

Exploring Parental Participation in the School Improvement Plan⁵⁹³

Gwen Jelly L. Bentayao^a, Cristy Pearl G. Quibod^b, Marleonie M. Bauyot^c

^a*gjbentayao@gmail.com* ^b*cristypearl.quibod@deped.gov.ph*, ^c*mmbauyot@addu.edu.ph*

^a*Senior High School Faculty, Rizal Memorial Colleges, Davao City, 8000, Philippines*

^b*Teacher I, GSIS Heights National High School, Davao City, 8000, Philippines*

^c*Professor, Ateneo de Davao University, Davao City, 8000, Philippines*

Abstract

Active parental participation in education is needed to acquire optimal education achievement. As numerous literatures suggest, educating a child takes a whole community. Hence, delving into parents' life experiences regarding their parental participation in school improvement plans is a meaningful discussion for educational management studies. This study utilized a phenomenological inquiry to understand further the coping strategies employed by parent officers with three years of experience in the school governance council (SGC). With a semi-structured questionnaire, the data was collected from 5 participants through face-to-face, in-depth interviews. The coding and thematic analysis results showed prevalent themes for each research objective. From the experiences shared, the participants took part in improving school facilities and infrastructures like the water system and school sanitation. It helps foster active participation and involvement and positively and negatively impacts them. A notable negative experience is the non-participation of other parents. The strategies they employed revealed the effective use of communication, which enhances collaboration; it also showed that participants are problem-solvers and knowledgeable in making initiatives even with limited available resources. Parents also believe they feel personal and interpersonal development with their engagement in the school improvement plans. This study shows that parental participation promotes collaboration between parents and teachers and family, school, and community on school development projects.

Keywords: Parental participation; School Improvement Plan; Improvement on School Infrastructures; Enhanced Communication; and Visioning of Sustainable Parental Involvement

1. Introduction

Parental participation in school events has been shown to predict student performance. School-based planning addresses campus issues locally to improve education. Parents should collaborate on school programs and activities. Understanding these stakeholders' opinions can assist school leaders in developing decentralized globalization initiatives.

Many schools worldwide use the Parents and Teachers' Association (PTA) to involve parents and teachers in school-based planning. Financial aid and facility improvement initiatives led by teachers and parents are two of many causes. Parents and Teachers Association activism has helped Edo State secondary schools grow (Ofeimu & Uloko, 2022). Reports indicate substantial PTA participation in financial, facilities, and labor development.

Due to government policy requirements, PTA engagement in school-based planning is falling in rural Ghana (Ballang & Aboodey, 2023). Due to a free education system, parents are not forced to contribute financially or labor. Due to inadequate school facilities, parents are reluctant to donate. PTA parent officers must also learn the policies that hinder their capacity to handle the school's workforce and infrastructure issues.

In Tarlac and Sorsogon, where most schools offered modular or distance learning, parents and teachers concentrated on academic support during the pandemic (Pascua & Dulos, 2020; Guan & Benavides, 2021). Parents' and teachers' increasing school-based activity participation and initiation reflect student progress. Academic success requires teacher and parent initiatives. Parental engagement outside of school is a new challenge.

Locally, instructional tasks should be transferred from teachers in the classroom to parents at home to implement the basic education learning continuity plan. The primary education learning continuity method requires parental instruction. Panes & Torrentira (2021) in Davao City's Tugbok District. Modular learning benefits from parent-teacher contact and realistic

instructional time.

Thus, this research explored parents' perspectives and practices in their involvement in the school-based planning processes. It potentially gave an understanding of how parental participation is needed in making plans for improving and developing both the learners and the school.

1.1. Review of Related Literature

This section provides the relevant literature, studies, and articles that can also contribute to exploring this topic.

School-based Planning Processes

Strategic planning involves methodical goal-setting, strategy selection, and resource allocation. Strategic planning and proactive decision-making dominate. Strategic planning increases academic performance, organizational performance, resource allocation, stakeholder engagement, and educational adaptation, according to the study. Strategic planning requires skilled leadership, according to Parry (2023). School administrators must involve stakeholders, explain thoroughly, and give continuing support and direction to implement the strategic plan.

