Beiträge zur Pädagogik 17

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The main subject of this work is parent involvement in early childhood years. It is attempted to revisit the latest discussions on parent involvement across different contexts including several parts of the world. There needs to be an update on the latest developments and perspectives on this topic as it is a dynamic and evolving concept like most concepts used in social and educational sciences. However, there is a lack of resources to address this topic with a comprehensive view wrapped up and covered in a thorough work. Mainly, other books have provided some practices from different contexts. But we must go beyond presenting mini and unrelated studies on the topic and provide a global perspective on parent involvement with an updated and contemporary approach and redefined concepts to raise further debates and contribute to future research and practices. Therefore, it is critical to give an overview of the latest studies with an updated lens from the expert authors in the field. Global perspectives do not only mean Anglo-Saxon perspectives and practices but provide contextual evidence and approaches from different continents and relevant educational systems. Lately, Nordic perspectives in early childhood education have received attention from the research community and other stakeholders in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). Therefore, this monograph extends the coverage of the topic with special emphasis on the Norwegian context to provide detailed information to the audience. For example, the authors provide information about the historical and current parent involvement practices in Norway. Similarly, in many works related to this topic, several contexts have been underestimated by the authors, including African and Middle Eastern or Far Eastern geographies. However, the authors try to cover the studies and development from these areas as well.

Consistent with the aforementioned objectives, there is a clear need to update the knowledge and information about the overview of parental involvement in ECEC as it has not been done for over a decade. To fill this gap and address the need to be contextual, it is attempted to deliver the updated literature review on the subject and provide a multidimensional perspective across different contexts, cultures, and ages with an extensive

focus on the Norwegian context. This monograph contributes to the existing literature also by attempting to redefine the concepts according to contemporary usage enlightened by the latest research and practice in the field. This will help the further studies become more conscience and on target as thorough up-to-date thorough definitions not only functions as guidance but also serve the awareness of research community

Definition of key terms

It is important to shed light on the key terms and how they have been defined in the related literature of any subject. As one of the aims of this scholarly work is to diminish the ambiguities, particularly in the usage of the terms and concepts, it is of great significance to start the introduction with the definitions. As such the phenomenon of parental involvement in education could be understood without paving the way for academic confusion or ambiguity. In addition to that, it is an attempt to give a clear understanding of the key terms since they could be used with different meanings in other sectors than early childhood education.

Parenting

Although parenting has been a practice since the existence of human beings, it has been evolved as other social concepts across different contexts and lately described and outlined by researchers. Several studies have defined parenting as the rearing of children by providing them with the care, love, and guidance they require to survive and thrive (Arafat, et al., 2020; Kahraman, Yilmaz Irmak & Basokcu, 2017). While some early years education scholars consider parenting as 'a general child-rearing pattern that characterizes parents' behaviors toward their child' (Sahithya, Manohari, Vijaya, 2019), others regard it as 'the patterns of a child's training moulded by the normative interaction of parents and how they respond to child's performance' (Arafat, et al., 2020). Although parenting is predominantly considered to be a socio-cultural phenomenon influenced and shaped by the chronosystem, the socio-economic status of the family, and the values and culture of the surrounding community, there is a solid consensus among ECEC scholars and practitioners on the significant role of parents in children's lives. As such, researchers have developed four main types

of parenting styles namely: authoritative, neglectful, authoritarian, and permissive (Arafat, et al., 20; Kahraman, et al., 2017).

In this monograph, "Parenting is considered as the ability and willingness of an adult to give necessary support to a child to develop and thrive physically, emotionally, socially, and intellectually". Per se, responsible parenting has an important role that begins from conception to adulthood and is determined by various factors ranging from biological to policy levels. In this scholarly work, we consider parenting to include a *constellation of attitudes towards the child that parent(s) have to communicate to the child to create an emotional climate in which their (parents') behaviors are expressed and sometimes, conveyed.*

Parental involvement

The social concepts that are used to depict any social dynamic are subject to have different meanings across contexts and cultures. Consistent with that notion, 'parental involvement' is not consistently and similarly defined, as well. Some authors and researchers have described it as practices that represent different parental behaviors; others considered it narrowly by considering parental practices such as parental aspirations of and expectations towards their child's academic achievement (Flores Martin, 2022; Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022a) while others have seen it as a form of parental communication with their children about school-related behaviors (Kim, 2022). However, some researchers consider it in a broader sense including parental participation in school activities, their communications with school authorities and teachers about their children's development, and how, when, and why they set rules at home that are educationally and developmentally productive (Tekin, 2011).

Another aspect of parent involvement is being multidimensional as asserted by several researchers. They claimed in their studies that involvement is a multidimensional construct that consists of parental behaviors, expectations, and beliefs on children's education at home and in school (Boonk, et al., 2018; Epstein & Boone, 2022; Kim, 2020; Tekin, 2011). As seen, there are mainly two domains of practicing parental involvement home- and school or education-related in a broader context. These constructs may include parental support for children's learning at home such as involvement and monitoring of schoolwork and visiting museums which aims at improving children's academic performance and developing social

relationship skills (Kim, 2022). According to this view, when parents are involved in school-based activities such as regular communication with teachers and attendance at school-organized events could maximize their understanding of children's performance in school and overall development (Epstein & Boone, 2022). So, the basic aim is always to improve the child's life concerning education and development. Both areas have, of course, different domains as will be discussed in this monograph further in detail.

One of the main objectives of this monograph is to attempt to provide a contemporary and comprehensive definition of the terms when required. Hence, in this monograph, parental involvement is broadly defined as

> "*Participation of parents in children's lives in school where they (parents) demonstrate behaviors and actions that represent involvement in their child's education such as involvement with the school, effective communication with their children, and active involvement in children's educational activities at home. Parental involvement in the cognitive-intellectual aspect is shown as parents demonstrate and promote their children's understandings and behaviors which foster children's development and mastery of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. It ranges from helping with homework to participation in educational events and experiences taking place outside of the school. Personal involvement of parents should also refer to realizing and knowing about, and closely following up almost everything going on with the child in school and at home and any other milieu that has impact on the child's learning and development.*"

Parental engagement

It is seen that "parental engagement" as a concept, has also been used widely in the related literature. Of course, there have been several attempts to identify this concept. For example, Goodall and Montgomery (2014) define parental engagement as 'parents' engagement in their children's learning at home, at school, and in the wider community'. It involves a discussion between parents, practitioners, schools, and other stakeholders by focusing on how families can build on what they already do to support their children's learning and development by providing a highly needed supportive home learning environment. Furthermore, Schneider and Arnot (2018) defined parental engagement as a process that reflects a two-way

interaction between school and home in fostering a mutual exchange of values and knowledge. This process should be characterized by placing more emphasis on reciprocity, empowerment, empathy, change, and opportunities for both parents and the school (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014; Schneider & Arnot, 2018).

We attempt to reduce the ambiguity of using the related terms in this monograph. Hereby, we provide a clear and contemporary definition of it.

> *"Parental engagement refers to the activities and efforts in a context where educators enter a community to create with parents a shared school landscape in which their (teachers and parents') shared knowledge and values inform decision making and determination of agendas. Ultimately, they co-work to achieve the intended outcomes of their efforts for children, families, the community, and the school".*

This definition sets a clear demarcation of whether parents are involved in their children's education or engaged in their learning and development.

Parental Cooperation

As one of the aims of this monograph is to review the literature and practice across different contexts in extension to the Nordic and particularly Norwegian context, it is critical to look at the relevant terminology employed by them. Hence, in Norway and similarly in Denmark, a different concept, namely parental cooperation (foreldresamarbeid) has been in use to address what is generally covered by parental involvement in children's early years. In such a conceptualization, home, and early childhood/ school settings are in cooperation with the parents and other guardians in children's development and well-being within the institutions where they participate the most (Rasmussen, 1985). This understanding of engagement with parents is utilized in Norwegian steering documents through the concepts of collaboration and understanding (Sadownik & Skoglund, 2021). Parental cooperation can come in different forms and levels (individual and institutional) and has a number of elements that influence parental cooperation:

- Staff backgrounds
- Types of institutions
- Parents' backgrounds
- Children's backgrounds

– Societal ideologies
– Pedagogical practices
(Rasmussen, 1985, p. 21)

The Norwegian framework plan for kindergartens uses *foreldresamarbeid* cooperation between home in kindergarten when engagement and involvement with parents are discussed (UDIR, 2017). In this monograph, parental involvement is used concurrently with parental engagements and cooperation in recognition that different contexts utilize various terminologies to refer to a similar concept. At this point, it is important to mention that there is particular attention to parental involvement in the Norwegian context to shed light on the situation where this monograph was produced.

Rationale for parent involvement in ECEC

This section introduces the rationale of parental involvement in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings across contexts, cultures, and countries. It delineates the existing rationale of parental involvement given their traditional role of children's first teachers with funds of knowledge to be passed to the next generation, the compensatory and complementary role of home contexts whenever there are deficits caused by poor quality school or the vice versa in improving learning attainments. Further, this section argues that in some contexts, parental involvement is part of the program or a compulsory requirement for program funding. In the ECEC settings, parental involvement is regarded as one of the basic children's and human rights. Also, the section argues that the parental involvement is one of the basic requirements by most of the ECEC policies which is linked to education for sustainability.

One of the rationales for investing in early childhood education and care is to adequately prepare children for formal schooling and eventual holistic child development (Black et al., 2017; UNESCO, 2007). In recent years, parental involvement in children's development and learning has increasingly gained the attention of researchers, policymakers, and practitioners (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). This is because parents, as children's first teachers, should be closely involved in their learning and development (Tekin, 2016). Available recent empirical evidence from developing countries indicates that children are entering schools with limited essential social, emotional, academic, language, and physical skills

which would have helped them to maximize in-school resources (Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022b; SACMEQ, 2020).

While research findings have consistently indicated that parents with higher SES are more involved in their children's learning and development than those with lower SES (Ip, et al., 2016), the beneficial implications of parental involvement are extremely vital for children from lower SES families (Ndijuye, 2020; Tamis-LeMonda, et al., 2019). For instance, analyzing data from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Study of Early Childcare and Youth Development, El Nokali, Bachmann, and Votruba-Drzal (2010) found that children with highly involved parents had enhanced social functioning and fewer behavior problems.

In developing countries with limited educational resources and less supportive home learning environments, parental involvement has been proven vital in supporting children's learning and development (Ip et al., 2016; Tandika and Ndijuye, 2019). Addressing the extent to which the level of fathers' involvement in children's learning and development among naturalized citizens and local majorities in Tanzania, Ndijuye and Tandika (2022a) found that the more parents are involved the higher the learning attainments of their children. The involvement of parents complemented existing learning and developmental gaps due to limited educational resources and lower family socio-economic status.

Most of the studies on parental involvement in children's learning and development have tended to put more focus on mothers especially maternal education and or family socioeconomic status (Troller-Renfree et al., 2022). It has been just recently that more studies have paid satisfactory attention to paternal (father) involvement (Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022a; Tekin, 2012; Troller-Renfree et al., 2022) which has proved to be quite significant in influencing children's development, especially during the early years (Knoester, Petts & Pragg, 2019). Nevertheless, parental involvement in children's development and learning has proved to be vital in improving learning outcomes (Ihmeideh, et al., 2020), and overall child developmental outcomes (Knoester, Petts & Pragg, 2019).

In some contexts, parental involvements are set as elements for programs (McWayne, et al., 2012). For example, the Head Start program in the United States aims to promote school preparedness for children from birth to age five from low-income families (Gestwicki, 2007). The program enhances children's cognitive, social, and emotional development by providing a learning environment that supports children's growth in many areas such

as language, literacy, and social and emotional development. To achieve the set goals, Head Start emphasizes the role of parents as their child's first and most important teacher (US Department of Education, 2003). The basis for Head Start is the assumption that the transition from home to preschool to grade one comes with diverse developmental challenges such as successful engagement with school peers, building relationships, achieve expected learning outcomes (Deming, 2009).

In other cases, parental involvement is part of the requirements for program funding (Pölkki & Vornanen, 2016; Uusimäki, et al., 2019). In Finland, for instance, as part of the funding requirement, parents are involved in their children's education through the provision of home care allowances for children below 3 years of age, and half-day school attendance for preschool-aged children (Pölkki & Vornanen, 2016). This program is said to have allowed the active participation of even parents from low-middle-income households (Uusimäki, et al., 2019) and has minimized the marginalization of these parents in the labor market (Pölkki & Vornanen, 2016).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) establishes parental involvement in children's education as one of the basic human rights. Specifically, article 18 states that '*Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their children and should always consider what is best for each child. Governments should help parents by providing services to support them, especially if both parents work* article 30 states that '*Children have the right to learn and use the language and customs of their families, whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live, as long as this does not harm others*'. Jointly read, the two articles require governments, various organizations, and institutions such as schools, to involve parents in their operations to better the lives of young children.

Connected to the above, available evidence has consistently indicated a linear relationship between parental involvement in children's education and the sustainability of education and knowledge (Tekin 2019; UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2020). Involvements of parents have proved to be vital in creating children's knowledge beyond schools (Leal Filho, et al., 2018), empowering children with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to address the interconnected global challenges such as socio-economic inequality and poverty (Vasconcelos & Orion, 2021) climate change, and environmental degradation (Leal Filho, et al., 2018; Vasconcelos & Orion,

2021). For sustainability purposes, it's justifiable to involve parents in children's learning and development.

Further, parental involvement has been linked to education beyond schools (Janzen & Petersen, 2020). Education beyond school has been associated with improved children's learning attainments (Janzen & Petersen, 2020; OECD, 2023), improved discipline and reduced truancy, and children's personal, and socioemotional development (OECD, 2023). Given the current global scientific and technological changes, children need to be equipped with skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will make them cope, fit, and be as competitive as possible in the global workforce market (UNESCO, 2007). Education beyond school is more practically feasible in developing countries where a considerable number of children either miss educational opportunities or drop halfway (UIS, 2021). Education beyond school as a concept is linked to lifelong learning – which is a more practical approach to modern education and healthy living (Nørgard, 2021).

Surrounding Communities and other establishments such as non-governmental organizations, religious organizations, and sports and cultural organizations play a significant role in parental involvement in children's learning and development (Lesneskie & Block, 2016). Going out to religious or sports and cultural events in which children had exposure to and interactions with different people have reportedly been associated with improved language and socioemotional skills (Saracostti, et al., 2019; Yamauchi, et al., 2017). Poor relationships between and within communities and other establishments beyond school are said to lead to children developing such undesirable behaviors as violence and poor communication skills (Lesneskie & Block, 2016).

Communities around families and children have been linked to the provision of social platforms that enhance the acquisition and development of various socioemotional skills (Park & Holloway, 2017). Development of socioemotional skills among preschool children has been linked to future academic and non-academic skills essential to succeed in school and beyond (Weiland & Yoshikawa, 2013). For immigrant children and their families, community organizations such as local and international NGOs have been vital in providing even basic services when they are integrating into a host community (Murphy, Yoshikawa & Wuermli, 2018). In some countries, communities and NGOs provide social services such as health, preschool education, and meeting places for children from poor households and immigrants (Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022b).

While parenting and parenting styles have changed over time, in early childhood settings, the concept of parents as children's first teachers and funds of knowledge is still more practical and applicable (Berger, 1991; Gezani, 2009). Parenting and parental involvement have been evolving, in contexts, cultures, and societies (Gezani, 2009; Zhao & Yu, 2016). It has sequentially shifted from biological statutes to bread-supplying to moral guidance to role-modeling to nurturance (Antony-Newman, 2019; Keskiner, 2015). Due to these role changes, even research on parenting and parental involvement has been changing, regarded, and indexed differently across contexts, time, and cultures (Gezani, 2009; Kiskiner, 2015; Zhao & Yu, 2016). However, there is a consensus among ECEC researchers that across contexts, times, and cultures, parents were and are still regarded as funds of knowledge and, hence should be actively involved in their children's learning and development (Antony-Newman, 2019; Gezani, 2014; Keskiner, 2015; Zhao & Yu, 2016).

