic and English.• Post tests in Arabic and English.
Subject/Topic: Administration

Improving Students' Achievement Through Parent Communication

An Action Research Project

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Abstract

This action research purpose was to improve the academic achievement of a group of students from two classes of grade 11 by communicating to their parents. Thirty students from a secondary school in Qatar and their parents participated. Those students showed low grades in the end of the first semester tests of Arabic and English. Teachers said that those students parents never communicate to school or ask about their children academic level, so the teachers , the social worker and me communicated to those students parents and provided information about how they can assist learning at home. Several methods were used to involve the parents in their daughters education such as two-way communicating tools, weekly students reports, participating in school activities and parents-teacher conference. A variety of techniques were used such as pre and post surveys for parents and for students, interviews with Arabic and English teachers, pre and post tests in Arabic and English. The parents demonstrated a large increase in their involvement in their daughters education. The post test results showed improvement in all of those students academic level. The students benefited from their parents involvement in their education and became better academic achievers.

Introduction

In my school which is a secondary girls' school, there are certain classes in which most of the students have low academic levels; those classes are 11\C and 11\E. When I asked their teachers if they called the parents of those students to discuss with them their daughters academic levels, they told me that most of those parents never communicate with them or ask about their daughter's academic levels although the school sent them their daughter's reports. In this action research I tried to improve the academic levels of those students by communicating with their parents.

Literature Review:

Parents play a key role in their children's development and learning; they can work as facilitators of their children's development and can be effective in raising their children academic level (Beveridge, 2004). Recently researchers have studied the role schools play in encouraging and facilitating parents' roles in children's academic achievement. The relationship that develops between parents and teachers and between communities and schools is very important. There is increasing evidence that the quality of these links influences children's and adolescents' school success (Booth & Dunn, 1996). Teenagers are very emotional persons who like to be independent and search for a stable identity and for social success as they transform from a child to a young adult. Parents can play a great role in building their children self-esteem and giving them confident in themselves which make them successful people(Owens,1995).

Research has proved that **the parents of** adolescents in secondary school can change their underachiever children from C students to A students by teaching them the art of learning and by keeping them on the right truck (Cogen,1992). Research has also demonstrated that communication with parents is essential. Teachers can build bridges of communication with parents through dialogues and cooperating with each others to build communities of learners who work with each others to facilitate the best education for children (McCaleb,1994).

Parent involvement in the child's education and the context of the school can make a real difference in the child's educational experience which includes the student achievement, grades and standardized test scores or other aspects of the process like program enrollment or behavioral problems the student might have. Parental involvement is influenced by factors both internal and external to the family (Schneider & Coleman, 1993)

One general approach that some teachers have found useful is to involve parents in learning activities with their children at home. This type of parent involvement is distinctly different from the parent involvement that brings parents into the classroom to assist the teacher or the parent involvement that includes parents as participants in decisions on school governance. Parent involvement in learning activities is a strategy for increasing the educational effectiveness of the time that parents and children spend with one another at home. (Epstein, 2001, p. 101). Parental involvement has a significant role in student success in all school grade levels. Parents participation at high school activities as athletic events or dramatic performances is correlated significantly with children's school achievement (Fagnano & Werber, 1994).

Something I'm interested in is ---

Can parents communicating with school improve the students academic level?

Community Setting

Students of the targeted classes come from middle class families, 75% are Qataris, 25% are from other Arab nationalities. They have attendance rate of 85%. The parents of 50% of the students made one contact with the students' teacher during the school year. Most of the parents have not completed their secondary education. They are of medium educational level, they come from nomadic background who do not give a lot of importance to completing their daughters' secondary education. They communicate once or twice a year to the school, but they rarely participate in school's activities.