Carvalho et al. (2022) study school planning and review using the school growth strategic action plan. Quality assessments measure how successfully these tactics helped children in school. School reform efforts can be assessed using study quality measures. These include setting clear goals and objectives that meet school priorities and needs, engaging stakeholders, assigning and planning resources, monitoring and evaluating systems, and measuring student performance. Quality measures demonstrate that strategy action plans benefit schools, according to the study.

Experiences of Parental Participation

Developing Responsibility and Dedication

School administrators have always valued parental involvement in improvement efforts (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). If they use the integrated support system, schools must work with parents and encourage shared responsibility to succeed. It immediately improves education by increasing family involvement and parental support for schools and structure. According to Perdana et al. (2023), involving parents in school activities strengthens the bond between parents and the school, equalizes or guides care goals for their children, and fosters a mindset of reciprocal accountability between parents and educators. Another study stresses the significance of incorporating essential stakeholders, such as teachers and parents, in planning to develop a sense of ownership and commitment among those involved (Damanpour & Schneider, 2014).

Assessing the Influence on Student Achievement

However, Vezzali and Friends (2019) examined how intergroup contact and empathy can predict positive attitudes toward immigrants. It emphasizes the importance of cooperative relationships between educators, parents, and students in creating a positive educational environment that fosters student accomplishment and the perceived impact of such collaboration on student results. Parents' involvement in their children's education was also hindered by inadequate communication, poor parent-teacher relationships, and dry leadership by school heads. Alice et al. (2016)

School-based planning can assist parents and teachers create inclusive educational practices to help all students achieve academically and personally. Teachers and parents may eliminate bias, prejudice, and unequal resource access that inhibits student growth. All kids feel safe, appreciated, and capable of academic success with inclusive practices and policies (Slee et al., 2016). Education, fairness, and equality are explored in this book. Shared inclusive learning environment designing boosts academic performance and student needs. Cariaga et al. (2024) found that parents worry about their children's emotional and social development since upbringing affects personality, abilities, adaptability, and mental health. Parental school support is encouraged.

Strategies of Parental Participation

Promoting Social Support and Links

Support networks help teachers and parents to share experiences, seek advice, and access tools to handle school-based planning stress. Linking with others in the same situations can give perspective, emotional support, and practical coping skills (Johnson & McCreary, 2015). It oscillates the role of social support networks in helping teachers manage their jobs, particularly school-based planning.

Making Use of Time Management Techniques

Overwork is reduced via time and energy management. It helps youngsters organize their schoolwork without neglecting other tasks (Zhang et al., 2016). This study examines Chinese university students' perfectionism, academic fatigue, and involvement. Time management helps busy teachers and parents avoid burnout and increase engagement.

Task prioritizing, goal formulation, and regular planning meetings help parents balance school-based planning with other responsibilities. Fiorella and Zhang's (2020) literature study discusses time management. It boosts productivity and reduces stress. These ideas can help parents plan for schools.

Insights of Parental Participation

Promoting an Environment of Ongoing Enhancement

Parents monitor and improve educational programs and practices in school-based planning. It can help kids establish a growth attitude by assessing academic progress, identifying areas for improvement, and implementing effective tactics. Educational consistency is crucial to development, Fullan and Quinn said in 2016. Harmonizing several learning processes is required.

Many research claims that school-related activities affect parents' thinking and behavior. Jónsdóttir et al. (2017) found that giving parents a say in school decisions and future directions increased their confidence in the school, general satisfaction, satisfaction with instruction, and communication with school staff.

Fostering Cooperation Between Families and Schools

Parents assist schools in bridging the achievement gap by providing a learning environment. Student communication, trust, and learning unity are enhanced by alignment. School-family-community relationships boost education and achievement, claims Epstein (2018). Further research in high-performing Jamaican schools' families and communities demonstrates optimism, dedication to learning, prioritizing student needs, connecting, working together, creating stakeholder coalitions, and encouraging school-wide family and community involvement. Epstein said this allowed schools to have the most family-community overlap (McPherson, 2022).