In most developed and some developing countries existing educational policies do require direct or indirect parental involvement in ECEC (Tekin, 2011). For instance, acknowledging the importance of parental involvement in children's learning and development, Turkey put into place educational policies that are implemented through various programs and projects that encourage families to participate in school-related activities. One of these projects and programs is the Mother-Child Education Foundation (MCEF) which considers parents as the main component of education and assumes that obtaining better educational results requires the full cooperation of parents (Hakyemez-Paul, Pihlaja & Silvennoinen 2018). Policy support for parent involvement in ECEC is also evident in Jordanian context (Ihmeideh & Tekin, 2022). More to the point, in Tanzania, the official policy is to strengthen the partnership between the government and other stakeholders – including ECEC parents. For instance, policy statement 3.7.4. states that '*the Government shall expand the scope and strengthen successful participation of different stakeholders in education and training sector at all levels*' (URT, 2014). In the United Kingdom, the official policy stance is to foster best practices that improve "*learning at home, school-home and home-school communication, in-school activities, decision-making (e.g. being a parent governor), and collaborating with the community*" (UK Department for Education, 2011). All these findings indicate the importance of parental involvement in children's development and learning from existing educational policy contexts.

Chapter 2

Theories of Parent Involvement

While theoretical approaches to any field provide foundations of analysis and interpretation, parental involvement in ECEC is no exception. Specifically, it is upon theories that the basis for research is built and deepens the aspirations of researchers to broaden and aspire further in social and natural sciences (Epstein, 2001; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). There are mainly three theories that have a great impact on the perspectives taken in most of the research done in ECEC and have laid out frameworks for the researchers and practitioners. Hence, this chapter discusses the theories that most commonly guide parental involvements, namely: 1) Socio-cultural theory by Levy Vygotsky, 2) Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory, and 3) Urie Bronfenbrenner's exosystemic theory.

Socio-cultural theory

Developed by Lev Vygotsky (1978), this theory considers human development as a socially mediated process in which children develop beliefs, expectations, views, and cultural values. Accordingly, learning occurs in a socio-cultural context with the guidance of a more knowledgeable other, therefore, it stresses the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition (Vygotsky, 1978). Socio-cultural theory strongly establishes that community plays a central role in the process of "making meaning" and proceeds development, as such, language plays a major role in children`s development and learning (McLeod, 2020). For meaningful learning to occur, children need to interact with other family members in a community setting (Tekin, 2011). In learning and development, this theory very strongly emphasizes social and cultural contexts in the construction of knowledge (McLeod, 2020). As such, there are no specific linear stages for all children to follow during development and growth as the main assumption is that every individual is uniquely influenced and shaped by specific social and cultural factors in their communities (McLeod, 2020; Tekin, 2011).

This theory introduced the concept of Zonal Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). ZPD refers to the difference between what a child can do and achieve independently and what s/he can achieve with guidance and encouragement from a more skilled partner. Vygotsky (1978) considers ZPD as a point where a child/learner is given more useful instructions to allow him/her to develop and master skills which they will then use on their own in developing higher mental functions. The ZPD necessitates the development of effective interaction with adults (i.e. parents) and more competent peers (i.e. classmates) to strategize and master required skills. For example, in a classroom context, teachers may opt for more interactive and cooperative learning strategies and exercises that allow less competent children to develop with help from more skillful peers - within the zone of proximal development.

Sociocultural theory locates language as a major means of interactions within the child himself, among children themselves, and between the child and 'more knowledgeable other' (Vygotsky, 1987). Accordingly, there are three forms of language namely (i) social speech – used for external communication and talking to others; (ii) private speech – used for a talk directed to the self for intellectual function; and (iii) private speech or underground speech which normally takes on a self-regulating function or silent inner speech. It is through private speech that children are confronted with difficult tasks/challenges and starts to individually strategize and interact with a more knowledgeable other using language (Vygotsky, 1987).

More to the point, this theory establishes the concept of 'elementary mental function' or children's inborn ability for intellectual development (Vygotsky, 1978). These include perception, memory, and attention which through interactions using language well understood by children, develops into 'higher mental functions'. The social interactions taking place in specific cultural contexts enable children to develop adaptation tools that may be of intellectual use in other contexts (Winsler, et al., 2007). In other words, children develop higher mental functions that are socio-culturally influenced. For example, due to biological reasons, young children's memory is mostly limited with attention paid to ongoing events. To keep and aid their memory, in Western countries, children will be asked to learn how to take notes, while in a context with limited print materials, children will tie knots in a string or just recall the names of relatives or ancestors (Ndijuye, 2017). These dimensions of the sociocultural theory emphasize the importance of interaction with parents in general and the parent involvement in young children's education and development, in particular, as the parents

are in their immediate environment and have a significant impact on forming the things they learn and how they build themselves. The parents guide them in the context, teach them, and influence them in ZPD as a significant knowledge resource, thus their involvement is essential.

Cognitive development theory

This theory was developed by Jean Piaget (1957) and assumes that children's cognitive abilities change as they chronologically grow through defined phases, hence, while a child learns, it also develops and constructs a mental model of the world around them. Children develop through a series of stages because of interactions between environments and inborn capacities (McLeod, 2022). As such, the main assumption of this theory is that as active learners, children have a constant drive to match and balance their internal drive of the world to that of the external construction (McLeod, 2022; Piaget, 1981). In such contexts, other people are important (i.e. parents) components of the learning process to influence children's environments.

Piaget presented two important concepts in his theory, namely assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation can be generally defined as the cognitive process of fitting new information into existing cognitive schemas, perceptions, and understanding. In this case, the child's general beliefs and understanding of the world do not change because of the gained new information. Accommodation can be defined as the cognitive process of revising existing cognitive schemas, perceptions, and understanding so that new information can be incorporated. This occurs when the existing schema (knowledge) does not work and needs to be changed to deal with a new object or situation (Piaget, 1981).

As such, children tend to assimilate the newly acquired knowledge very quickly and/or accommodate incorrect worldviews if they are actively involved within their environments. This detail necessitates the creation of appropriate learning opportunities that allow interactions between children, parents, and physical and cognitive environments (Prior & Gerard, 2007). However, the same theory does not distinguish the extent to which these schemas may influence children's learning and development in different contexts from their previous experiences. For example, while swimming is common in Western societies as a leisure activity, in tropical communities along lakes/oceans/large rivers in developing countries it is associated

with fish and fishing, hence a necessary survival skill for children from these communities. Thus this dimension can be subjected to critique as contextuality matters in children's learning and development.

Another important aspect of this theory is equilibration (Piaget 1957; Wadsworth, 2004). This is a state whereby the mind balances between old and newly acquired knowledge and it takes place when the child acquires and fits in new information in the existing schema through assimilation processes (Piaget, 1957). However, sometimes the new information may not be assimilated, which creates frustration and a need for accommodation of the new knowledge. This is more practical in the learning and development of children in which they interact and acquire new knowledge whenever the opportunity to learn presents itself. Taking the perspective of this theory, parent involvement becomes critical since children's minds develop very fast with fluctuations and always need to learn and unlearn new concepts, ideas, and experiences. Parents can be considered as one of the most significant parts of children's learning process through assimilation, accommodation, and equilibrium.

Nevertheless, the same theory seems to miss the critical role of culture and society are essential parts of children's development and learning and has implications on the level of parental involvement. This is because human development is not linearly universal due to socio-cultural, climatic, and biological reasons (Wadsworth, 2004). Even the development of various domains within an individual child is multidimensional and tends to grow at different paces. As such, contextual and cultural reasons do influence readiness and the level of parental involvement in children's learning and development (Puccioni, Froiland & Moeyaert, 2020). Hence, it should be noted that Piaget's cognitive development theory could fall behind in addressing this contextuality as it is authenticity is based on mostly a Western context without going beyond for further investigation in other cultures and contexts.

Ecological systems theory

This theory was introduced by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1974, 1995) who established that children's development and learning occur in a nested arrangement of structures/layers each contained in the other. Initially, Bronfenbrenner developed the ecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) which regarded development because of interactions

between humans and proximal and distal environment. However, in later years Bronfenbrenner modified and revised his theory by arguing that the human development process occurs because of complex reciprocal interactions between 'biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate, proximal and distal external environment' (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). Bronfenbrenner called this theory a 'bioecological model' to reflect interactions between nature and nurture.

Understanding the multidimensional effects of the proximal processes on development, the foci should be on the person, quality of interactions, contexts, and outcomes. This is because there are variations in these processes, hence affecting people differently (Bronfenbrenner & Evance, 2000). Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1995) grouped the ecological systems as micro-systems, meso-systems, exo-systems, and macrosystems. Accordingly, the approach focuses on the developing child and its interactions with environments such as people, objects, and symbols in "proximal processes" across multiple settings and contexts (McLeod, 2022; Prior & Gerard, 2007).

More specifically, Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1995) established that a microsystem is a set and pattern of roles, activities, and interpersonal experiences by the child in a specific setting with specified features. These include the child's family, school, teachers, peers, available health services, and the neighborhood. Normally, the noted components tend to interact with and influence each other. For example, the quality of schools in a certain neighborhood reflects the quality of life in that neighborhood and vice versa. The exosystem consists of such elements as extended family members, parents' workplaces, the school board, and the media. Such elements do indirectly influence children's development and learning. For instance, in a collective society, the death of an extended family member may have implications on the psychological well-being of parents and even a child.

The mesosystem includes the interrelations among two or more settings in which the child is an active participant. For example, the relationship between and among school, home, and neighborhood comprise the mesosystem. Sound child development and meaningful learning occur there is a solid linkage among various components of these systems. The macrosystem simply refers to the functionalities, reliabilities, and consistencies of the other lower systems that exist at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These include societal attitudes and ideologies such as existing laws, morals, values, customs, and worldviews. These elements have indirectly eminent implications in children's

development and learning such as children's construction of what is socially (un)acceptable.

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However, it is important to note that while the bioecological systems are vital in child development, it does not mean that those who do not have less supportive ecological systems are not developing at all or are less developing. While this may be partially true in some contexts, some children grow into well-rounded adults even though they receive limited support from their ecological systems. This could result from resiliency factors. Nevertheless, delineating from bioecological system theory, we argue that children's development and learning are influenced by mutual interactions between them, teachers, schools, parents, peers, communities and neighborhoods, existing policies, and other systems. Effective coordination of various systems is vital for children's development. Particularly, the child as an agent in this system, needs effective and meaningful involvement by the other parents, who are located in the core system of this theory. Especially during the early years of development as their information processing level is high as they are experiencing the golden era of learning. During this era, they need solid sources of knowledge such as parents as they become and get familiar with their immediate ecosystem. This brings to the fore

the question of the quality of parent involvement in children's development and learning.

Chapter 3

Models of parental involvement

As parent involvement issues have started to be covered by the central educational policies and demanded or somewhat mandated from the schools and other educational settings, a few models to guide and shed light on the practices have been developed, contextualized, and commonly used in various educational research and practice contexts. In ECEC settings, models are developed to gain a better understanding of the targeted issues and make better use of the gained knowledge (Epstein, 2001; Tekin, 2011; Whitaker, 2019). Thus, these models could be used as a guidance and framework to apply the essentials of parent involvement in a more holistic and beneficial way. In this regard, two broadly and most popular models: Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995) and Epstein's (1991) models of parental involvement will be discussed.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's parental involvement model

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This model was developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) and later modified in 2005. It proposes that the engagement of families begins when they decide to be involved and ends with improved learning and development outcomes (Whitaker, 2018). The cognitive component of in-

volvement decision-making includes role construction for involvement and self-efficacy for helping children succeed in school. Accordingly, parents' attempts to support children's learning can be classified into the following categories: involvement through encouragement, involvement through modeling, involvement through reinforcement, and involvement through instruction (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995).

To be precise, it can be easily claimed that the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) parent involvement model takes more of a psychological perspective in children's development and learning. As such, the model does not only list down types and steps of parental involvement but rather goes as far as explaining various factors that motivate parents to be involved. The authors listed the following reasons: (i) to build up a parental role construction and their participation in children's education; (ii) to develop a positive parental efficacy for helping their children succeed in school; and (iii) to develop a positive perception of opportunities or demands for involvement from children and school. In this regard, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) developed holistic levels of parental involvement. The details are outlined hereby below.

In the first level of the model, the following reasons motivate parents to be involved in the education of their children: (i) Construction of parental role for involvement - do parents have good reasons for involvement?, (ii) Ability of parents to help children learning - do parents believe that their involvement will contribute to their children's learning?, (iii) Parental conceptions of their involvement – are parents ready to partner with schools and be involved?, and (iv) Parental conceptions of their roles in supporting their children - do parents think that their children need parental involvement?

In the second level, three constructs related to parental involvements are developed: (i) how parents perceive their abilities, knowledge, skills, and interests, (ii) how parents prioritize related needs and demands on related resources such as time and energy, and (iii) how parents perceive invitations to get involved be it from teachers, school authorities or even children (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). In the third level, the model establishes that parental involvement has implications on children's developmental outcomes through various mechanisms namely:(a) School-related skills modeling, (b) Learning reinforcement, (c) Instructional help such as being involved in children's homework (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

The fourth level focuses on mediating mechanisms and constructs developed in level 3. It is at this level that parents may opt to use develop-

mentally and culturally appropriate techniques and practices that bridge and fit parents' choices and school expectations of parental involvement. The choices and expectations may include specific learning outcomes such as changes in behavior and learning habits (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). The fifth level addresses the outcomes of parent involvement in children's development. These may include children's learning achievement, skills and knowledge, and personal sense of efficacy for succeeding in school. More specifically, on this level, parental involvements aim at developing children's knowledge and skills, hence, personal efficacy of doing well in school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005).

Later in 2005 and 2009 Hoover and Sandler revised their model by including new paradigms displayed in levels 1 and 2 in three overarching constructs in Level 1 (Walker et al., 2005). They proposed that parental role construction and parental self-efficacy must be organized in one broad construct of parents' motivational beliefs or personal motivation. Other constructs that were added to the revised model are parental invitations, self-efficacy, and life contexts. More to the point, recent research indicates a correlation between the added variables and parental involvement (Antony-Newman, 2019; Garcia & Gerdes, 2019), however, there are contradictory research results found by others, too. For instance, it is critical to note that the studies by Kigobe et al., (2019) and Alharthi (2022) revealed that parental invitation and self-efficacy were, in fact, negatively correlated with the degree of parent involvement.

Essentially, this modal provides a clear framework of the psychological aspect of parental involvement in children's learning across contexts. For example, it emphasizes motivational and efficacy aspects as it is believed to have a great impact on the degree of involvement. Similarly, mutual interests and effective communication as part of this multidimensional model during parent-child engagement on relevant issues such as homework, parental participation in school conferences, and educational aspirations for their children are also highlighted (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). The multidimensional approach to parental involvement, aided by its psychological perspective; is an invaluable framework for research that considers psychological aspects, school factors, and even family SES of involvement of parents and even beyond (Park & Holloway, 2017).

While acknowledging the significant contributions of this model in understanding parental involvement in young children's learning and development, most recent studies have critiqued it on various grounds (Alharthi,

2022; Kigobe et al., 2019). Exploring parental involvement in children's learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in Saud Arabia, Alharthi (2022) found that teachers' invitations of parents to participate in children's work were unheeded because parents preferred to keep their traditional roles rather than teaching roles which they considered imposed. In Tanzania, Kigobe and colleagues (2019)- investigated factors that would motivate parents to be involved in their children's learning and found that holding other factors constant, self-efficacy was not correlated to parental involvement. These findings suggest that this model cannot be applicable uniformly across contexts and cultures (Alhejji, 2021).

