

## 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*

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.

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 model 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 sociocultural 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 (Bunijejac & 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.