School-based planning can inform parents about their children's classroom curriculum, teachers' methods, and evaluation standards. Build on what your kids learn at school and make sure their experiences build on one other to help them learn at home. Sanders (2017) discusses curricular change and how parents and educators influence schooling. It emphasizes parental involvement in school-based planning to connect home and classroom expectations.

1.2. Research objectives

Specifically, this research seeks to answer the question:

- Describe the lived experiences of parents in their participation in school improvement plan;
- Identify the strategies used by parents to manage with the challenges faced in their participation in school improvement plan; and
- Give insights gained by parents in their involvement in school improvement plans.

1.3. Theoretical lens

This study follows Epstein's 1997 parental participation concept (Gilliam, 2021). This system connects school, family, and community. School improvement programs include all six categories of parent participation to increase student learning. Parenting helps all families build a learning home. Parent-teacher communication on student achievement is constant. Parent support is found through volunteering. The learning-at-home concept informs parents about their child's homework and academic progress. Parents can make school decisions like elected officials. Finally, collaboration is the most involved. Parents participate in school development programs like PTA infrastructure projects.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research design

This study employed a qualitative-phenomenological approach to explore the perspectives and practices of parents' involvement in school-based planning. Drislane (2014) states that qualitative research examines individuals' thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. Understanding causes, beliefs, and motivations was its goal. Idea trends and issues were highlighted (Defranza, 2015). Qualitative research examines a group or individual's experience (Creswell, 2013). It is widely used for scheduled, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews (Freeman, 2016).

2.1 Participants of the study

The participants of this study are five (5) parents in the Division of Davao City for the school year 2023-2024. It was based on the following inclusion criteria: a member of the parent-teacher association (PTA) for three years and above, has a child who is currently enrolled in the school, has active participation during SGC meetings or any school-related activities, and has meaningfully contributed and implemented tangible and intangible projects for the school improvement plan.

2.2. Data gathering

Researchers sought permission from the authorities before the data gathering. The researchers informed participants about the study. Participants were asked to affix their signatures to the informed consent letter before the interview. Recorded interviews were kept safely in my email and another drive on my laptop to secure all the data taken throughout the study. The participants' answers were carefully transcribed verbatim to guarantee validity and precision during the data analysis. More so, all the data will be permanently destroyed by reformatting the external hard drive. These actions ensure confidentiality, privacy, and security.

2.3. Data analysis plan

Interview data was carefully recorded and translated. The researchers coded the transcripts after reading and understanding them. The researchers utilized thematic analysis. Thematic analysis (TA) as identifying, organizing, and analyzing reoccurring themes or patterns in a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Noswell, 2017). Focusing on dataset meaning helped researchers understand shared meanings and experiences. Researchers identified key concepts and themes. These central ideas and topics were categorized based on responses like the other participants.

2.4. Ethical consideration

Every behavior researcher must be ethical. Ethical considerations played a vital role in assessing the ethical awareness of research studies that involved human participants in qualitative research. (Mirza et al., 2024). Therefore, this research was carried out by ethical norms. Researchers collected data when participants signed the informed consent. The informed consent was communicated via email and Messenger. The same procedure obtained informed consent. In absence of email and Messenger, the researchers looked for alternate ways to send and collect their signatures on the informed consent form through personal distribution. Participants were not coerced, thus, they can leave without explanation.

3. Findings and Discussions

This chapter examines parental participation in the school improvement plan and discusses the findings. The research questions were answered via an in-depth interview. From participant replies to emerged themes.

3.1 Experiences of parental participation in the school improvement plan

The first research objective was to explore the experiences of parental participation in the school improvement plan. Three significant themes emerged from the data collected: improving school facilities and infrastructure, fostering active participation and involvement, and impacts and experiences of motivation.

Improving School Facilities and Infrastructures

The analysis of the data gathered from the participants revealed a strong emerging theme that parents help improve school facilities and infrastructures. This theme reflected the theoretical lens utilized in this study, which was the highest level of involvement proposed by Epstein et al. (1997), namely collaborating with the community. Below are detailed discussions of core ideas under this theme.