Epstein's Parent Involvement Model

This is perhaps the most prominent and widely used parent involvement model in the field of early childhood education. Introduced by Dr. Joyce Epstein, the model establishes six types of parents' involvement (Epstein, 2001). She suggests the following types of parental involvement:

(i) **Parenting**
This may involve families establishing supportive and learning-friendly home environments to assist children gain the knowledge and skills required to master their environments. To achieve this, relevant authorities should organize various parenting training such as family literacy. Further, communities and other authorities may consider having such programs as family support to assist families with health, nutrition, and other services. Similarly, there should be such supportive activities as home visits during children's transition points to the next levels of education and growth such as puberty, elementary, and high school. Parenting may result in improved children's attendance, parent-child relationships, and in developing countries – increased awareness of the importance of education.

(ii) **Communicating**
In this type, the focus is on designing effective forms of school and home communications about various school programs and children's progress. This could be done by organizing various conferences which attract the participation of every parent at least once a year. The suggested strategies include, but are not limited to regular schedule of useful notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters, and other communications suitable in specific contexts. Potentially, some of

the benefits of this type of parental involvement include the improvement of children's communication skills and parent-child relationship, and the broadening of children and parents' understanding of various school policies and practices (Epstein, 2001).

(iii) **Volunteering**

This type includes recruit and organizing possible parent help and support available in the community. It may include school and/or classroom volunteer programs to help teachers, administrators, students, and other parents. The suggested strategies include a parent room or family center for volunteer work, meetings, and resources for families. This may also include conducting an annual postcard survey to identify all available talents, times, and locations of volunteers. Volunteering as a means of parental involvement develops effective parent-child attachment (Tekin, 2011), and children's sense of community service and responsibility (Epstein, 2005).

(iv) **Learning at home**

This type involves the provision of useful information and ideas to families on how to help their children at home with school-related activities such as homework and life skills such as timely decisions and proper planning. The required information for families includes those related to the skills required for students to excel in all subjects at specific grades, homework policies, and how parents may successfully monitor and discuss schoolwork. Learning at home enhances students' developing self-concept as learners (Epstein, 2005; Tekin, 2011), and has been reported to be associated with higher homework completion rate (Ihmeideh, et al., 2020).

(v) **Decision-making**

In this type, families are regarded as active participants in school decision-making, hence developing parent leaders and representatives. The suggested strategies include active parent-teacher associations/organizations (PTA/PTO), advisory councils, and committees. The protection of children's rights and appropriate representations are some of the potential outcomes of this type of parent involvement.

(vi) **Collaborating with Community**

In this type, the main activity is to coordinate resources and services from the community for families, students, and the school. Then, the coordinated resources and services should be provided back to the community. The suggested strategies include the provision of

> information to students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, and social support, and other programs or services. The information provided should be linked to learning skills and talents. Some of the envisaged benefits of this type of parental involvement include inculcating a sense of community to children (Jeynes, 2018).

Recent empirical studies have established the usability of Epstein's parent involvement model in various contexts and cultures (e.g., Jeynes, 2018; Nunez, et al., 2017). For example, Investigating the extent to which parental involvement in children's homework would improve learning attainment, Nunez et al., (2017) found that it is very strongly correlated with all aspects of the model except collaborating with the community. However, the authors speculated that the negative correlation between parent involvement and collaborating with the community might have been due to socioculturral reasons rather than limitations with the model itself.

While this model has been applauded for being comprehensive and focused, it has been critiqued on two fronts. Some scholars claim that while the model is about parental involvement, it pays more attention to educators, with minimal regard for parents (Tekin, 2011). This makes the model to be more of a practitioner's manual than a parental involvement model (Newman, et al., 2019; Tekin, 2011). As a result, the model is not such a useful research instrument, hence less helpful to a researcher interested in understanding this matter from the parents' perspective. Further, the model is criticized because while parents' decision to be involved in various types of involvement is imperative, how these decisions are made is not clear. Failure to understand how these decisions are made may have enormous implications for children, schools, and parents themselves (Tekin, 2011).

This model has been strongly criticized for the mechanical nature of its operations and approach to parental involvement in children's learning and development (Bunijevac & Durisic, 2017; Tekin, 2011; Puccioni, et al., 2020). Human development is a complex process that involves various dimensions and factors, such that the involvement of parents is as a complicated process as development itself (Ihmeideh, et al., 2020). Ihmeideh et al., (2020), using the same parent involvement model, investigated how parents of children, early childhood teachers, subject coordinators, school administrators, and school counselors living in Qatar perceive family–school relationships. Findings revealed that while learning at home exhibited the highest mean score among Epstein's six-types model of parent involve-

ment, decision-making received the lowest level. Interestingly, school staff responded more positively regarding family–school relationships while parents did not equally respond.

Chapter 4

Parental involvement across ages and societies

Although many systemic programs are relatively new, as a concept, parent involvement has a long history starting from prehistorical times. It is also uncommon to see many related works providing information about parent involvement and its history in different geographies than the western parts. This chapter details the development of parenting and parental involvement in children's development and learning. It takes a historical route to trace through various global civilizations how parenting and parental involvement as both roles and responsibilities have changed over time. It traces parenting and parental involvements from the Greco-Roman era, ancient Egyptian parenting, Confucius-influenced Asian parenting, and the sub-Saharan experiences to modern-day approaches to parenting across countries and cultures.

As a concept, parental involvement is as old as humankind (Berger, 1991). Since prehistorical times, parents are reported to have been closely and distantly involved in their children's education and development (ibid). During this time, parents taught children survival skills such as observance of societal rules and regulations, gathering wild food, and hunting (Gezani, 2009). During the Greco-Roman era, regulations were put in place to govern how children were taught to read, write, argue, fight, and swim. Children were considered to be the future, hence must be handled with care and be equipped with all necessary socio-cultural and military skills (Berger, 1991). Parents had the right to choose schools, sessions, and specific lessons they wanted their children to learn (Hiatt-Michael, 2012; Gezani, 2009). During this time, the main argument among the then scholars was 'who is a child's first teacher between a mother and father' (Hiatt-Michael, 2012).

Among the ancient Egyptians, parental involvement was part of the then 'school curriculum' (Hiatt-Michael, 2012). Children were to learn such skills as farming, hunting, and military to fit into the societal norms and culture (Gezani, 2009). Parents could regularly visit learning areas – which could be literary equated to nowadays' schools, to see 'for themselves' how their children were learning (ibid). However, parents had no power over

what and how children were learning school management, or educational policies and legislation. In ancient China, parental involvement took various forms including school visits, physical communication with teachers, and payment of school fees for their children (Zhao & Yu, 2016). Guided by Confucian pragmatism, Chinese parents are known as highly involved figures or tiger parents who prioritize children's education and academic success beyond anything else (Li & Qiu, 2018). Their involvements are said to be the result of deeply rooted beliefs in filial piety, collective culture, and values attached to education (Li & Qiu, 2018; Zhao & Yu, 2016).

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In the sub-Saharan region, while parental involvement is one of the least documented research areas and little is known about it, nevertheless, available reports indicate that parents have been involved in their children's learning and development over time immemorial (Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022a). Generally, while this region is quite large and diverse socio-economically and culturally, still has some common features which can be termed 'typical African'. One of them is how parents are involved in their children's learning and development (Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022b). The ancient sub-Saharan children received an education that would enable them

to cope and master their environment – survival education (Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022a).

These skills were provided by parents in collaboration with selected community members to prepare children for their future roles as adults (Ndijuye, 2017). However, there was no written curriculum nor educational policies and guidelines to guide the process. Colonial sub-Sahara was characterized by the imposition of formal education which solely did not intend to serve the interests of the local community, but rather of the colonial master. As such, parental involvement was rather minimal or non-existent (Mtahabwa, 2011). The post-colonial sub-Sahara experienced a massive expansion of education and formulation of new educational policies and guidelines which included more involvement of parents (Mtahabwa, 2011; Nikiema, 2011). However, their involvements varied across countries, rural-urban divides, and even the gender of the child (Tefera, Admas & Mulatie, 2015; SACMEQ, 2020).

The modern parental involvement in ECEC while rooted in ancient times, took its current shape at the beginning of the 20th century in the United States of America when educational centers were mostly within college or suburban towns. Schools welcomed primarily stay-at-home mothers to serve as teaching assistants or paraprofessionals in the classrooms and take physical care of the facility (Gestwicki, 2007). However, parental involvement gained momentum across the United States and all over the world when it became a prerequisite requirement for program funding and an integral part of programs (Darling-Hammond & Noguera, 2007). A major milestone in US parental involvement was in 2002 when the bill No Child is Left Behind was signed into law (Domina, 2005). Specific legislation of this law required schools to establish specific parental involvement programs and develop written policies on how to engage parents (Dee & Jacob, 2011).

In other Western contexts, parental involvement gained special empirical and policy attention in the early 1960s in the United Kingdom with its reports-based approach (Caroll-Meehan, 2021), Germany which approached it with 'parental cooperation or Erziehungs- und Bildungspartnerschaft' (Knör, 2021). In the UK, various governmental reports on parental involvement have been formed and decisions have been made based on these reports. These reports range from the 1967 Plowden which established that 'all schools should have a program for contact with children's homes' to the most recent 2016 white paper report on educational excellence everywherewhich technically established that every British parent has a stake

in the quality of the education system and schools; because every parent wants the best for their child. However, parents have not always been at the heart of the system, and they have not always had the information they need to challenge it.

In Germany, the constitution, or the Social Code – Services for Children and Young People (Sozialgesetzbuch, SGB VIII – Kinder- und Jungendhilfe) has explicitly provided the legal framework for parental involvement. It is part of the teacher education and school curriculum in all of the German states (Knör, 2021). However, while there is some increasing interest in the effective strategies, practical approaches, and implications of parental involvement on children's learning and development, still there is limited empirical evidence so far carried out from Germany. This leads to most of the policy and practical decisions being made based on international studies, such as the Head Start Project (Friedrich, 2011; Knör, 2021).

Among specific disadvantaged groups such as immigrants and refugees, available evidence has consistently singled them out as the most misunderstood and less involved than any other single group regardless of where they happen to be (Antony-Newman, 2019; Dee & Jacob, 2011). In the Western world where there is reportedly the largest group of immigrants, studies about the involvement of parents from this group started to emerge as early as the 1970s (Antony-Newman, 2019). Most of these studies focused on the involvement of immigrant parents from other Western countries and the former USSR (Klein, 2008; Theodorou, 2008), Latino (Jeynes, 2017), and to a lesser extent from Asia especially Chinese and Indian parents (Dyson, 2001). One notable observation on studies of immigrant parental involvement is their predominant focus on maternal involvement than any other group of adults (Andrews 2013; Plunkett et al. 2009; Sibley & Dearing 2014).

In the global south, there were drastic changes in parental involvement in sub-Saharan Africa following the 1990s liberalization policies. During this time, the provision of education was by both public and private sectors – relatively rich parents sent their children to better-resourced private schools, while children from poor households were enrolled in under-resourced public schools (Robledo & Gove, 2019; UIS, 2020). In South Africa for instance, the post-apartheid education policy considered parental involvement as one of the cornerstones for children's holistic development (Gezani, 2009). The 1995 Education and Training in democratic South Africa White Paper (ibid) instructed schools to not only involve parents

but to regularly consult them on various matters about their children's development and learning (Tefera, et al., 2015).

Chapter 5

Recent trends on parenting and family across contexts

Parenting and family as a social phenomenon have always attracted researchers' interest. The family is the smallest social unit in society and is seen as the core agent in a functioning milieu because of its social role and dynamics and impact on future generations. Parenting is one of these relational roles within families. However, both concepts are contextual as they are socially and environmentally construed. This chapter introduces the epochal development of parenting and family as concepts and as research areas. Specifically, it focuses on how family and parenting have been changing over time, contexts, and cultures. It discusses various forces, styles, and approaches to family and parenting that have shaped the current practices and research. It concludes by discussing the current trends in family organization including declining fertility rate and male interest in marriage which together have implications for family and parenting in the 21st century. Like the quality of early childhood education services, parenting, and family concepts have been changing across time, contexts, and generations (Fernandez et al., 2017; Roskam & Meunier, 2009). To better understand these changes, we conceptualized parenting and family within Bronfenbrenner's chronosystem framework in which time influences environmental and context changes that occur over a life course (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007).

Since time immemorial, people across cultures have been becoming parents and raising families (Fernandez et al., 2017). Traditionally the two concepts have been associated with the assumptions that one may potentially lead to the fruition of the other (Roskam & Meunier, 2009). In the context of this study, parenting is generally defined as the promotion and provision of emotional, physical, social, and intellectual support to the child from conception to adulthood. A family is a social group made up of children, parents, and sometimes immediate relations – however, this does vary across cultures and time.

Observations of literature from various parts of the world (Jeynes, 2018; Gezan, 2009; McHale, Dinh, & Rao, 2014; Selin, 2014), indicate that while parenting approaches have changed over time, in some contexts, especially

among rural communities, the style has generally remained the same. If people are to lead the same kind of lives, the same kinds of parenting still exist and apply (Jaynes, 2018). However, in many societies – both Western and non-Western, urbanization coupled with increasingly more women joining the labor force, and recent scientific and technological changes have led to changes in parenting and parental beliefs (McHale, et al, 2014; Selin, 2014). For instance, in most Western societies, there is less reliance on other family members, especially grandparents which has led to limited social networks for other activities (Putnick, et al., 2018). While in some cultures the belief is that parents want their children to join better schools and colleges – this is perhaps a very Western approach (McHale, et al., 2014). Other popular beliefs include that most immigrant parents even if uneducated, do want their children to be educated, have professions, and make a place in the world (Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022b; Putnick, et al., 2018). The examples below elaborate on the concept of parenting and the rationale behind the choice of a specific style in specific contexts.

In Southeast Asia, parenting has been greatly influenced by Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism, which have shaped traditions and values that dictate family structure, hierarchy, roles, and one's place in society (McHale, et al., 2014; Putnick, et al., 2018). In this cultural context, grandparents are revered, husbands possess more power than wives, and sons have more privileges than daughters. Family ties with the extended members are very close and the family collectively shares roles in caregiving, socialization, and co-parenting of children (Jeynes, 2018). Children are expected to be thankful to their parents for their birth, upbringing, and education; they must always think of their parents and family first and love and care for their parents in their elder years (McHale, et al., 2014; Selin, 2014). However, given the existing wind of change across the world - increasing physical and social mobility, migration and relocation, international marriage, delayed marriages, aging population, declining fertility rate, change in attitudes related to gender roles, and more women joining the labor force; the nature, structure, and organization of parenting is prone to change.

In Turkey – which happens to fall in between Asia and Europe, hence characterized by both individualistic culture and a collectivistic society; empirical evidence has documented that parenting reflects both styles (Selin, 2014; Sen, Yavuz & Yagmurlu, 2014). However, the reported gender roles have women, even those with higher educational degrees, not to work after marriage (Sen, et al., 2014). In a typical traditional Turkish family,

parents must inculcate and emphasize patriotism, respect for authority, lovingness, and warmth toward children. As it is in other contexts, Turkish mothers are normally sensitive, and reasonable, and provide cognitive stimulation to their children - this is reflected by proportionally increases in maternal education. Relatedness and a sense of belonging among and between family members are highly valued (Selin, 2014). And there is an emphasis on autonomy and obedience which varies among families coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

In East Africa, traditionally fathers are breadwinners while mothers must stay home take care of the children, and support their husbands in whatever errands (Wadende, Fite & Lesser, 2014). Parents have the responsibility of taking care of their children and grandparents from both sides of the family – husbands and wives (Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022a). In Ghana, generally, parenting is reflected by provisions to one's family and social responsibility, as such, fatherhood is both biological and social responsibility (Nyarko, 2014; Ugwuanyi, Okeke & Njeze, 2020). Mothers are oriented towards the permissive style of parenting, while fathers use an authoritarian style (ibid). This division of interests leads some parents to accept corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure, while others don't accept it. Boys are more valued than girls – regarded to be family and clan name bearers. This comes with more responsibilities and expectations such as establishing brilliant careers, taking care of parents when they get old, and producing a third-generation heir (Ugwuanyi, et al., 2020).

