

ABSTRACT

An Investigation into the Impact of Parental Involvement on the Cognitive and Social Skills of Grade One Students in Jamaica

Sharline Marie Cole

This thesis, through the use of a sequential explanatory mixed design investigates the impact of parental involvement on the cognitive and social skills of Grade One students attending thirteen (13) schools (10 general, three special needs) located in rural and urban Jamaica. The participants are 260 students (131 girls and 129 boys) matched with a parent, 29 teachers and eight principals. The research found that parental involvement significantly predicts the cognitive and social skills of students, with involved parents being more 'efficacious' and more efficacious parents raising children with higher cognitive and social skills. Family structure also influences the cognitive skills of students. Additionally, the education of parents and the school types are associated with parental involvement and students' cognitive and social skills, where parents with tertiary education (college and university) were less likely to be invited to be involved and are viewed as more 'efficacious'. Urban inner city schools have the highest reports of parental involvement. The time parents spend with children influence how involved family members are and have a bearing on students' social skills. The support of the nuclear and extended family and the commitment of single parents, with all the challenges faced, impact parental involvement and how cognitive and social skills are developed in students. Students have high cognitive and social skills because parents are actively involved, are efficacious, volunteer at school and build connections with the schools. Personal, educational, social, financial and school-related barriers negatively impact parental involvement. This research reinforces the importance of the tripartite interaction between the family, school and children in getting parents involved and improving the cognitive and social skills of students. Critical information for future research and approaches on how parental involvement can be improved are discussed.

Keywords: Sharline Cole; Parental Involvement; Cognitive Skills; Social Skills