Water Facilities and School Infrastructure. Their efforts included water and sanitation improvements. Parents worried about school sanitation and safe water. Additionally, parents have created make-shift classes. After parents heard their children had to take classes in the open gymnasium, which was improper for studying, the idea was born. We also

considered building partition walls for extra offices and feeding space.

"They do not drink water because the comfort rooms in the school stink, and there is no water, so that is when I was challenged." (P1)

"They only had classes in the gym, so he made a way. Create make-shift classrooms." P2,

Parents' school-based planning activities stem from teachers' and parents' infrastructure ownership (Damanpour & Schneider, 2014). They started the project because they wanted safe drinking water and clean comfort rooms for their children. The data confirms Durisic and Bunijevac (2017)'s claim that parent-school partnerships improve school development. They solved classroom challenges jointly after getting involved, like this study's participants. These demonstrate that parental involvement in school improvement improves facilities and infrastructure.

Fostering Active Participation

Another emerging theme generated from the participants' answers is fostering active participation and involvement. As these parents initiate efforts to improve school facilities such as water systems and classrooms, they highlight the urge for active participation of the PTA officers and members to achieve the project's end goal.

Active Participation. Like in the experiences gathered from the participants, the officers acknowledge that to continue working on the projects, they must push for themselves and set good examples. As they narrated:

"... it will be difficult for me to collect because it is voluntary, but if you explain to them, they will give it. So my role is to collect the money" (P1)

"We are officers here; that is our priority, and we are pushing." (P2)

"But when I saw that my colleagues challenged me because they helped me with what project at school, they encouraged me to be me, so we did all that project at school." (P3)

The shared accountability to support the school and its teachers for bettering their children's welfare further strengthens the relationship between parents and school personnel. This practice corroborates the study by Perdana et al. (2023), which will later result in constant communication channels between them.

Impacts and Experiences of Involvement

The third subtheme formulated is the impacts of experiences, both positive and negative implications, on them as parents in the school; it also encompasses their motivation for their continuous participation in the school improvement plan.

Positive Impacts and Improvements. Participants were so pleased with their efforts that they felt they had improved their children's academic performance. Additionally, it has improved their teacher connections.

"So their academics improved because they focused on their studies." P1

"So when arranged in their temporary room, they were ready to go to school." P2

"The improvement is massive because I used to be shy with the teachers or there was a gap, but now they want to talk a lot as if the teachers have become close to us." P3

Nicdao and Ancho (2020) stressed the need of stakeholder participation in community ownership and educational standards. Parents' collaboration to build school infrastructures is crucial to student success. Like the beneficial effects of their participation, it created a learning environment that reflected student and school success.

Challenges and Negative Experiences. The influence and experience of parent involvement in the school development plan also highlights parents' obstacles and negative experiences. Non-participation by other parents hurts them. Sometimes other parents are reluctant to help with planning, thus no attendance makes it hard.

"The negative is that if there are only a few officers, they are the only ones who come during the meeting." (P1)

"When we were working together, someone promised that we would catch up there, but he never showed up." (P2)

"Sometimes, parents, especially when we have programs, it is inevitable that they will ignore them and say we are the officers and will not give you support. There are many of them. They are about 70%" (P3)

Parents assisted in the following projects to support their children in school and care for them. Some parents' absences slowed project progress. Alice et al. (2016) noted that parents' illiteracy and head teachers' leadership styles impeded preschool participation. Parents may require more information from school authorities to attend such workshops.

Motivations and Reasons for Involvement. Participants explained why they kept participating in school improvement projects. The health of their children was their greatest concern. Another motive is the impact of successful projects, so they persevere and are delighted their children have clean water and more classrooms. As they said:

"... about water, because my children bring water at home because they do not drink at school, that motivates me because I am concerned about their health because they cannot drink the water at school." (P1)

"What motivated me was when I said that when the children are just starting here, they will not have water, so they will not drink, so they will not be able to use cr." (P2)

"Our help here is not just to help because something is missing; it is just to support my child so that he will not regret going to school here, so I will support him so that when the day comes when he is willing to go to school -support of his son is my motivation." (P4)

A recent study by Cariaga et al. (2024) stated that parents worry about their children's social and emotional well-being; with this, the drive to help improve the school environment is rooted in their love and concern for their children as school learners.