In Argentina, there is an affiliative culture in which groups place a high priority on constructive interpersonal relationships (Minzi, Lemos & Vargas-Rubilar, 2014). In this culture, parenting styles vary across urbanicities, family socioeconomic status, and gender. For instance, typical middle-class parents must control children's outings, schedules, and friends (Minzi, et al., 2014; Selin, 2014). The most interesting or surprising part of the Argentine culture is that girls are more academically successful than boys and are known to be closer to their mothers and maternal grandmothers (Minzi, et al., 2014). For those in poverty and social risk, the three most important functions of social parenting - nurture, socialization, and education) are weakened or reduced. These parents used more physical punishment, shouting, isolation, intrusion, withdrawal from relationships, and negligence.

In Ecuador, evidence has documented that parenting is shaped by its historical, economic, and political context (Camacho, 2020; Schvaneveldt, 2014; Selin, 2014). While traditionally, within the Ecuadorian collectivist

culture, parental authority was highly valued, still parents observe gender roles and socialization practices which encourages conformity. Given the current socio-economic and technological changes taking place globally and locally, Ecuador is currently going through various changes including changes in gender roles -family separation due to emigration patterns, divorce, and single parenthood (Selin, 2014). In Ecuador, the most used parental practices are positive induction, involvement in school-related activities, emotional warmth, and closeness, and building neatly close family relationships (Camacho, 2020; Schvaneveldt, 2014).

Family as a concept has undergone various changes over time, contexts, and culture (Gezani, 2009; Li & Qiu, 2018; Selin, 2014). Ancient human societies regarded a family to consist of a father, mother, children, extended members, and clans or community members (Selin, 2014). Among collective cultures, a family consists of a father, mother, children, and close extended members such as grandparents, uncles, and aunts (Nyarko, 2014). On the other hand, the composition of a family in the more individualistic cultures includes a father, mother, and children. However, recently there has been growing single-parented families in both collective and individualistic cultures (Fagan & Cherson, 2017). This has been partly due to increasingly more women in the workforce, women empowerment efforts, and various women's rights movements (Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022b).

Recent studies from various parts of the world have pointed out the declining women fertility (Miller, 2020), and male's loss of interest in marriage and family institutions (Gonalons-Pons & Gangl, 2021). For instance, on average, a Western European woman in the 18th century could bear between 4 to 6 children, while the current one could bear between 0.4 to 1 child (Fernandez, et al., 2018; Miller, 2020). Even the child value has been changing across generations and cultures (Miller, 2020; Wiesner-Hanks 2019), and gender preferences have been shifting in the opposite direction (Miller, 2020). In non-western societies such as Chinese, where the one-child policy put a lot of pressure to reproduce a male heir to the family, more parents are increasingly expressing preference to have a girl for various reasons (Wang, et al., 2019).

Evidence has documented changes in the structure and organization of families especially marriage including same-sex marriages, divorce, and males' declining interest in marriage (Jarska, 2021). In recent years, due to various reasons, there has been a huge portion of the women population who choose to remain unmarried and childless, others choose to have been married to be or the same sex and opt to have or have no children (Bernini,

2020). Among men across the world, there is a trend of choosing to remain single due to the economic burden associated with family responsibilities (Bernini, 2020; Jarska, 2021), and the costs to be incurred in an unfortunate case of divorce (Jarska, 2021).

All the above have shaped, changed, and impacted concepts and practices of family, parenting, and marriage across contexts, cultures, and times. While the implications of the discussed factors may vary from one context to the next, their implications are significantly influencing children's development and learning. Given the available empirical evidence, there is a need to formulate integrated ECEC policies tailored to understanding of specific contexts, result-oriented parenting styles, and local cultures. Further research is needed to explore what works, how it works, and who does what to make it work in a specific locale.

Chapter 6

Parent Involvement in the Norwegian Context

The authors of this scholarly work attempt to provide insights into parent involvement in ECEC across different contexts with a Norwegian emphasis. To have a full understanding of parental involvement in the Norwegian Context, there is a need to define what is considered a family, who are its members, and what are their duties and responsibilities to the children. It is also important to understand whether these definitions are legally mandated throughout the Norwegian system such that it is recognized by different governmental offices/ministries or departments—and if any specific governmental offices have jurisdiction over these matters. Once these are established, programs and practices on parental involvement in governmental documents will be easier to identify and examine. Hence, this chapter provides exhaustive information on 1) the Family in the Norwegian context, 2) the History of families in Norway, 3) Norwegian families towards sustainable goals, 4) the Background of ECEC in Norway, 5) Norwegian government and welfare state efforts about families and children.

As emphasized in the Norwegian Framework Plan for Kindergartens (Rammeplan) (UDIR, 2017), having good relations between kindergartens and home is of utmost importance to children's well-being and development, and is an indicator of quality. Kindergartens are mandated to ensure that parents are actively participating by engaging with them on an individual and group level. Parental cooperation is often in the form of parent councils as discussed and described in the previous sections. In addition, kindergartens are mandated to serve as an "active channel for maintaining contact between the parents and the kindergarten" (UDIR, 2017, p. 30). As the kindergarten has what could be considered a 'mediating' role between parents and the kindergarten staff, research on communication and language-related barriers connected with inclusion and integration has proliferated in recent years.

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Family in the Norwegian context

While the family is not specifically defined in Norwegian Law, the Marriage Act (Ekteskapsloven) (Norwegian Ministry of Children and Families, 1993) and Barcelona (The Children's Act)/ Lov om barn og foreldre (Act on Children and Parents) (Norwegian Ministry of Children and Families, 1982) both contribute to the societal understandings of the family. It is often broadly understood to include both nuclear and extended families that have the responsibility to make decisions for and with the family members

(Garvis & Ødegaard, 2018). The Norwegian Marriage Act specifies that any two people, regardless of sex, can get married under the law (Norwegian Ministry of Children and Families, 1993). Therefore, getting married entails joint financial and social responsibilities that include but are not limited to child-rearing. In addition, families in Norway usually live within the same households even though the parents of the children are not married (Sture, 2006). Cohabitation, or partnership without marriage, is also recognized as a valid family unit (Sture, 2006).

In the Children's Act (Norwegian Ministry of Children and Families, 1982), parenthood is explicitly outlined such that paternity is determined when the man to whom the mother is married at the time of birth is considered the father of the child. On the other hand, the woman who gave birth to the child is automatically considered the mother of the child (ibid). If the mother is married to another woman at the time of birth, then this woman becomes co-mother to the child. According to this law, a child cannot have both a father and a co-mother (ibid). In addition, the Children's Act (1982) determines parental responsibility of the parents. It is stipulated that parents have the right and duty to decide for the child in personal matters, but the child must also have a say in all matters that will affect them (Norwegian Ministry of Children and Families, 1982).

History of families in Norway

Norwegian marriage and fertility statistics have seen many changes throughout the years. During periods when there was an economic recession, fewer people got married because they could not afford to raise families (Sture, 2006). Historically, Norway had moderate fertility rates until around the 19th century when the country saw an increase in population (ibid). Around this time, ca. 1865-1930, part of the Norwegian population emigrated to different countries, particularly to the United States of America. During this time of recession, resources became scarce to support an increasing population which led to a decrease in fertility rates. For instance, in 1930, the mean age for marriage was 26.4 years for women and 29.3 years for men and the fertility rate was down to 1.78 children for women (ibid) After the 2nd world War, these statistics drastically changed. People got married earlier, and there was a 'baby boom' from 1946 until the start of the 1960s (ibid). However, around the 1950s, cohabitation also became a rising trend that is related to not being able to afford a "socially accepted

wedding" (Sture, 2006, p. 2). Cohabitation constituted what is considered "the contemporary family in Norway, very similar to a status of "being engaged" or a "pre-marriage trial period":

By 1970, the high marriage rates culminated. Up to this point in time, divorces were rare, and almost all children (95%) were born to married couples. From 1970, however, this situation started to change rather dramatically, fewer couples married, more couples divorced and more children were born outside marriage. Cohabitation became a form of living together that first developed among young couples. This form of cohabitation could be compared with a stage of engagement before marriage. (Sture, 2006, p. 4).

The new trend of cohabitation among the young implied that few women under the age of 25 married. Still, very few had children during this stage. Later, when cohabitation started to be more common, people started to have children when still cohabiting. This new stage of cohabitation has by some demographers been described as the transformation from a traditional to a modern family formation pattern (Blom, Noack og Østby, 1993).

As cohabitation is largely considered a "well-established and fully accepted family form in Scandinavian countries" (Eriksen, 2001, p. 72), parents in cohabitation in Norway consider their parenting roles as like married parents (Ramsøy, 1994 in Eriksen, 2001). Therefore, there are no huge differences in parenting practices in these contexts, and government support is the same, if not better for cohabiting parents (Eriksen, 2001). Families then, could take many forms and also do not necessarily live within the same household but are "emotionally attached, detached or related by kin" (Garvis & Ødegaard, 2018, p. 2).

Another movement that was influential in the formation of families, parenting, and parenting practices in Norway was the feminist movement that started in the 1800s. It is widely acknowledged that Norway is one of the countries that have advanced women's rights earlier than the rest of the world. The universal suffrage for men and women in Norway took years in the making, but as early as 1911, a woman named Anna Rogstad held office in the Norwegian parliament (Stortinget, 2021). Suffrage for women was successfully introduced in 1913 which sparked discourses on roles and duties in society and equal pay for all (Bergstrøm, 2013). The feminists in Norway called for societal reform to have legal abortion and women's protections for many years but it was only in 1978 when the Equality Act was passed and implemented that woman started taking university degrees and participating in the workforce (Bergstrøm, 2013). This empowerment

was a driving force in making solutions for women and men to be better able to have good work conditions and balance family life and parenting at the same time (Leira, 2002). Solutions came in the form of early childhood places for children so parents would have somewhere safe to leave their children while they worked during the daytime. This will be further discussed in the next section.

Families towards sustainable goals

In the UNICEF (2018) synthesis report on key findings on families, family policy, and sustainable development goals, families have a broader role in attaining sustainable development goals (SDGs) than just attaining target 4.2 which ensures all children have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education. The report identified six SDGs (SDG 1 no poverty; SDG 3 good health and well-being; SDG 4 quality education; SDG 5 gender equality; SDG 8 decent work and economic growth, particularly youth unemployment; and SDG 16 peace, justice and strong institutions with a focus on ending violence) where families have an important role, highlighting the need for more family-focused programs supported by national and local policies (UNICEF, 2018).

Norway has aligned its development policies and efforts in attaining Sustainable Development Goals by pledging to uphold good governance, respect human rights, and promotion of rights-based implementation of the SDGs (Permanent Mission of Norway to the United Nations, n.d.). Norway has also served as a haven for stateless individuals and families that have been affected by war in different parts of the world as part of their humanitarian initiatives. This includes the provision of free education at all academic levels to residents, including refugees and immigrants. For families with the youngest children, kindergarten places and mother-tongue interpreters are provided, along with free access to healthcare.

Background of early childhood education in Norway

The history of kindergartens in Norway is linked to the country's socio-economic and workforce conditions as well as the women's reform movement (Johansson, 2020). For a long time, circa 1920s and 1930s, there was

high unemployment. Women who worked away from home worked in factories, agriculture, or other people's homes (ibid). Parents had different options for child care: Most mothers stayed at home to take care of the children, some organized care for other children within their homes with the help of relatives, and those who could afford it hired babysitters (ibid). Half-day kindergartens for five- and six-year-olds were introduced around the 1900s, but places were limited (ibid). In 1965, it was found that many women with children were just working part-time in jobs outside of their homes, if at all. The government's support in creating kindergarten places made it possible for most mothers to combine studies and work with having children and families (ibid). From the 1970s parts of the kindergarten policy were focused on preparing children for primary school until the reform in 1997 when the framework for kindergartens was introduced (ibid).

In 2003, there was political support for building kindergartens for children of all students and parents in the workforce (Johansson, 2020). Also during this time, a "local price" was introduced for kindergarten places (ibid). In 2010, most children were attending kindergarten. In 2019, the government provided more support for 2-5-year-olds to attend four hours a day for children who have parents who have low incomes (ibid). The Norwegian government also provides more provisions for families and children, which will be discussed in a separate section of this paper.

Norwegian Government and welfare state efforts in relation to families and children

The family is an important unit of society in Norway that warrants a specific government office responsible for policies, programs, and practices related to it. As early as 1956, the Ministry of Family and Consumer Affairs [Departementet for familie- og forbrukersaker] was established to administer, coordinate, and legislate on family and consumer matters (Store Norske lexicon, 2020). In 1991, the Ministry of Children and Families [Barne- og familiedepartementet] (BFD) was created in lieu of the Ministry of Family and Consumer Affairs [Departementet for familie- og forbrukersaker]. The new ministry was responsible for creating and administering government policies and programs on the upbringing of children and framework conditions for families to operate (Berg et al., 2021). Over the last three decades, BFD has had many changes in name and areas of responsibility (ibid). In 2006, when it was called the Ministry of Children and Equality. In 2010,

it changed its name to the Ministry of Children, Equality and Inclusion, which it was called until 2016. After this, the ministry was called the Ministry of Children and Equality until 2019 when the ministry then took back its old name, the Ministry of Children and Families (Berg et al., 2021).

BFD is responsible for creating and implementing policies that include child protection, upbringing, and living conditions of children, young people, and their families [Regjeringen, n.d.]. The ministry consists of four departments: Child Protection Department [Barnevernsavdelingen], The Consumer, Faith and Philosophy Department [Forbruker-, tros- og livssynsavdelingen], Planning and Administration Department [Plan- og administrasjonsavdelingen], and the Family and upbringing department [Familie- og oppvekstavdelingen] (Regjeringen, n.d.). It is the family and upbringing department that has the primary responsibility for designing and coordinating children and young people's welfare and well-being through programs and policies that involve their families. This includes the development of child and family laws, the development and administration of transfer arrangements for children's families, preventive family protection, grants, and policy development for children and young people, development of adoption policy as well as key measures in policies to prevent and assist people exposed to violence in close relationships (Regjeringen, n.d.). As such their programs are geared towards these themes. In addition, BDF has a subordinate agency called the Directorate for Children, Youth and Families (Bufdir) which is a professional body that manages the Children, Youth and Family Agency (Bufetat) that works within the areas of child welfare, family protection, adoption, cohabitation measures, matrimonial matters, research and development, parental guidance, youth exchange, among other things (Regjeringen, n.d.). Bufdir offers local and online initiatives to support parents. One example of this is through the website "Foreldrehverdag.no" which is a recognition that there should be online resources and tools where parents could get information about parenting.

Kindergartens in Norway have been administered by the Ministry of Family and Consumer Affairs from 1958 until 2006. For a long time, childcare of the youngest children was deemed by the government to be the mother's responsibility within their homes (Johansson, 2020). Women who were part of the workforce had to hire private nannies, ask for help from their relatives, or turn to private care solutions for their children before the introduction of state-owned care institutions (ibid). Therefore, with the advent of social support of the state through kindergartens, one can argue

that kindergarten pedagogy was developed and strengthened by taking inspiration from European proponents such as Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel (Johansson, 2020) and that the responsibility for upbringing and education of children and young people in institutions are largely the state's responsibility.

In terms of children and young people's education, a different government office is responsible for overseeing the policies, programs, and practices in this regard. The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research [Kunnskapsdepartementet] has a long history that dates back to 1814, making it the first ministry to be established in Norway (Regjeringen, 2007; Helsvig, 2014). The Ministry of Education and Research has primary responsibility for educational institutions across all lifespans: primary, secondary, upper secondary, tertiary, cultural, vocational, research, and training schools. In 2006, the jurisdiction of kindergarten moved to the Ministry of Education and Research (Regjeringen, 2007).