The targeted group of students showed low academic achievement in Arabic and English. This group of students consists of thirty students distributed in two 11 grade classes. There are 12 students in class 11\C and 18 in class 11\E. The rest of the students in those classes are of high or medium academic level. There are 514 students in the school, distributed on 18 classes, 6 classes of 10 grade, 6 classes of 11 grade and 6 of grade 12 assigned heterogeneously within average of 28 students. The program of this school includes a school day of 6 hours and 20 minutes. Forty five minutes are devoted to each subject. This school follows the Ministry Of Education system which applies that 10 grade students should study Arabic, English, Math, science, Social studies, Research Skills, Domestic Science, Islamic Studies, IT and physical Education. In the 11th grade, there are the Arts section and the Science section, the students have to choose one section to join and complete for the 12th grade. In the Arts section, students study just a little amount of Math and Science in addition to a larger amount of Arabic, English, Islamic Studies, Geography, History, Community Studies, Philosophy, psychology, Domestic Science IT and physical Education. In the Science section, the students study Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Advanced Math, English, Arabic, Islamic studies Domestic Science, IT and physical Education. There are 80 qualified teachers in the school.

Data collection

To collect data a variety of techniques were used:

1. Two pre-surveys for parents.
2. Pre-survey for students.
3. Two post surveys for parents.
4. Post survey for students
5. Interviews with Arabic and English teachers.
6. Pre-tests in Arabic and English.
7. Post tests in Arabic and English.

Analysis Methods

After analyzing the end of the first semester tests results ,I found out that the academic level of many of the students in two of 11th grade was low especially in Arabic and English. As it is clear in figure 1, most of the students in those classes have D, a few got C and F grades while none of them got A or B . So I decided to have my action research project on improving those students academic level by involving their parents in their education.

Figure 1:Unit tests scores prior to parent involvement intervention

Grading Scale	Arabic Test	English Test
A (90-100%)	0%	0%
B (89-80%)	0%	0%
C (79-60%)	25%	9%
D(59- 50%)	48%	55%
F (49- 0%)	21%	34%

At the beginning I sent with the students an agreement letter to their parents to clarify the project to them. Then I interviewed the Arabic and the English teachers of those students. They told me that those students do not do their homework and do not participate in the discussions in class and that their parents never come to school to ask about their academic level. The teachers said that they tried to communicate to those parents by sending their daughters reports to them and invitations to come to the school to discuss their daughters academic level ,but they didn't receive any respond from them.

Next I gave the students a survey to fill and I called the parents by telephone. I asked them if they got their daughters reports and the teachers invitation to discuss their daughters academic level, most of them said that they didn't receive them. Then I asked them if they got the letter I sent to them and they said that they got it. I invited them to a parents conference and I told them that I'll send for them two surveys that we need them to fill in and send it back with their daughters. A week later ,all of the surveys were back.

Figure 2:Parental assistance and involvement according to the students prior to parent involvement intervention

Survey Items	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
Discuss school day with parents	10%	20%	51%	19%
Parents inspect assignments	9%	11%	50%	30%
Provide studying environment	16%	12%	24%	48%
Parents help on HW	8%	17%	32%	43%
Average	13%	18%	47%	42%

Figure 3: Parental academic involvement at home according to the parents prior to parent involvement intervention

Survey Items	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
Discuss your daughter's school day	55%	38%	7%	0%
Inspect assignment	65%	27%	4%	4%
Provide studying environment	70%	19%	7%	4%
Help your daughter with HW	27%	40%	8%	25%
Average	65%	37%	8%	10%

When we compared the students surveys to their parents surveys, we found that there was a big difference in the students and parents responds. We found that 13% of the students said that they always get assistance from their parents in their education, while 65% of the parents said that they always assist their daughters in their education, 18% of the students said that usually get assistance from their parents in their education, while 37% of the parents said that they usually assist their daughters in their education, 47% of the students said that sometimes they get assistance from their parents while 8% of the parents said that they sometimes assist their daughters in their education, 42% of the students said that they never get assistance from their parents, while 10% of the parents said that they never assist their daughters in their education. To interpret this difference , we think that the parents and the students look at the situations from different prescriptive. But in general, it's obvious that there was a lack of parental academic assistance to their daughters.