3.2 Strategies of parental participation in the school improvement plan

The second research objective was to identify the strategies parents use to cope with the challenges faced in their participation in school improvement plans. Three (3) significant themes emerged from the data collected. The statements of the participants support and justify these themes. The emerging themes are enhanced communication and collaboration, problem-solving and resourcefulness, and balancing responsibilities.

Enhanced Communication and Collaboration

The first emerging theme is enhanced communication and collaboration. Under this central theme, three core ideas emerged: attending meetings and actively participating, and collaborative communication and openness.

Attending meetings and actively participating. Attendance and active participation in those meetings evolved as a fundamental tactic, enabling parents to comprehend other individuals' viewpoints and preferences to reach a consensus. The assertions that were made to present this concept are as follows:

"First of all, attend the meeting so that you can meet other parents and know their likes and dislikes. Participate and attend to reach an agreement." (P1)

"I got to school to attend the meeting, and there is something to explain, I will explain." (P2)

The statement confirms that parents who attended meetings and actively participated in school activities could understand and agree on different opinions. George (2016) suggests that parents should attend school meetings, communicate with teachers via email or phone, support children at home, and be available to assure their well-being.

Communication and Openness. Parents also emphasized the importance of collaborative communication and openness, facilitating relationship-building and a shared understanding of attitudes and expectations. The participants emphasized this idea:

"Do not be shy, just talk. That is the important thing. Communicate so that you can get to know their attitude. Build a relationship." (P4)

"I will reach out directly to the teachers involved. Before, it was still difficult to communicate because I was always shy. However, since I started being open with them, especially about money collection for school projects, I have become more effective in communicating with them. Just be open; if I want to suggest something, I just tell them." (P5)

These statements demonstrate the importance of parents' communication and openness to school administration for project and activity execution. It would involve parents in school improvement. This statement encourages parents and teachers address parental school choice engagement expectations and opinions. Popovska et al. (2021). Open and fruitful discussion helps parents and others identify and achieve their goals.

Problem-solving and Resourcefulness

The second emerging theme is problem-solving and resourcefulness. Under this theme, three core ideas emerged: finding alternative solutions, transparency and accountability, and cooperation and collective decision-making.

Finding alternative solutions. Parents believed rapid and alternative solutions could improve the school and reduce internal-external conflict. Baker and colleagues (2016) found parents can spot problems and solutions. When obstacles arise, parents offer solutions.

"...Because if the budget cannot afford it, we always look for a different method." (P3)

"...Usually, the parent differs. But, we always negotiate what is better; we look for other alternatives." (P1)

Parents thought immediate and alternative answers may improve the school and prevent internal-external conflict. Baker and colleagues (2016) revealed that parents can identify challenges and solutions. Parents propose associated answers to prevent future barriers when impediments are found.

Transparency and Accountability. As noted, parents employ accountability and openness. Parents believe that showing other parents accomplished projects and resource sharing will excite and inspire them to engage. Thus, they realized they needed to share information on resource distribution based on PTA money.

"Show them our income from completed projects. People who don't know can state we'll give because of the improvements. Create a report because without it, they would be weak and we cannot change promptly. You need documentation to explain what happened to PTA money at the meeting." (P4)

"Report to them the accomplishments monthly or quarterly, even the collection of money, so that they will not wonder where the money they gave was used for." (P5)

The community can supervise school resource allocation, say Putra and Suryanawa (2022). When accountability and transparency exist, government-supported operating help is used. Community input on school policy helps management design and implement successful ways.

Balancing Responsibilities

The third emerging theme is balancing responsibilities. Under this theme, the core ideas emerged.

Time Management and Flexibility. Additionally, parents were willing to spend more time on school events and projects. They also understood the need to balance parenthood with educational advancement. They promised to be adaptable and prioritize tasks when needed.

"...If the school needs help and I do not even have a job, I willingly offer my time to help." (P4)

"I have a small farm at home, and we also have a shop. So, when I need something here, I will go here right away; when I am done with work, I will just return home immediately. I can balance my work and support school activities. If something is important at school, I will stop by the school." (P1)

Zhang et al. (2016) say that if people manage their time and energy well, they can complete school-based planning without feeling overwhelmed. Learning to manage time well can prevent burnout in busy parents.