The Ministry of Education and Research also has an executive agency, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training [UDIR], that is responsible for the development and supervision of kindergarten, primary and secondary school matters (UDIR, 2021). This executive agency develops, conducts, and monitors research and development within its jurisdiction. UDIR's work involves research and development on the quality of kindergartens and schools, the framework plans for educational institutions, and competence frameworks for teachers (UDIR, 2021). UDIR is also the government body responsible for carrying out research on educational matters, which includes parent involvement. In 2016-2019, UDIR conducted yearly parent surveys to find out parent's satisfaction with the conditions and offers of kindergartens in Norway. The UDIR has also been responsible for developing and evaluating the Kindergarten Framework Plan [Rammeplan] (UDIR, 2017).

Apart from children's education, the Norwegian government also has an administrative agency established in 2006, the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) which is responsible for administering different welfare schemes to everyone living in Norway (Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration, 2019b). NAV's main goals are to facilitate having more people active and in work, fewer people on benefits, a well-functioning job market, and providing the right services and benefits at the right time, and providing good services tailored to the users' needs and circumstances to have a comprehensive and efficient labor and welfare administration (Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration, 2019b).

To support families with children, NAV administers family-related benefits, particularly for mothers active in the labor force (Sture, 2006). These benefits enable parents to be still actively working while they have children. These family-related benefits are also in place to support families that have difficult economic situations such as those at risk, who have broken up, or who just recently moved to the country as refugees or immigrants. The benefits are discussed in the succeeding section.

Family Related Benefits in Norway

NAV's family-related benefits are grouped into five categories: 1) Related to pregnancy, birth, and adoption (foreldrepenger, engangsstønad og svangerskapspenger), 2) child benefit and cash benefit, 3) benefit for single parents (mother/father), 4) child/ support/ advance payments of child support, 5) support related to family matters and concerns (Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration, 2019a).

Related to pregnancy, birth and adoption (foreldrepenger, engangsstønad og svangerskapspenger)

Parental allowance (foreldrepenger) is the money one can apply for to replace their income when one has to be at home in connection with giving birth to a child or adoption. This applies to mothers, co-mothers, and fathers of the children. In addition, parents are entitled to a total of 12 months' leave in connection with the birth and after the birth. These 12 months include the mother's right to leave for up to 12 weeks during the pregnancy and six weeks of leave reserved for the mother after the birth. In addition to the benefit of leave for the first 12 months, each of the parents is entitled to one year of leave for each birth. This leave must be taken directly after the first year of the child. Single parents are entitled to both the years. Other people who care for the child may also be entitled to leave: adoptive parents and foster parents have equal rights to leave, from the first day of officially assuming care responsibility for the child. The right to leave does not apply to people who will adopt a stepchild or if the child is aged over 15.

On the other hand, when a person who has not had a job in the past year is expecting a child, this person can apply to receive a lump sum (one-off benefit or engangsstønad) instead of the parental allowance. In addition,

women who have to stop working because of higher-risk pregnancies can apply and receive maternity pay benefits.

Child benefit and cash benefit

If a person has a child under 18 under their care, they are entitled to child benefits that could help cover the cost of raising a child. Parents, single parents, and foster parents can receive the child benefit. For the latter, the child should be residing with them permanently (for more than 3 months). The child must be living in Norway or have been in Norway for at least 12 consecutive months.

The child benefit is a fixed amount per month per child. If one has more children, then there is an extended child benefit to cover all children. Child benefit is paid out one month before a child turns 18, for as long as residency conditions are still met.

In addition, there is an additional cash benefit supplement for children ages 1-2 years who do not attend kindergarten full-time.

Benefit for single parents (mother/father)

Single parents who have children under the age of 8 years can apply for and receive a transitional allowance for up to three years. There is also an additional allowance to cover part of the daycare and after-school care costs of single mothers and fathers. They are eligible to receive this allowance until the end of the child's 4th grade. In addition, single parents can receive an allowance for school fees that cover expenses for tuition fees, semester fees, and examination fees for the children..

Child/ support/ advance payments of child support

For children who do not live with their parents, the children must be supported through monthly child support. This child support is paid to the parent who the child lives with. This is also true if the child/ren lives with someone other than their parents. For example, if a child lives with and is taken care of by his/her grandparents, then the parents still must provide for the child and the grandparents can receive the contribution. In all cases,

NAV can help decide how large the child support could be, depending on the circumstance of the parent/s.

Support related to family matters and concerns

NAV also facilitates other benefits that families can apply for which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Attendance allowance in connection with a child's illness
- Care allowance in the final phase of life
- Care benefit
- Training allowance
- Spousal support
- Paternity and parental responsibility
- Acquired rights for care work
- Grant for funeral
- Allowance for transportation of the deceased
- Basic benefit
- Attendance benefit
- Higher rate attendance benefit

Garvis & Ødegaard (2018) have offered an overview of policies, parental provision and welfare support for children and their families within the context of Nordic countries. Their overview includes Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark and Iceland.

Table 1.1. Nordic policy around childhood

	Sweden	*Norway*	*Finland*	*Denmark*	*Iceland*
Ratification of UN Rights of the Child Convention	1990	1991	1991	1991	1992
Corporal punishment law	1979 (UN) 1958 (forbidden to hit children in schools)	1987 (UN) 1936 (in schools)	1983 (UN) 1890 (in schools)	1997 (UN) 1967 (in schools)	2003 (UN)
Universal access to kindergarten	3-6 years are free for 15 hours a week since 2003 Children can start from 1 year of age since 1995 6-year-old right to free preschool since 1975	Every child, age 1-6, has a legal right to a place in kindergarten since 2009	8 months to five years since 1990 6-year-old kindergarten class since 1996	Children should be offered a place in day care facilities (dagtilbud) if they parents want it Some local authorities guarantee a place since 1997. Since 2000-2003 there has been a financial agreement between the central government and local authorities of offering all parents day care places.	Day care obligatory for bilingual children from 3 years Children can start from 1 year of age
School starting age and years of compulsory schooling	7 9	6 10	7 9	6 10	6 10

Profile of frameworks for early childhood	Play and learning Democracy Scientific documentation Qualification socialization and subjectification	Play and learning Democracy Continuous observation of whole child development and happiness Socialization, qualification and subjectification	Play and learning Democracy Individual plans Socialization, qualification and subjectification	Play and learning Democracy Language screening of 3-year-olds Socialization, qualification	Play and learning Democracy Equality Assessment of every child's development Socialization, qualification and subjectification
Provisions provided in education	Basic rights to free education, including necessary equipment, textbooks, school transport and meals	6-18 basic rights to free education, including necessary equipment, textbooks and school transport	Basic rights to free education, including necessary equipment, textbooks, school transport and meals	Maximum cost is 2.551 (Copenhagen) Low family income, free or low fee	Parents pay 30% of actual cost in public institution and up to 50% in private institution

The policies in Table 1.1. (Garvis & Ødegaard, 2018) remain the same.

Table 1.2. Policy for parents in Nordic countries

	Sweden	*Norway*	*Finland*	*Denmark*	*Iceland*
Amount of maternity and parental leave	Both parents are entitled to up to 8 months of paid leave per child, which makes it possible for a total of 16 months per child Of this amount, 13 months are paid at 80% of the most recent income up to a ceiling of approximately 443,000 SEK (€51,100) per year in 2016	Mothers can take 35 weeks at full pay or 45 weeks at 80% pay Fathers can take up to 10 weeks on the mother's income. Together the parents can receive an additional 56 weeks of full pay of 80% pay	Maternity leave is for 18 weeks Parental leave is for 26 weeks Paternity leave is for 9 weeks and covers the first year of a child's life Benefits during maternity, paternity, and parental leave are between 70 to 90% of previous annual earnings	18 weeks of maternity leave Fathers get 14 days Parents can then split an additional 32 weeks	Parents can split 9 months of post child-birth leave Mothers get 3 months and then fathers get 3 months Both parents receive 80% of their salaries
Father's rights	A new father or the other parent also has the right to 10 days with compensation when a child is born	Fathers (other parents) can get 10 weeks on the mother's salary, and they split the rest	Fathers can take 18 weeks of paternity leave while the mother is on maternity leave	14 days paid leave at birth, then until 32 weeks paid parental leave Can extend the leave on reduced pay	Fathers are given 3 months and the possibility to an additional 3 months so share with mother
Provision	Free prenatal care	Free prenatal care	Free prenatal care	Free prenatal care Maternity package	Free prenatal care

An update to Table 1.2. (Garvis & Ødegaard, 2018) for the Norwegian context, at the time of writing in 2022, the total period for maternity and parental leave is 49 weeks with full pay or 59 weeks with 80 % pay. The mother must use the first six weeks immediately after the birth, and the other parent can get 15-19 weeks on the mother's salary, depending on the percentage of benefit coverage. Generally, when parents choose the lower percentage of coverage, they are entitled to longer parental leave.

Table 1.3 Welfare support for children

	Sweden	*Norway*	*Finland*	*Denmark*	*Iceland*
Health care provision	Children below 20 are entitled to free health care (including dental care)	Children below the age of 18 receive all of their medical care free (including dental care)	Children below the age of 18 receive all of their medical care free.	Every legal resident gets a free health care Free dental care for children until 18)	Children below the age of 18 receive all of their medical care free Pay for medicine
Entitlement to care for sick children	120 days per child per year for children under 12 years Salary is at 80%	20 days per child per year for children under 12 years Salary is 100%	Parent has the right to stay home to look after sick children.		12 days per child under 13 years per year For chronically ill children 80% salary for 9 months
Child benefit	Child allowance amounting to SEK 1,050 (about €122) per month and per child with supplements for large families	Child allowance amounting to NKR 970 (€107) per month and per child under 18, with supplements for large families	Working parents are entitled to work shorter hours from the end of the parental leave period until the end of the child's second year of school A flexible care allowance encourages parents of children under the age of 3 to combine part-time work with part-time care. An amount of €244.18 per month is paid to parents working a maximum of 22.5 hours per week or 60%, of their normal full-time hours, and €162.78 to those working a maximum of 30 hours per week, or 80% of their normal full-time hours	Families (mothers) with children 0-2: DK 17,772 (€ 2390) per child per year 2-6: 14,076 per child per year 7-17: 11,076 per child per year	Child allowance is provided for low-income families depending on income, number of children and their ages

	Sweden	*Norway*	*Finland*	*Denmark*	*Iceland*
Cost and access for kindergarten	Preschool is free for children 3-5 years for 15 hours a week Parental fees are directly proportional to parents' income and inversely proportional to the number of children in a family The fee can be up to 3 per cent of the family's monthly income but no more than 1,260 SEK (about €146) per month	Maximum price is NOK 2.480 (€264) Low-income families get reduced or free cost	The monthly fee per child varies between €0 and €283 in 2015 depending on family size and income Education for 6-year-old children (pre-primary) is free	Maximum price is DK 2.551 (€ 343) with lunch included	Prices vary between municipalities Meals are included For those who cannot get a place in lekskola, can get subsidies for private day care
Support for children who do not access kindergarten	A flat rate allowance of untaxed 3,000 SEK (€312) per month	Families who do not use kindergarten service at all get NOK 6,000 (€639) per child per month If the child uses kindergarten service less than 20 hours a week, the family gets NOK 3,000 per child per month	Parents are also entitled to paid childcare leave with an allowance after the end of parental leave if they do not use day care This enables parents to look after a child under the age of 3 without giving up their jobs In 2015 this basic childcare allowance was €342.53 per month per one child	Children from families in need for language support can get access to a language stimulation program 15 or 30 hours a week	No support

As an update to Garvis & Ødegaard's (2018) table on welfare support for children (Table 1.3.), for the time being, the child allowance per child per month is NOK 1,766 for children under 6 years of age and NOK 1,510 for children over 6 years of age. As before, there are supplements for large families and single parents (NAV, n.d.). As of August 1, 2024, the maximum price in kindergarten to NOK 2000 a month. In the 189 most sparsely populated municipalities, the price will be NOK 1500 a month. As before, families with incomes get a further reduction. While 9 out of 10 children in Norway now attend kindergarten (UDIR, 2019), some families prefer to keep childcare within the home. As kindergarten is not compulsory, these families are also given cash support by the government, which is dependent on the family circumstances and the amount of time the child/children spend in childcare facilities (if any) (NAV, 2024). In addition, the Norwegian government also provides other childcare benefits connected to children's health and well-being. Some examples are contributions, payments, and reimbursement of travel expenses to go to doctor appointments, surgeries, and purchase of special equipment such as wheelchairs, PC or tablets for learning differences, wigs, orthopaedic shoes, or orthotics, to name a few. Having these benefits enable all parents to have the capacity to participate in the workforce knowing that their children and family are taken care of and have safe spaces to belong while they work.

Norwegian Laws related to family involvement in schools and kindergarten

The Education Act and the Kindergarten Act are two overarching laws that have provisions for the involvement of parents in their children's upbringing and education. The Education Act [Lov om grunnskolen og den vidaregåande opplæringa (opplæringslova)] aims to provide training and apprenticeship to young people in cooperation with their home and families to prepare them for participation in local and international societies in the future (Norwegian Ministry of Education, 1998). This law has been in force since 1998 and covers primary and secondary education and training. In Section 11-4 of the Education Act, primary schools are mandated to have parents' councils [Foreldrerådet] to have good partnership and cohesion between home and school to facilitate positive development and well-being of children (Norwegian Ministry of Education, 1998). All parents who have children in the school are automatically members of the parents' council,

and representatives of this parents' council also take part as members of the school board.

"Parent involvement in early childhood education (ECE) in Norway is currently framed by the Act of Kindergarten (2005, updated in 2008 and 2010) and the Framework Plan for Kindergartens: Content and Tasks (UDIR, 2017)" (Sadownik & Skoglund, 2021, p. 174). The Kindergarten Act [Lov om barnehager (barnehageloven)]'s Section 19b stipulates kindergarten's cooperation with the children's parents, especially when a child needs different assistance and services (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006). Similar to the Education Act, Section 4 of the Kindergarten Act also mandates kindergartens to have parents' councils and coordinating committees which are part of the decision-making body of the institutions (ibid).

In Norway, home-kindergarten partnerships are referred to as 'foreldresamarbeid,' or parental cooperation. As previously mentioned, parental cooperation in kindergartens and schools is in the form of parents' councils (Foreldreutvalget for barnehager (FAU)) consisting of all parents/guardians of the children in the kindergarten (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006). The parents' council shall promote their common interests and contribute to the collaboration between the kindergarten and the parent group creating a good cooperative environment (ibid). The FAU must also take the initiative for activities in the kindergarten (autumn/summer parties, volunteer events, ski days, etc) and help to carry them out (ibid). FAU must encourage and ensure participation from parents/guardians and share responsibility for ensuring the learning environment is safe and good. The Parents' Council chooses its leader and secretary who become the parents' representatives in the cooperative committee (Samarbeidsutvalg (SU)) (Foreldreutvalget for barnehager, n.d.).

According to Section 4 of the Kindergarten Act (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006), the kindergarten must have a cooperation committee (SU) which acts as an advisory, contact-making, and coordinating body. It consists of parents/guardians and staff in the kindergarten, so each group has 2 representatives (Foreldreutvalget for barnehager, n.d.). If the kindergarten has more than two departments, the number of representatives from these two groups is increased. The kindergarten owner elects 2 representatives to SU, but not with more representatives than each of the other groups (Foreldreutvalget for barnehager, n.d.). The municipality can also elect a representative to the cooperation committee. The owner's representatives are elected for 2 years, the others for 1 year (Foreldreutvalget

for barnehager, n.d.). The collaboration committee constitutes itself, which means that the committee itself decides who will be chairman and deputy chairman (ibid).

