

ABSTRACT

Parental Involvement in an Urban Primary School

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This study sought to interpret and analyse how parents and teachers conceptualize parental involvement. Data were collected through interviews with the principal, 10 teachers, and 14 parents of an urban primary school in Trinidad and Tobago, as well as through observations. Six themes emerged from the study: (a) parenthood, (b) communication, (c) volunteer work, (d) at-home education, (e) decision making, and (f) collaboration. Analysis of the data indicated that: 1) although the parents set high standards for their children, their involvement was not to the extent required to achieve these standards; 2) communication was limited to report books and when it became necessary for the parents to assist in fund raising and attend meetings; 3) in terms of volunteer work, a few parents were actively engaged and visible in the school; 4) while the parents found it important to provide the basic necessities for their children, it was observed that nine of the parents interviewed did not create a supportive at-home environment for their children's academic development; 5) the parents were critical of the lack of opportunities to actively participate in the governance of the school; and 6) the parents indicated that if they knew how to contribute, they would be willing to collaborate with the school to facilitate their children's success.

Keywords: Parent teacher relationship; Parent student relationship; Parent participation; Urban schools; Parent attitudes; Teacher attitudes; Principal attitudes; Parent role; Trinidad and Tobago