3.3 Insights of parental participation in the school improvement plan

The third research objective is to give insights gained by parents in their involvement in school improvement plans. Based on the data collected, two main themes emerged, namely personal and interpersonal parental development, vision for sustained parental engagement, and promoting collaborative parent-teacher partnership.

Personal and Interpersonal Parental Development

The first central theme that emerged is parents' personal and interpersonal development. This theme emphasizes the development gained by parents in terms of their individual and interpersonal aspects with their involvement in school planning. Based on the data analysis, two core ideas emerged.

Personal Growth of Parents. Parents stated school-based planning gave them new knowledge and skills. They said they needed to learn how to manage PTA parents before becoming active. However, with the support of the school head and exposure to problems, they were able to adjust and grow as people, gaining information and social skills from other parents.

"... It is not the same as before when I was shy to talk, but because of being a member of the PTA, I learned not to be shy, and my mental health improved because it boosted my confidence in front of other parents." (P1)

"Aside from additional skills, my previous skills have improved; I have also learned how to socialize with people." (P2)

"I have gained additional and increased knowledge in terms of the school organization, projects, constructions and responsibility in the school participation." (P3)

Interestingly, the parents' story revealed their potential. Jónsdóttir et al. (2017) found that parents' involvement in school decision-making improved their self-esteem, teaching, and learning and school staff communication. Their participation in school decision-making improves their social skills and school structure.

Visioning of Sustained Parental Engagement

Parent officers envision that other parents will emulate their participation, involvement, and initiatives. These core ideas are discussed in detail below.

Constant Monitoring and Inquiry. Parents discovered that frequent school visits and school meetings can help them monitor their child's academic achievement. It improves family, school, and community collaboration and parental participation.

"Monitor our children including visiting the school and also monitor the Academic performance. Another thing is, I will ask my child what they are doing at school." (P1)

"I ask them what happened at school, then after that, they express what experience they have done at school." (P2)

According to Myers-Young (2018), parents should continue to participate in school activities for many reasons. Participation in their child's education can boost a school's reputation and motivate other parents. Teachers benefit from parent participation. When parents participate, teachers can maintain a classroom climate and push students to succeed and pursue higher education.

4. Conclusion

Parental participation is crucial to school improvement efforts. It boosts school operations, personal and social development, and long-term school engagement.

Parents could develop schools by building water systems. Parents worried about their children's safety pushed for water systems and school walls. Participation and caring for their child encourage active participation in school-based planning. Parents' unique school planning skills help them overcome problems and collaborate. Parents stress the importance of school attendance. They learn about school needs by being there. They believed regular attendance at meetings and school activities showed support for their children. It also stressed the significance of parent communication and collaboration in accomplishing unity. Parents' inventiveness and problem-solving skills help them find alternatives and reach a consensus in difficult situations. Working parents must balance duties and fulfill their responsibilities. Interestingly, parental participation

insights are meaningful to them. Involvement helps them gain new skills. Participation allows them to work with school staff, stakeholders, and other parents. Thus, transparency and engaging activities foster teamwork.

Finally, parents' school improvement plan experiences enable personal growth. It underlines the benefits for their children's academic progress and welfare. Parental involvement ensures a smooth learning experience for students.

5. Recommendations

The following suggestions are made to incorporate parents in school development efforts. As the central planning authority, the Department of Education must provide comprehensive parental programs to encourage parents' active involvement in their children's education. The department should assess each school's parents' concrete and intangible projects. Parents should also receive training and seminars on their involvement in school operations to prepare for their duties. Educational leaders must increase parental involvement through quarterly meetings and exposure. Schools should design activities that always involve parents to make them feel welcome. Parents must understand that their continual monitoring and active engagement in school activities help instructors and administrators get along with them. Despite busy schedules, parents should balance work and life. Parents are recommended to volunteer for school activities. To promote ongoing engagement, parents can create a mentorship program where active and experienced parents share their experiences. Finally, future researchers should track and evaluate parental engagement in all schools' efforts. Parent-driven school activities are advised.

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