As an advisory body, SU must be used actively concerning the kindergarten (Foreldreutvalget for barnehager, n.d.). As a contact-creating body, SU must work actively to initiate measures that can create contact between the various parties in the kindergarten. Activities, themed evenings, and various celebrations together with the children, as well as taking responsibility for the kindergarten creating contact about the local community. As a coordinating body, the committee must in various contexts, including where conflicts arise, work to find joint solutions.

SU's tasks can include, but are not limited to the following:

- Discuss the kindergarten's ideals
- Promote contact between the kindergarten, school and the local community.
- Determine the annual plan.
- Have matters presented that are important for the kindergarten's activities
- Building the relationship with the parents, the kindergarten and the local community

The SU has to accomplish these within the framework set by applicable laws, regulations, the kindergarten's statutes, and budget (Foreldreutvalget for barnehager, n.d.).

While there are overarching guidelines for having parent councils in kindergartens and schools, its implementation is subject to the interpretation of school/kindergarten administration. For example, as each barnehage and school is mandated to inform the parents of the FAU and SU as automatic members, they usually upload this information to their websites. Additionally, each barnehage has different activities and practices stemming from this umbrella program. Below are some common activities of parent councils:

- Arrangement of various social events for children and their parents.
- Pre-Christmas party/Christmas party
- May 17 celebration in the kindergarten
- Other social activities such as volunteer days (in collaboration with the kindergarten)

– Other social events, such as an open barbecue hut, sledding day or parents' evening

Foreldreutvalget for barnehager (FUB) is the national committee appointed by the Ministry of Education for parents with children in kindergartens. Apart from ensuring that kindergartens are upholding the policy of having parent councils, FUB also offers guidance for both parents and kindergarten staff in the form of lectures on how cooperation between families and kindergartens can be strengthened (Foreldreutvalget for barnehager, n.d.)..

Chapter 7

Benefits of family/parent involvement

Outcomes of parent involvement programs and practices have been investigated in various contexts and countries across different domains of childhood development and by different variables such as demographic background. After decades of practice and research evidence in different contexts and levels, it has become universally accepted that involving parents has a significant and positive impact on young children's education and development. This chapter presents various studies and findings in the related literature documenting the benefits of parent involvement not only for children but also for teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. Globally, research evidence has consistently linked parental involvement in ECEC with children's cognitive and brain development, and socioemotional and physical development. Further, this chapter establishes the link between parental involvement in ECEC and improved children's academic skills in math, science, language, and early reading. Other grounds for rationale such as long-term future life benefits are also delineated.

Parental involvement academic development

Parent involvement in early childhood has been linked to grounding and improved Science, Technology, Mathematics, and Engineering (STEM) (OECD, 2023; Silinskas & Kikas, 2019; Thomas, et al., 2020). Regarding specific research areas, parental involvement has been found to influence children's development of quantitative skills and problem-solving (Thomas, et al., 2020). It can be asserted that the impacts of parental involvement on grounding STEM or STEAM are said to exist beyond early childhood and across contexts and cultures.

For instance, the 2012 and 2015 studies of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in Croatia, China (Hong Kong and Macao], Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Italy, New Zealand, Portugal, Panama, and Qatar) focused on Science and Math. Findings on survey questions related to parental involvement showed that parental expectations were strongly

associated with children's Math attainments. Further, parental participation in STEM-related activities from the early age up to 10 years was closely associated with their science and Math attainments (OECD, 2013, 2023).

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In Math and Science, the available empirical evidence indicates parental involvement does influence children's attainments in the two subjects (Segrin, et al., 2015; Silinskas & Kikas, 2019; Wong, et al., 2018). To develop Math and Science in early childhood such attributes as competence, autonomy, and problem-solving are vital among children and parents (Silinskas & Kikas, 2019). However, as an important critique, most of the studies with such findings tended to rely on parental-reported data on the scope and frequency of involvement (Dumont et al, 2014; Silinskas & Kikas, 2019).

Recent efforts of grounding parental involvement and science in early childhood have gained the attention of researchers and policymakers globally (Dumont, et al., 2014). There has been a "swing away from science" global concerns due to declining students' interest in natural sciences and related disciplines (Segrin, et al., 2015). One of the effective strategies commonly used to build natural sciences foundational skills and interests is the involvement of parents through various projects and programs (De Silva, Khatibi & Azam, 2018; Silinskas & Kikas, 2019).

On the other hand, in some countries such as Sri Lanka and Tanzania, while there is a huge gap in natural sciences learning achievements across gender, urbanicity, family SES, and even within regions; early childhood parental involvements have been reported to increase, and influence children's interests in these disciplines (De Silva, et al., 2018; Ndijuye & Tandika, 2020). Research has shown that effective parental involvement in such contexts may also take the form of participation in informal STEM activities (Dearing, Sibley, & Nguyen, 2015; Nugent, Barker, Grandgenett, & Welch, 2016).

Parental involvement and language and early literacy development

Parental involvement is associated with improved early reading skills and even future literacy skills in upper grades (Hemmerechts, Agirdags, & Kavadias, 2017). Regardless of family socioeconomic status, race, or family background, almost all of the parents are said to have been more involved in children's early language and literacy development than any other form of academic development (Hemmerechts, et al, 2017; Tan, Lyu &Peng, 2020). Parental involvement in such activities as story-telling, the naming of common items available in local environments, and storybooks reading with children are claimed to improve children's early reading and literacy skills (Tekin & Tekin, 2006; Tan, et al., 2020). Such parental practices are more nuanced and effective in a context with limited educational resources and lower institutionalized social support (Ejuu, 2022; Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022b). Parents in different contexts, for example, in the Gulf countries such as Oman, are also more involved in the process of young children's foreign language, mainly English, learning starting from preschool levels (Tekin, 2014; Tekin, 2015; Tekin & Al-Salmi, 2019)

More to the point, available evidence from the Global South seems to suggest that while such aspects of parental involvement practices as school activities, parent-school regular communications, and parent-child academic discussion are important, in a context with limited educational resources and pervasive family poverty, specific aspects of home-based involvements and parental expectations are extremely vital in enhancing and improving children's early reading and literacy (Dearing et al., 2015; Ejuu, 2022; Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022a; Tan, et al., 2020). The reason for these variations is not yet empirically known which calls for more parental involvement research from the Global South.

Parental involvement and cognitive development

Studies from different parts of the world have documented the connection between parental involvement and young children's cognitive development (Rollè, et al., 2019; Sun, et al., 2018), consistent with language and reading skills (Varghese & Wachen, 2016; Sun, et al., 2018). While there are mixed findings about the implications of distal and proximal factors such as parental education and income on children's cognitive- and early reading development, there is a consensus among ECEC researchers from various contexts that confirm a direct and positive relationship between parental involvement and cognitive development (Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022, Rollè, et al., 2019; Varghese & Wachen, 2016).

In line with the other contexts, the evidence from various countries in the sub-Saharan region has also consistently indicated the existing association between parental involvement and children's cognitive development (Echaune, Ndiku & Sang, 2015; Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022). For example, in Kenya, Echaune, Ndiku, and Sang (2015) explored the impacts of parental involvement on early literacy development among preschool and primary school children. They found that while parental involvement in children's homework was correlated with early literacy development, the positive effect disappeared with the control of other variables. Not surprisingly, female parents were more involved than male parents in children's learning and development for socio-cultural reasons.

In India, investigating parental involvement in the cognitive development of children from lower-achieving families, Cashman, Sabates, and Alcott (2021) found that children from wealthier households had more involved parents, which influenced their language skills. This study found that although parental involvement differed across family SES, maternal involvement had significant implications on children's cognitive skills and language development regardless of family SES. Other studies from the US, South East Asian, and South African regions compared maternal and paternal involvements and found that although the mean level of mothers' involvement was higher than fathers', there was a linear association between fathers' involvement and children's cognitive skills (Baker, 2018; Duursma, 2014; Sun, et al., 2018).

On the other hand, a study making use of a large data set from Norway sheds light on the causality of parents' educational levels on children's educational levels (Black, Devereux & Salvanes, 2005). The authors assert that reforms in educational policies in Norway beginning in the 1960s had

a significant impact on higher educational attainment of the population which also led to the capacity to have higher incomes (ibid). In their study, they found little causal relationships between parent education and child education, except for mother and son pairings; that sons get more education when mothers also increase their educational attainment (Black, Devereux & Salvanes, 2005). In some follow-up studies, they have linked this causality to the reform of parental benefits, particularly on the provision of supportive parental leaves connected to giving birth (maternity) as well as to the provision of early childhood care for children (Björklund & Salvanes, 2011). These findings show the power of comprehensive school and policy reforms—that providing support to parents and families has the potential to yield high results for society.

Further, another Norwegian study that focuses on parents' experiences with children's cognitive and language development, particularly of children who have had cochlear implantation, it was found that parent's understanding of learning was key to how they supported their children's learning process but that they are unaware that their involvement had a big impact to the children's cognitive development (Bruin, 2018). Also, this study points to rethinking parents' roles in children's educational development and how parents can be supported by professionals in this role (ibid). On the other hand, the research also points to a debate on how to involve parents in children's pedagogical tasks without reducing parenthood to these activities (ibid).

While there is limited research on parent involvement and academic development among Norwegian researchers in ECEC, there are other studies that include the Norwegian context in their data set. One such research is from Hampden-Thompson et al. (2013) where they undertook a cross-national analysis of parent involvement and student literacy. For this study, they have utilized PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) scores from 21 countries, Norway being one of them. In general, they have observed that increased communication and engagement with parents come with higher student literacy scores, particularly in reading (Hampden-Thompson et al, 2013). This phenomenon where parent involvement through social and cultural communication benefits students in reading literacy was observed in Norway, Austria, Australia, Finland, and Ireland (ibid).

While we have included this in the literature review, it is important to note that the data set used pertains to school-aged children rather than from the early years. The lack of research in this area could be related

to how the Norwegian Society views early childhood education and care—that the early years are separate from schools and that there is no pressure to "schoolify" kindergartens. As such, there are no subject matter areas in kindergarten pedagogy in Norway; much focus is on children's rights and well-being, and giving children the opportunity to play, experience nature and the outdoors, and become local and global citizens, which is reflected in the Norwegian Framework for Kindergartens (UDIR, 2017).

Parental involvement and socioemotional development

Across countries, there is empirical evidence that establishes a relationship between parental involvement in ECEC and children's social and emotional development (Chavkin, 2017; Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022; Saracostti, et al., 2019; Yamauchi, et al., 2017). In Chile, Saracostti, et al. (2019) investigated the impact of parental involvement in children's socio-emotional development and found a linear relationship between the two factors. However, on learning outcomes, the study found neither mediating nor moderating the role of children's socio-emotional development. In Norway, Drugli et al. (2009) point out that parental involvement does not work the same for everyone, particularly for parents of children with behavioral differences. For this group, parents with low educational attainment seem to be more vulnerable as they have psychological difficulties to contend with (Drugli et. al., 2009). As such, children who are brought up in these families seem to be at risk of having poor results in children's development (ibid). The researchers point towards this concern to be investigated further as a target area for research (ibid).

It is important to note the variations of what constitutes children's socio-emotional development across contexts and cultures, which in turn, have implications for parental involvement. For example, in Uganda one of the roles of parental involvement is to act as children's first teachers, thus responsible for both personality and culturally appropriate behavioral development, in most of the western societies; parents are to support children develop independence and choice of life pathways that fit their dreams (Selin, 2014).

On the other hand, parental involvement is not always associated with children's personality and psycho-social development (Wong, et al., 2018). Overinvolved parents or 'helicopter parents' who are said to be reluctant to give autonomy and space to their children, have been found to have a

negative impact on their children's learning and development (Schiffrin et al., 2014; Wong, et al., 2018). Findings from various parts of the world have established that such excessive parental control potentially puts children at high risk for behavioral deviation (Schiffrin et al. 2014) and/or low self-esteem (Segrin et al. 2015). In Hong Kong, Wong et al., (2018) examined the educational involvement of parents in their children's academic performance and psychosocial development. These parents were predominantly influenced by Confucius' views which emphasize excessive involvement. Findings indicated that while home-based parental involvement was associated with children's academic performance, it was negatively correlated with psychosocial development.

Parental involvement and physical development

The importance of parental involvement in children's physical development is two-fold. It includes parents providing children with such needs as food, security, and emotional support at home, and collaboration with schools spanning from such issues as what children eat, play, and physical activities to volunteering (Verjans-Janssen, et al., 2018). In some Western countries, in physical development, parents are mostly involved in school-based programs related to overweight, obesity prevention (Bleich, et al, 2017), nutrition and physical activities, and sedentary behavior (Langford, et al., 2014). In developing countries, on the other hand, parents are mostly involved in school-based programs related to malnutrition, effective parenting, physical activity behavior, and holistic child development (Verjans-Janssen, et al., 2018).

Involvement of parents in young children's physical development is perhaps the leading domain with mixed findings globally (Ackah-Jnr, 2022; Wong, et al., 2018). In Ghana, the involvement of parents in a program related to nutrition, parenting, and learning attainments indicated children's improvements in learning attainments but did not pin their other physical indicators such as MBI and BMI z-score (Ackah-Jnr, 2022). In Hong Kong, Wong et al., (2018) examined the associations of parental educational involvement at home and in school with academic performance, and psychological and physical health of Chinese school children. Results indicated that while parental involvement was positively associated with academic performance, it was slightly associated with psychological health, and has a negative relationship with physical health. These mixed and inconclusive

findings related to the importance of parental involvement suggest conducting more research is needed in this area. In an ethnographic study with a focus on motion in Norwegian youth, parents of children who participated in sports activities were interviewed to shed insight into parent involvement (Stefansen et al., 2018). Parents have pointed out that in their parents were not present and involved in their sports activities in their youth, hence they see parent involvement as important to connect with their children emotionally (ibid). They also believe that their involvement as parents furthers children's development in many ways (Stefansen et al., 2018).

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Parental involvement and young children's overall wellbeing and rights

Evidence from various longitudinal studies has documented that parental involvement in children's learning and development has implications on their overall well-being (Melhuish et al., 2008; Melhuish, 2010), and is related to children's rights (Coleman, 2019). In their three-year longitudinal study conducted in Zanzibar and the United Kingdom for children aged between three to seven years, Melhuish and colleagues found that parental

involvement was associated with children's academic development as well as linked to increased self-confidence, cooperation, and peer social ability.

Consistent with these findings, some other reports showed that parental involvement in children's development and learning is part of children's rights (The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNRC, 1989). For instance, article 30 of the UNRC stipulates that children have the right to have their parents' participation and engagement in various activities in which they (children) are involved. This brings to the fore the importance of various legal and practical frameworks relevant to specific socio-cultural contexts (Pölkki & Vornanen, 2016). For example, while it has been reported that in most non-western contexts' mothers are mostly involved in children's education (Selin, 2014), there is a need to have more fathers and other male figures involved so much so that they serve the child's right obligation.

Other benefits of parental involvement

Various educational and sociological studies have documented various rationales for parental involvement in children's learning and development (Bigner & Jacobsen, 2020; Cain, 2018; Ejuu, 2022). In most non-western contexts, parental involvement as been associated with future returns, especially during old age care (Ejuu, 2022), and uplifting from intergenerational poverty (Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022b; Wong, et al., 2018).

There are longitudinal studies suggesting that parental involvement during children's early years with future low crime rates and substance abuse (Anwar & Derin, 2019; Garcia, et al., 2017). Using randomized controlled trials, Anwar and Derin (2019) found proportionally reduced crime rates among young adults with parents who had been actively involved in their education than those with parents who were reportedly less involved. The impacts of parental involvement were more nuanced among children from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds who very clearly defined to their children what was morally good and bad.

