

DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of the family on the academic performance of children at the Basic and Senior Secondary School levels including the special needs children. A total sample of 844 parents and children from all the ten regions of Ghana were used for the study. ~

Out of this, 371 were parents comprising 194 fathers, and 177 mothers; 373 were regular children made up of 118 males and 185 females from various basic and secondary schools were randomly selected. Additionally 100 pupils from special schools comprising 62 males and 38 females were purposively sampled for the study. The instrument was a 25 – item questionnaire for parents and 20 – item questionnaire for children which were all designed and validated to elicit the desired responses from the desired audience were used. Descriptive statistics was used to describe the results.

Factors were correlated using the Spearman formula (Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient). Results showed a symbiotic relationship between home and school factors on children's academic progress and domestic life. Positive correlations exist between alcoholism among parents notably the fathers on the other hand and quarrelsomeness, flogging, starving and freedom of expression and consequently academic progress on the other. Alcoholic fathers smoked or sniffed or chewed tobacco; they also beat their children and could not feed their children properly. There was a negative correlation between factors, such as, payment of school fees, good feeding, freedom to express self, freedom to play, lack of happiness and parental control and quarrelling. Parents who paid school fees promptly, fed their children properly and provided school materials, but gave less freedom to their children to play and express themselves freely at home. The inference was that parents wanted to get their children to work harder to justify the monies expended on their education and welfare. It was also found that most children were fed on poor diet, bullied and were bogged down with household chores. On the part of parents, alcoholism, quarrelsomeness and starvation were factors which correlated positively with another to lead to family dysfunction.

All these negatively affected children's emotional behaviour and school performance. Recommendations for educational intervention are given at the end.

Introduction

The key to educational success of any child hinges on the support that the child has from the family. It is often stated that "for every pupil or student who does well and gets through the educational system, there is a parent who was there every step of the way (Bulletin of Institute of Adult Education 48th Annual New Year School, 1996:1). The presence of the handicapped child in the family as stated by Featherstone (1980) and cited in Turnbull and Turnbull (1986:49) indicated that:

A child's handicap attacks the fabric of a marriage in four ways. It excites powerful emotions in both parents. It acts as a dispiriting symbol of shared failure. It reshapes the organization of the family. It creates fertile ground for conflict.

They added that despite this, if parents and siblings' feelings and needs are recognized and addressed, then the entire family will be in position to help the exceptional child to grow and develop.

My emphasis is that whether the child is handicapped or not if the family is unable to function properly and the issues are not identified early and addressed, there is bound to be chaos, disintegration and disengagement of responsibilities. These will affect the school-age child in the home and at school.

There is a widespread outcry of poor school performance of basic school children and Senior Secondary School students for about two decades now. Programmes have failed to achieve the desired outcome. Since 1970s upto 2003, governments have strategized ways to enhance academic goals vis-à-vis national demands but satisfactory results are yet to have the imprints of indelible strides. As far back as 1852 to 2003 series of Educational Ordinances, Committees or Commissions and Educational Acts or Reforms were set up to discuss education problems, failures and successes in addition to how education could be improved in Ghana. Notable among these were:

The Education Committee of 1920; The Accelerated Development Plan of Education 1951 and Education Act of 1961 New Structure and content of Education of 1970's: Educational Reform of 1987. Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) of 1992 constitution (Gadagbui, 1998). The National Educational Forum of 1999 and again presently, the Educational Review Committee of 2002 chaired by Professor Jophus Anamuah-Mensah of University of Education, Winneba (The Ghanaian Times 2002 p. 1).