On the parents- teacher conference ,most of the parents came. The classes teachers , the social worker and me met the parents and distributed their daughters reports so they could be discussed with them. we clarified for them the importance of their role in their children education and asked them to help to raise their children achievement by cooperating with their teachers and we told them that the teachers will give their children three homework a week and that they should make sure that their children do their homework and if they need any help from the teachers they can contact them through their emails or by mobiles and we gave them a list of the teachers' mobiles and emails in addition to the school's telephone number. Then we asked them to give us their mobiles numbers and their emails so that the teachers can communicate with them and tell them any remarks about their daughters progress. We told them that the students reports or any other remarks will be sent by email to them. The social worker told the parents of ways to help increasing their daughters academic achievement such as watching their attendance, motivating them to learning, participating in the school activities, monitoring time spent on academic, discussing their daughters school day and inspecting assignments. They can support, compliment and praise their daughters. I told them that we are going to follow up with their daughters to check their progress, and after eight weeks we are going to test them to compare the results to the previous test results . We distributed another survey to measure the amount of parental communication to the school and we asked the parents to fill in the survey and give it back at the end of the conference. The results are shown in the following table.

Figure 4: Parental communication to the school according to parents prior to parent involvement intervention

Survey Items	Always	Usually	sometimes	Never
Attend parent-teacher conf.	3%	5%	14%	78%
Contact your daughter's teacher	5%	6%	18%	71%
Contact the social worker	6%	12%	18%	64%
Participate in school's activities	0%	3%	10%	87%

The table shows that there is a lack in parental communication to the school and that most of the parents never communicate to the school.

Intervention Procedures

The objective of this research was to increase students academic achievement by communicating to parents and involving them in their daughters education, so we used a variety of communication tools such as newsletters, telephones, mobiles, and emails. Through those tools the parents were informed regularly about their children conduct and progress in the form of text messages or weekly students reports. The parents were asked frequently to participate in school activities such as a charity selling, the open day party and some sports activities , and they participated in most of those events . A parents- teachers conference was held to discuss the students academic achievement.

The parents were told of ways to increase their involvement in their daughters academic such as watching their daughters attendance, motivating them to learning, supporting, complimenting and praising them, participating in the school activities, monitoring time spent on academic , discussing their daughters school day and inspecting assignments. After eight weeks there were post tests in Arabic and English to measure the students achievement after the intervention.

Results and Findings

After eight weeks we distributed post surveys to the students and to the parents and we gave the students post tests in Arabic and English. The results are shown in the tables below. Figure5 _shows that 21% of the students responded with the answer with Always to the parental involvement in students education, while it was 13% before the intervention. 49% of the students respond with Usually while it was 18% before the intervention. We noticed that there was no change in the number of students who responded with Sometimes which is 47%. There was a real difference in the number of students who responded with Never, only 9% of the students said that their parents never assisted them in their education, while it was 42% who said so before the intervention.

When we came to the parents survey about the parental academic involvement as shown in figure 6, we found that although there was a difference in the percentage of the responses, it also showed a positive increase in the parental involvement in students education.

Figure 5: Parental involvement according to the students:

Survey Items	Always		Usually		sometimes		Never	
	pre	post	pre	Post	pre	post	Pre	post
Discuss school day with parents	10%	29%	20%	30 %	51%	41%	19%	0%
Parents inspect assignments	9%	10%	11%	56%	50%	34%	30%	0%
Provide studying environment	16%	20%	12%	35%	24%	30%	48%	15%
Parents help on HW	8%	12%	17%	35%	32%	43%	43%	15%
Average	13%	21%	18%	49%	47%	47%	42%	9%

Figure 6:Parental academic involvement at home according to the parents

Survey Items	Always		Usually		sometimes		Never	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Discuss your daughter's school day	55%	62%	38%	31%	7%	7%	0%	0%
Inspect assignment	65%	78%	27%	15%	4%	7%	4%	0%
Provide studying environment	70%	79%	19%	13%	7%	8%	4%	0%
Help your daughter with HW	27%	55%	40%	39%	8%	6%	25%	0%
Average	65%	82%	37%	29%	8%	8%	10%	0%

When we compared the results of the parental communication survey before and after the intervention as figure 7 shows, we noticed that before the intervention the parents responds were 4% with always, 8% usually, 18% sometimes and 90% never. After the intervention it changed to be 32% always, 30% usually, 39% sometimes and 32% never.