Further evidence from other parts of the world has also been documented on the different benefits of parental involvement in young children's education, development, and care. For example, in developing countries in the global south, parents are used to having children at young ages when their fertility abilities are high and get involved partly as children's rights (Cain, 2018), and as a strategy to avoid environmental risks such as

infant mortality and development of alternative source of future insurance during old age. However, studies have found a diverging pattern of thinking on the value of children between biologically heterosexual or traditional parents and same-sex parents on the value of children, which in turn influences their views and perception of parental involvement in children's development and learning. Empirical findings have consistently indicated that while there are different motivations for becoming parents, regardless of sexual orientation, all parents get involved in their children's education though for varied, sometimes contradicting reasons (Bigner & Jacobsen, 2020).

Further empirical evidence on parent involvement in early years

As a research area in ECEC, parental involvement is one of the least researched areas in non-western contexts even though there is mounting evidence about its importance in children's development and learning. This section presents what the research community already knows about family and parental involvement. It presents empirical evidence from both Western and non-Western contexts and cultures.

There is a consensus among ECE researchers, policymakers, and practitioners that parental involvement is associated with improved children's developmental and learning outcomes (Duan, Guan, & Bu, 2018; Sadownik & Skoglund, 2021). It is more critical for children with special learning needs and those from immigrant backgrounds (Sadownik & Skoglund, 2021). Parents who are actively involved in their children's learning are said to promote their socio-emotional development and improved academic growth (Boonk, et al., 2018). Learning activities such as reading at home, school involvement, parental expectations and aspirations, involvement in children's homework, and parental academic pressure have been associated with children's academic success (Boonk et al., 2018; Gubbins & Otero, 2020).

The longitudinal study by Park and Holloway (2017) examined the long-term impact of parental involvement on children's mathematic attainment from preschool to middle grades of elementary schools in the United States of America. Using a sample of a total of 17,385 students from both public and private schools who were followed through Grade 5 and had one or more scores in mathematics. Participating students were assessed on six occasions: Fall and spring of kindergarten, fall and spring of Grade 1, spring

of Grade 3, and spring of Grade 5. Findings indicated that regardless of the kind of schools they attended, parental involvement improved children's academic achievements, boosted parents' and children's networking skills, and was very strongly associated with high mathematic attainments for those from lower family socioeconomic backgrounds.

Some longitudinal studies came up with mixed findings about the role of parental involvement in children's development and learning (Johnson & Hull, 2014; Manolitsis, et al., 2013). For instance, in their longitudinal study to examine the effects of home literacy and numeracy environment on early reading and math acquisition among children in Greece, Manolitsis and colleagues (2013) reported mixed findings. Their study used a sample of 820 children from prekindergarten to the end of grade one. Findings indicated that parental involvement in children's home learning activities was generally correlated with letter knowledge, vocabulary, and phonological awareness, it was not linearly associated with verbal counting.

However, some studies have documented a negative relationship between parental involvement and children's developmental outcomes (See Johnson & Hull, 2014). Such activities as volunteering, fundraising, and even participation in schools' social events were not associated with children's learning outcomes (Johnson & Hull, 2014; Stright & Yeo, 2013). However, some of the investigated traits would have a negative association in one context, but a positive association in another context. For instance, while some studies in the US (Johnson & Hull, 2014; Karbach et al, 2013) found a negative relationship between parental control or interference in children's homework, in China Hsu, et al., (2011) found a positive association between the investigated variables and children's learning outcomes.

In Estonia, Silinskas and Kikas (2019) longitudinally examined associations between children's perceptions of parental involvement in math homework (control and support) and their math performance and motivation (task-persistent homework behavior and math self-concept) from preschool to grade six. The study randomly sampled 512 children who completed math tests, and evaluated their math self-concept; and 420 mothers who evaluated task persistence during homework. Findings indicated that low self-concept in math predicted increased parental control, related to low math performance, task persistence, and math self-concept. Parental support was related to increased task persistence during homework. Over time, parental control was more detrimental to boys' task persistence and math self-concept than for girls.

Other studies have established that parental involvement and learning outcomes are indirectly or directly mediated by children's competencies and characteristics (Phillipson & Phillipson, 2017; You et al., 2016). They list such attributes as children's academic ability and self-evaluation ability and family socioeconomic status (Wang & Sheik-Khalil, 2014). For instance, You and colleagues (2016) studied the relationship between parental involvement and children's academic achievements and self-efficacy in Korea. Findings indicated that while there was a relationship between the observed domains and parental involvements, the improved learning outcomes were the result of children's abilities supported by parental supervision.

While maternal involvement has consistently been linked to children's developmental outcomes, there is mixed evidence about the involvement of fathers (Baker, 2018; Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022; Rollè et al., 2019). Baker (2018) examined father involvement in school-related activities such as parent-teacher conferences and regularly attending parent meetings and found that father–school involvement was positively associated with children's reading, math, and teacher-rated approaches to learning scores in pre-primary and elementary school. However, the findings indicated a negative relationship with later developmental outcomes in upper grades or beyond.

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Rollè et al., (2019) conducted a systematic review to examine the existing literature on the association between father involvement and the development of children's cognitive skills during early and middle childhood. Findings indicated the impact of father involvement on children's cognitive skills which was positive and statistically significant. Examining the role of father involvement in children's development of early reading and math, Ndijuye and Tandika (2022) found a significant relationship between father involvement and children's development of such skills. However, the strength of the relationship and the degree of father involvement are still not clearly known and empirically established.

There is evidence that suggests that parental involvement is largely influenced by existing educational policies, laws, and regulations (Tekin, Mikayilova & Muradova, 2021), parental expectations and beliefs (Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022), and the existing socio-cultural contexts (Boonk et. Al., 2018). In Azerbaijan, parental involvement is regulated by the 2013 State Strategy on Development of Education, which is legally guided by the General Education Law and the Preschool Education Law. The two laws are practically translated into school contexts by the Exemplary Charter of Preschool Educational Institutions (Tekin, et al., 2021).

Social-cultural contexts are one of the significant protective factors that influence parental involvement in early childhood. Available evidence suggests that while parental involvement does not diminish as children grow older, it does change in nature and scope (Boonk et al., 2018; Tekin, 2021), as such, it is not the same across contexts, ethnic groups, and culture. A longitudinal study by You and colleagues (2016), found that while parental participation in school activities, supervision, and expectations had a positive impact on Korean children's development of math and reading, it did not significantly influence their learning attainments when they were in middle school. However, parental involvement had a positive impact on other non-Korean children such as Caucasians and other Asians who were attending the same school registered in the same grade.

Existing empirical research evidence have documented the gap between early childhood education policy and practice on parental involvement (Garvis, et al., 2022; Janssen & Vandenbroeck, 2018; Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022). While most of the existing ECEC policies seem to recognize parental involvement, the developed guidelines and programs seem not to build required partnerships (Janssen & Vandenbroeck, 2018) but rather list what parents should do (Epstein & Boone, 2022). This leads to the use of various terms such as parent-school partnership, parental involvement, parental

engagements, and parents-school association (Goff & Phillipson, 2022; Epstein, et al., 2019; Janssen & Vandenbroeck, 2018).

In various contexts, parents have been involved in children's learning and development by playing different roles depending on contextual needs. While in the United Kingdom parents are described in ECEC documents as school partners who create rich home learning environments (Carroll-Meehan, 2022), in Uganda they are involved as children's first teachers through parent-school engagements (Ejuu, 2022). In Singapore, with her tiger parenting, the official stance on parental involvement spans from 'parent engagement' in-home reading and private tutoring programs to 'school-home partnerships' which may involve volunteering at school (Koh-Chua, et al., 2021). This has implications and may define how, when, and the level of involvement parents should be engaged (Garvis, et al., 2022).

While studies across countries have established the potential benefits of parental involvement in children's development and learning, there is reported evidence that indicates that over-involvements have negative implications (Koh-Chua, et al., 2021; McHale, Dinh, Rao, 2014). Parental over-involvement has been associated with such malpractices as interference with already existing school programs (McHale, et al., 2014), and creates a non-working relationship between parents and teachers which reciprocally has negative impacts on children's learning and development (Park & Holloway, 2016).

There are some studies indicating that the over-involvement of parents in children's learning and development has negative psychological and academic impacts (McHale et al., 2014; Park & Holloway). For instance, the famous 'Tiger parenting' style coupled with Confucius-oriented parental beliefs are dominant among the Chinese population which while it is reportedly correlated with academic success, it does not have implications on other domains for holistic child development (Xie & Li, 2018, 2019; Hu, 2022). Equally important, the over-involvement of authoritarian 'Tiger' Chinese parents was associated with less emotional support, limited parent-child emotional attachment, and the possibility of future personality problems (Xie & Li, 2018).

Chapter 8

Parent Involvement Programs in Early Childhood Education

Given the proven and documented benefits of parent involvement in young children's education and development, many programs around the world, most of them being applied in Western countries, namely the USA and the UK. This chapter attempts to cover the essentials and provides a synopsis of profound parent involvement programs, not only from the Anglo-Saxon contexts but also the other parts of the world. Special attention is also given to discovering the programs in Norway. While the discussed programs are not necessarily the best examples or most successful, they still provide an overview of the existing efforts and strategies that so far, have been in place to get parents involved in their children's learning and development. Successes and challenges faced by the discussed programs may serve as a lesson, basis, and benchmark on which future parental involvements could be set and executed.

Because of the established benefits and the importance of parental involvement, there have been efforts in various countries to launch parent and school partnership/collaboration programs (Tekin, 2011; Wright, Stegelin, & Hartle, 2007). In the United States of America for instance, the well-structured parental involvement programs though begun much earlier gained momentum in the 1960s with the implementation of the Head Start program (Wright, et al., 2007). With all its associated benefits, this program was specifically designed for children from disadvantaged backgrounds with perceived parents with limited educational skills (Gestwicki, 2007; Wright, et al., 2007). In this program, parents and teachers were co-partners with shared expertise on children's learning and development. Individual parents had an opportunity to decide their levels of involvement that suited their commitments and schedules (Gestwicki, 2007).

The Head Start program has been criticized on various grounds including the cost and benefits view which establishes that while the financial investment in the program is on an upward curve, the educational returns do not reflect the investment made (Bailey, Sun & Timpe, 2021; Gestwicki, 2007). The National Reporting System which is administered by the Head Start program twice per year has been criticized for limited provision of in-

formation about children's social-emotional growth, physical development, science, social studies, the arts, and literacy. While educational authorities require preschool teachers to demonstrate the impact of the Head Start program on children and families, the existing evidence suggests that most educators still rely on norm-referenced, general assessment practices, and early learning standards that are difficult at best to translate into well-formulated progress-monitoring information and child outcomes (Grisham-Brown et al., 2008).

In the United Kingdom, until recently, each of the member states of Scotland, Wales, Ireland, and England has its policy of parental involvement. Following the signing of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the government of the United Kingdom introduced a Sure Start policy in 1998. The policy linked education, health, and social care services into one service for families (Carroll-Meehan, 2022; Goodall, et al., 2011). There have been local efforts in specific member states to implement this policy such as the Education Endowment Fund in England, the Scottish Parental Involvement Act in Scotland, the Getting Ready to Learn program in Northern Ireland, and the Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan in Wales (Carroll-Meehan, 2022). All these programs and legislations aim at creating a tripartite relationship involving children, parents, and schools in the United Kingdom. The UK approach to parental involvement has been critiqued because the decision to translate what works in specific member states may bring different outcomes (ibid)

In Tanzania, the existing Education and Training Policy (ETP) and Integrated Early Childhood Education Program (IEEP) mandate the establishment of parental involvement programs at each primary school in the country (MoEST, 2016). While the ETP states in its generic terms of family involvement in ECEC, the IEEP details what and how schools should implement parental involvement. Specifically, parents are obliged to play active roles in Parental-School Association/Partnerships (PTA/P) in which they participate in various school-related activities ranging from preparation of meals to membership in school boards.

The main purpose of the PTA/P is to create practical and effective communication and linkage between families/parents and schools to maximize children's developmental potential. As such, schools provide some academically and socially related activities in which parents are expected to participate actively. However, given such challenges as overcrowded classrooms (Ndijuye, 2020), scarcity of educational resources, low quality of teaching force, and perversive poverty (Kafle, Jolliffe & Winter-Nelson,

2018), it is questionable about the extent parents are actively taking part in school-related activities and building a sense of ownership.

In Hong Kong - China, while there is no specific parental involvement program, however, the existing policy and curriculum guidelines involve parents at various levels and roles (Hu, 2022). Parents are regarded as close school partners in enhancing children's development and learning as role models and clients (Hong Kong Education Bureau, 2017). As active clients, parents are involved through engaging in children's home assignments, parent-child reading, and building morals (Lau & Ng, 2019). To achieve this goal, preschools establish regular and frequent channels of communication with parents. Communication could take various forms such as one-on-one contacts, telephone calls, parents' newsletters, regular parent-school meetings, home visits, and interviews (Pang, 2011). Normally, effective communication leads to such activities as parents volunteering as teaching assistants, and administrators, designing activities, and compiling parents' newsletters (Hu, 2022).

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The Hong Kong approach to parental involvement seems rather vague due to its lack of a clearly defined involvement policy (Hu, 2022; Lau & Ng, 2019). This leads to barriers such as language and limited time of parental involvement which impacts children's learning and development (Lau & Ng, 2019). Further, the lack of clearly defined parental involvement policy

and guidelines is more detrimental in a Confucius culture where power relations between teachers and parents are imbalanced (Hu, 2022; Ng, 2017) asserts that in the Confucius culture, there is still a phenomenon whereby "teachers regard themselves as experts and professionals and maintain control over parents" (p. 268). This may potentially make it difficult for parents to have equal status when it comes to participating in their children's education (Hu, 2022).

In Australia, while there are no clear overall guidelines across states on parental involvement, the existing family involvement program emphasizes on building and maintaining collaborative partnerships between schools, families, and communities (Goff & Phillipson, 2022). Parents are urged to participate in children's lives and learning at home, school, and the wider community. Normally, parental involvement is through school-family partnership programs such as the National Partnership Agreement on Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities (Goff & Phillipson, 2022).

In Norway, laws are often translated into practice within local government bodies. Municipalities all over Norway support different organizations to organize and implement different programs that would benefit children and families. As an example, the Bergen municipality has different offers for families in terms of cultural activities and well-being. These programs include, but are not limited to the following:

PopLAB-creative family activity (PopLAB - kreativ familieaktivitet), which is implemented by the Bergen Barnas Kulturhus (Children's Culture House). This activity is just one of the many theatre, music, dance, visual arts, and film workshops, festivals, and activities that this center offers for children and their families every weekend, after classes, or seasonally (Bergen Kommune, n.d.).

Family counsel (Familieråd) is offered by the commune through the Agency for Children and Families (Etat for barn og familie) which is responsible for child protection and family services (Bergen Kommune, n.d.). This program is primarily concerned with children's and families' well-being. This program is parallel to child and family assistance for mental health well-being, as well as offers music therapy for children and their families, in collaboration with Barnas Kulturhurs (Bergen Kommune, n.d.).

While these offers are open to all residents of the local municipalities, these offers are targeted to cater to families that need support more than others.

As already mentioned earlier, the Directorate for Children, Youth and Families (BufDir) also has some efforts to support parents through the

website "Foreldrehverdag.no." On this website, there are numerous resources that parents can access to help them with interacting with their children better. There are different kinds of tests that parents can take to find out their parenting styles, which are also dependent on the ages of their children. These tests have been formulated from a systematic scoping review of systematic reviews that Bufdir commissioned the Norwegian Institute of Public Health to conduct. In their report, they utilized Baumrind's parenting style model with two axes of warm-cold and control chaos creating four parenting styles "authoritarian", "authoritative", "permissive", and "neglectful" (Blaasvær & Ames, 2019). In their systematic review, they found that the "authoritative" parenting style is associated with increased children's well-being while the "authoritarian" and "neglectful" parenting styles are associated with negative outcomes in children (Blaasvær & Ames, 2019).

