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Mothers' involvement in children's learning

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Khush Funer Murtaza



The Aga Khan University-Professional Development Centre North (AKU-PDCN) believes that without involvement of communities and parents in the school teaching and learning process, the school improvement initiatives taken from the outside do not impact much effectively in change processes. We aim to cooperate and work very closely with all members of the communities.

Apart from other stakeholders of the communities, to increase the maximum capacity building of the communities and their participation in the school improvement activities the Educational Development and Improvement Program (EDIP) involves parents particularly “mothers’ in the teaching and learning processes by celebrating “**Mothers’ Day**” and sometimes mothers meeting in each of the project schools during various terms of the academic year. The School Management Committee (SMC), the Village Education Committee (VEC) and in some

schools the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) plays a vital role in collaborating with faculty members to ensure maximum participation on the Mothers' day. Initially the mothers showed little reluctance to come to school because of the cultural sensitivities in the context. The conducive environment in the project schools and friendly interaction of the faculty has encouraged them to visit the schools frequently in order to share their feelings and ideas about how mothers can contribute to the school and students performance. In most of the schools mothers had never visited the school before the program. Some mothers shared that they had never thought about how they could help the school and their children in their learning process. Frequent meetings of Faculty with SMCs, and some mothers who are working in different schools as teachers, the attendance and participation of mothers in meetings has increased gradually. The faculty members encourage mothers to serve as members of the school management committees and village education committees to become more informed about what happens in schools, and to contribute knowledge about their children and having an equal voice with teachers.

The significant features of mothers meetings are to:

- Discuss with them about creating a home environment that encourages the children's learning
- Become more involved in their children's education at home.
- Communicate high, yet reasonable expectations for their children's achievement and future guidance.
- Develop procedures that enable mothers to monitor and help homework.
- Provide frequent, timely communication on student progress so mothers can respond to student's individual interests and difficulties.
- Discuss issues related to students leaving the school premises during school hours.
- Discuss cleanliness and basic health problems.
- Use mothers as resource persons in teaching and learning process i.e. some mothers are very good in sewing and cooking, while some are working as health workers. The faculty members try to invite and arrange sessions where these mothers share their skills and experiences.
- Share library resources that literate mothers might read aloud to their children at home and illiterate mothers could tell indigenous stories to their children.
- Identify how mothers can manage and prepare low cost cushions/seats to their children who are expected to sit on the ground as in few schools where building/space is not available for some classes.

There are clear benefits in creating an effective involvement of mothers in the school process. It helps in minimizing the students' absenteeism from the classes. It is observed that in schools

where mothers have participated, students no longer leave the premises during school hours and attendance has increased. Cleanliness of student's and quality of their uniform has improved. Students bring basic resources e.g. pen, pencil, sharpener and writing and reading resources in their bags. Mothers have prepared low cost cushions for their children who have to sit on the floor due to lack of building and space in few project schools. Some mothers and their educated daughters are encouraged to teach in the school as substitute and volunteer teachers. Mothers have started visiting the schools where they discuss the performance of their children and ask the teachers how they could assist their children more meaningfully at home. Health visitors and health workers are being used as resources persons in mothers meetings, where they share, conduct sessions on basic health education and suggest activities to mothers about prevention of disease which are caused by germs.

All the above results indicate that mothers can be involved in forming effective partnership with home and communities to improve the schools.

Michael Fullan (1997, pp. 42-43) says it best: "Nothing motivates a child more than when learning is valued by schools and families/communities working together in partnership. These forms of (mothers) involvement do not happen by accident or even by invitation. They happen by explicit strategic intervention."

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