Figure7: Parental communication to the school according to the parents

Survey Items	Always		Usually		Sometimes		Never	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Attend parent-teacher conf.	3%	55%	5%	15%	14%	20%	78%	10%
Contact your daughter's teacher	5%	30%	6%	42%	18%	28%	71%	0%
Contact the social worker	6%	12%	12%	28%	18%	50%	64%	10%
Participate in school's activities	0%	11%	3%	15%	10%	33%	87%	41%
Average	4%	32%	8%	30%	18%	39%	90%	32%

Conclusion

Based on the data presented above and its analysis, the parents demonstrated a large increase in their involvement and as shown in figure 8 which compared the students tests scores before and after the intervention , there was increase in students academic achievement.

Before parental involvement, no student from the targeted group got A or B. After the parental involvement 6% of the students got A in Arabic and 3% of them got A in English, 30% of the students got B in Arabic, and 27% got B in English. There is increase in number of students who got C and decrease in number of students who got D. No student got F in Arabic or English.

Figure8:Test scores before and after parental involvement

Grading Scale	Arabic Test		English Test	
	pre	post	pre	post
A (90-100%)	0%	6%	0%	3%
B (89-80%)	0%	30%	0%	27%
C (79-60%)	25%	60%	9%	63%
D(59- 50%)	48%	4%	55%	7%
F (49- 0%)	21%	0%	34%	0%

The strategies used in the research to increase parental involvement had a positive impact on most of the students. The parents-teacher conference was very helpful for both the teachers and the parents . The students benefit from their parents involvement in their education and became better academic achievers.

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Appendix A

Parents' Agreement Letter

Dear Parents,

I am studying a Master Program in Qatar University. As a part of this program I will be conducting an action research project concerning parental involvement and its effect on students' academic achievement. You and your daughter will have the opportunity to partake in this fulfilling and educational research. Your daughters will be asked to complete a survey. In addition you'll be asked to add to our data by filling out two surveys. Please keep in mind that all responds have to be honest so our study will be valid and reliable. The surveys will remain confidential and will not affect students' grades.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation. Feel free to contact me at Roda Bent Jassim School on telephone number 4688243 or 4688245 if you have any questions or concerns.

School Principal:

Moza Alboainain

Agree.....

Disagree.....

Appendix B

Interview Questions for the Teachers

1. -Why do you think the targeted students had low academic achievement?
2. How often did the parents communicated with you?
3. What type of communication did you have with the parents of the targeted students?
4. What are the ways that you use to communicate to the parents?
5. Do you have the parents telephone numbers or emails?
6. Have you tried to communicate to them? And have you got any respond?
7. How can the parents help in increasing their daughters academic achievement?

Appendix C

Student Survey

1-Do you discuss your school day with your parents?

Always

Usually

Sometimes

2-Do your parents check if you have any homework every day or if you have done it?

Always

Usually

Sometimes

3- Do your parents provide a quiet studying environment for you?

Always

Usually

Sometimes

4-Do you ask someone at home for help on your homework?

Always

Usually

Sometimes

Appendix D

Parents Academic Involvement Survey

1. Do you discuss with your daughters her school day?

Always

Usually

Sometimes

2- Do you help your daughter with her homework?

Always

Usually

Sometimes

3-Do you check if your daughter had done her homework?

Always

Usually

Sometimes

4 - Do you provide a quiet studying environment for your daughter?

Always

Usually

Sometimes

Appendix E

Parents Communication Survey

1- Do you attend parents-teacher conferences?

Always

Usually

Sometimes

2- Do you contact your daughter's teachers?

Always

Usually

Sometimes

3-Do you contact the social worker?

Always

Usually

Sometimes

4-Do you participate in the school's activities?

Always

Usually

Sometimes