In addition, there are different video courses, as well as podcasts that parents can listen to. In a report where the website was evaluated (Viana, Gundersen & Nygaard, 2021), it was found that parents appreciate having tools and resources to cope and be more confident with their role of being parents. Overall, the website is deemed a positive source of support for finding tips and guidance for parents in Norway. However, Bufdir still aspires to have more online/digital offers for parents. To create more programs in the future, they have conducted a systematic review of different strategies and parental interventions in different formats (Nøkleby, Flodgren & Langøien, 2019). They also hope to cater to Norwegian and immigrant parent populations.

While the most relevant organization for parent-kindergarten cooperation is organized by Foreldreutvalget for barnehager (FUB/FAU), several non-governmental organizations work for the benefit of families in Norway. Some include Rød kors, Frelsesarmeen (The Salvation Army), Kirkensbymisjon, etc. Most times, these organizations collaborate in planning and implementing projects. Non-governmental organizations often make use of public spaces such as community libraries or churches to hold their events. Often, they have volunteers to work in these events, as well as in the different programs to support families and children. These non-governmental organizations seek funding from their local municipalities for support and funding of the different projects they implement such as Kirkensbymisjon's Home Start Familiekontakten (HSF) program that aims to support families with young children by having volunteers visit families with young children under school age for 2-4 hours each week. In doing so, the program

provides guidance as well as respite from the stress of parenting when the families may not have relatives nearby or if they need someone to talk to for advice or guidance on child-rearing or challenges with having chronically ill children (Kirkensbymisjon, n.d.; Frelsesarmeen, n.d.). From this program alone, the 2017 annual report shows that around 1,082 families have received support all over Norway (Frivillighetnorge, n.d.).

Chapter 9

Challenges, barriers, and recommendations to parental involvement

Parent involvement is a dynamic and ever-changing phenomenon that has a significant impact on children's lives. Therefore, it has different dimensions to be considered meticulously. As it has witnessed decades of research and practice, there are several challenges and barriers faced by parents, teachers, children, and other stakeholders to improve the applications and get the utmost benefit. These challenges and barriers are related but not limited to, 1) communication and language issues, 2) parent and family matters, 3) efficient programs meeting individual and contextual needs, 4) policy-practice divide, and 5) involving non-parent adults. Besides, parent involvement needs to be redefined considering evolving changes in the connected variables and roles in the family across the contexts and the new information obtained by the related research. Otherwise, it would not be possible to provide suggestions for better practice of parent involvement. For example, parent involvement about sustainability and its implications will be discussed. Therefore, this chapter attempts to provide recommendations and solutions to those contemporary challenges and barriers from an up-to-date perspective.

Research across contexts, cultures, and disciplines has documented several challenges and barriers to parental involvement in children's learning development (Badrasawi, Yahefu & Khalid, 2019; Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022; Wong, et al, 2018). However, the noted barriers and challenges varied across countries (Garvis, et al., 2022), educational systems, and cultures (Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022; Wong, et al., 2018). Other literature has grouped them in school-related, home-related, and policy-related.

(i) Communication and language-related barriers

Effective communication and language barriers are some of the most stumbling challenges of parental involvement (Badrasawi, Yahefu & Khalid, 2019). It is more so when the official medium of instruction at school is different from the language spoken by children and parents (Hu, 2022). Communication may take the form of direct or indirect, verbal or non-verbal, and sometimes can be visual depending on context, need or purpose,

and urgency (Hu, 2022). In rural Malaysia, Badrasawi, Yahefu, and Khalid (2019) examined challenges to parental involvement among children of ethnic minorities. Findings showed that parents' limited mastery of Putonghua – the official Chinese language of instruction, was the main obstacle to their involvement.

Similarly, parental involvement especially of immigrant parents is mostly limited by their race and immigration status (Antony-Newman, 2019; Hajisoteriou & Angelides 2016). Some findings indicate that in countries where immigrants were of a similar race to the host communities, parental involvements were reportedly active compared to countries where immigrants belonged to a different race (Hajisoteriou & Angelides 2016). These findings suggest that immigration status and race created a sense of inclusion and exclusion among immigrant parents which shaped and influenced their involvement in school-related activities.

(ii) Parents and family-related barriers

Various research has consistently indicated that parents with lower socioeconomic status may be unable to provide a supportive home learning environment and/or be less involved in their children's learning and development (Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022). Further, parents from lower SES have been reported to be less involved in children's development and learning due to busy schedules and having relatively large family sizes (Ejuu, 2022; Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022; Saracostti, et al., 2019; Yamauchi, et al., 2017). In a context with limited or poor social security systems, large family size has implications on resources distribution within the family including attention time and food set for children. However, there are some exceptions given the dominant parental beliefs and expectations towards their children's education and development.

Equally, it happens that family cultural beliefs and parental expectations do not align with overall school philosophy and practices about child-rearing and development. In such circumstances, some empirical findings indicate that parents either withdraw their involvement or decide to move forward to implement their approaches to child-rearing and learning (Antony-Newman, 2019; Yamuachi, et al., 2017). For instance, with their tiger parenting approaches, most of the immigrant Chinese parents in the U.S. found it difficult to reconcile and align their authoritarian parenting with more liberal school approaches. As such, they chose to be less active in school-related activities (Antony-Newman, 2019). The same is true for the Norwegian context. In more recent years, through their

humanitarian efforts to support families and individuals from war-stricken countries along a general trend of global diaspora, Norway's population has seen a rise in diversity of ethnicities and cultures in society. Having a diverse population has repercussions on early childhood education care and parental cooperation. There is a proliferation of research on inclusion and integration efforts in kindergartens, some of which are discussed below.

There are more theses on this topic on parental cooperation with parents of minority background in kindergartens with themes on parent's experiences and communication processes and efforts to get to know parents who have just moved to Norway and shed light on immigrant parent experiences of meetings with Norwegian kindergartens (Sadownik & Ødegaard, 2018; Sadownik, 2021; Sønsthagen 2018; Weymar, 2016; Wolf, 2019; Isaksen, 2021; Helgesen, 2019; Pladsen, 2021; Linn, 2022; Spikkeland, 2022). In a systematic literature review on parental cooperation between minority families and kindergarten staff, it has been found that parental cooperation is sometimes dependent on attitudes and that while there can be extensive contact, there could be little cooperation (Tveitereid, 2018). In addition, the review revealed that there is a tendency to overly focus on cultural and economic differences and lack of language skills as reasons for parental cooperation not to work which ultimately affects the inclusion and integration of immigrant and refugee families (Tveitereid, 2018). Instead, some researchers are proposing that cultural differences be used as a contact point for parental cooperation. As an example, diverse religions could be used for holiday markings and festivities in kindergartens (Krogstad & Hidle, 2015; Grandahl, 2021). Further, it has been pointed out that while a good number of research focus on just parent cooperation, research should also pay attention to the importance of kindergartens in parents' social belongings (Eidsvåg, 2022) especially since parental cooperation is essentially a regular dialogue where the different parties participate (Pesch, 2018). In light of this research, the concept of belonging seems to also be an emerging theme within this topic.

Some reports from various parts of the world indicate that while existing rules and regulations in most countries require that parents be involved in their children's learning and development, some schools do not comply (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). In Tanzania for instance, Ndijuye and Tandika (2022) found that that while the country's existing policies, laws, and regulations require that schools establish a practical partnership with children's families, in reality, parents were reportedly not welcomed in most of the schools, especially at decision-making levels. Similar findings were

reported in Hong Kong (See Hu, 2022), Turkey (Kahraman et al., (2017), and Argentina (Jeynes, 2017).

While such practices deny parents their rightful and practical opportunities to contribute to their children's learning and development, also bring to the fore the question of power relations and loyalty between various ECEC stakeholders (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022). Specifically, most existing policies and regulations do not specify who between parents and school authorities decides about family involvement, and to what extent should families be involved. Given the significant role of family involvement in children's learning and development, it is vital to have well-articulated power relations among various stakeholders (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018).

In an earlier report on the status of knowledge on kindergartens funded by the Norwegian Research Council, the section on parental cooperation focused on a different aspect of diversity—gender. The report discussed a couple of projects that highlighted the role of parents' gender in parental cooperation with kindergartens (Gulbrandsen, Johansson & Nilsen, 2002). In the projects they have discussed, they have found that both fathers and mothers in Norway participated in and attended various activities and meetings in kindergartens, which is validated and welcomed by the teachers and managers of kindergartens. While the kindergarten leaders pointed to some differences between how parents and mothers participated, the report described positive communication and parental relations where the projects were conducted (Gulbrandsen, Johansson & Nilsen, 2002).

There can also be barriers to the time parents can devote to their children. In one study on parents' work schedules, they made cross-country comparisons among four different countries—the United States, Germany, Norway, and the United Kingdom (Hook & Wolfe, 2013). They have found that while American fathers who work the evening shift spend more time interacting with their children, they have found no evidence from the Norwegian data to support this. They have linked this finding to the already existing provisions of childcare support of the government, which enables parents to be involved in their children's lives (Hook & Wolfe, 2013).

(iii) Policy-practice divide

Further, research has identified gaps related to parental involvement in the existing early years education policies and guidelines in various countries. Evidence from mostly developing countries indicates no or weak parental involvement policies and guidelines (Ackah-Jnr, 2022; Ejuu, 2022; Ndijuye

& Tandika, 2022; Saracostti, et al., 2019). This led to limited parent-school collaboration which mostly had to rely on individualized understanding and partnership. Even in developed countries with solid parental involvement policies and guidelines, there are empirical findings that suggest the exclusion of some groups of parents such as immigrants and minorities due to issues related to language barriers (Hu, 2022).

While available reports indicate that most of the countries have included parental involvement in their educational policies, empirical evidence indicates that most of the schools don't have clearly defined implementation plans for the noted policies (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Hu, 2022; Saracostti, et al., 2019). This results in schools relying on and adopting traditional approaches to parental involvement such as teachers and parents' meetings instead of higher-level parental engagement with the children's learning and development (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). The extent to which the existing parental involvement policies might be on their own is not essentially important, rather the interpretation and implementation of such policies at school and classroom levels are what matters (Garvis, 2022; Hu, 2022).

Further, in Norway, Solberg (2019) raises the question of the role of kindergarten staff and the parents in parental cooperation, and whether the daily meetings such as in daily pick-up of the children to and from kindergartens could be analyzed as a framework for participation and cooperation. It is during the time of pick-up of children in kindergarten that parents and teachers often have to opportunity to chat and build relations daily, hence this is a prevalent theme in existing research (Solberg, 2019; Nubdal, 2018). In addition, many books are pointing to the important role of early childhood educators in kindergartens in having good parental cooperation with the children's parents (Drugli et al, 2020; Omdal & Thygesen, 2018; Malmo & Stemshaug, 2022; Johannessen & Mikkelsen, 2021; Hofslundsengen & Bøyum, 2021; Kinge, 2009). Literature documented the essential role of dialogues in making parental cooperation stronger and able to overcome difficult tensions (Aamodt & Hauge, 2013; Drugli & Onsøien, 2022), such as teachers asserting their professional role in the cooperation with parents (Bæck, 2010).

(iv) Involvement of non-parent adults

One notable aspect of parental involvement is the role of other non-parent adults in children's development and learning (Settles, 2014; Xie & Li, 2019). These other non-parent adults include grandparents, aunties, uncles, and even next-door neighbors (Ejuu, 2022). Such kind of parenting is

common in collectivist cultures in Asia and Africa where broadly speaking, child-rearing is a shared responsibility across the entire community (Ejuu, 2022; Xie & Li, 2018). In these cultures, other non-parent adult plays a vital role in children's development and learning including their involvement in school and community-related activities (Ndijuye, 2020). However, not much is empirically known about the actual contribution of this group from and in the context of Western countries.- This is even though grandparental care is not a new social phenomenon, given the current extended lifespans and transformations in family arrangements, such as decreased family sizes and increased maternal employment, which have accentuated grandparents' roles as caregivers globally (Bol & Kalmijn, 2016; Dunifon et al., 2018; Schatz & Seeley, 2015).

The most common group of non-parent adults that has reportedly been involved is that of siblings (Diab, Guillaume & Punamaki, 2018; Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022). This group is well known to be involved in their young brothers and sisters' development and learning by engaging in their homework, and care and in some contexts – especially in poor countries, are key breadwinners who provide family's daily bread (Ejuu, 2022). Sibling involvement has been linked to children's academic achievements (Diab, et al., 2018), emotional development, setting aspirations, and emotional attachments (Dunfon, et al., 2018). For instance, examining the mediating roles of school, family, and child characteristics between academic achievement and both traumatic war experiences and stressful life events in war-torn areas, Diab et al (2018) found that even after traumatic experiences, siblingship functioned as protective factors for children's academic achievement in war conditions.

Stepparents and divorced single parents are two other important groups that are often overlooked in children's development and learning (Diab et al., 2018; Oswald, et al., 2018). There are reports of lower involvement of divorced single parents due to limited time and interest in participating in school activities or support their children with home and community activities (Oswald, et al., 2018). Similarly, stepparents are reportedly less involved due to their perceived roles in the family (Arat & Poortman, 2021), and conflicting ideas of what should be their roles in the stepchild's life (Oswald et al., 2018). Further, empirical findings in the West have consistently reported the 'popular perception' among stepchildren to characterize the role of a stepparent to be more of a 'friend to get along with' than a 'parent to be involved' (Arat & Poortman, 2021; Oswald, et al., 2018). There are some reports that stepparents might be involved in other children from

the previous marriage and hence remain with limited time to participate in their stepchildren's education (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015).

Chapter 10

Recommendations and Conclusions

This review recommends more research to explore various aspects of parental involvement from various contexts, cultures, perspectives, and approaches. This will broaden understanding of which involvements, where, and how they work to maximize children's potential. To further this idea, researchers may consider how STEM learning environments provide affordance that maximizes parental involvement. This is more vital in developing countries where parents need to overcome various challenges posed by contextual obstacles such as language and poverty.

Given the corpus of evidence indicating a solid and very linear relationship between family-school partnership and children's development, teacher education curriculum and in-service training should broaden opportunities for teachers to experience parental involvement. This could be done by creating more opportunities for teachers to practically experience, and take leading active roles in enhancing parental involvement through such activities as take-home activities. There is a need for researchers and practitioners to explore more on the best communication model which is beyond the traditional approaches which can be used to enhance parent-school partnerships.

The study recommends the formulation of empirical and practice-informed parental involvement policies and guidelines which aims to smoothen parents-school communication and build solid partnerships. The formulation of such policies and guidelines should also take into mind the question of who does what, where, and how. This will set clear boundaries among and between ECEC stakeholders and build fruitful power relationships.

There is an urgent need to include the component of parental involvement in the current teacher education curriculum. The training should equip preservice teachers with the necessary skills and attitudes to build, straighten, and sustain parent-school partnerships and parental involvement. Importantly, preservice teachers should be aware of the existing diversities in their preschool setting and how to effectively communicate with parents and children from diverse backgrounds and cultures.

Given the existing challenges related to parental involvement in children's learning and development, there is a need for various context-specific initiatives and programs to raise public and individual awareness. The initiatives and programs should focus on building sustainable tripartite partnerships between parents, schools, and ECEC stakeholders such as policymakers, NGOs, religious organizations, social and health workers, and other relevant authorities. Such a move will ensure the sustainability of initiatives and programs, and build a sense of ownership among parents, teachers, and children.

To conclude, parent involvement is a unique and dynamic aspect of the young children's education. It is necessary to revisit this concept in alignment with the recent subjects that are on the focus such as sustainability, digitalization, and ever-changing family roles and functions. The utmost goal of the educational process is to improve the children's lives. By providing better guidance in parent involvement, it could be possible to attain and employ better parent involvement programs. This piece of scientific work contributed to having a better understanding of parent involvement in ECEC by taking different perspectives and covering underestimated regions and eventually presenting the insights specifically from Norway. It is critical to conduct further reviews and apply advanced studies in the field to progress and improve the benefits for young children wherever they live.

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