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**Analysis of the Role of Parent-Teacher Meeting in Enhancing the  
Quality of Education at School Level**

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**Abstract**

The most accepted comprehensive and modern aim of education is the proper development of the personality of students. It implies for psychological, physical, social and even emotional development of the personality. There are multidimensional factors which affect students' learning and education. Teachers, parents and students themselves are the essential stakeholders that play their roles in the development of the students' personality, education and training. The process of learning cannot be fully accomplished unless all of them play their roles properly. Parent-Teacher Meeting (PTM) is one of the factors which creates harmonization, coordination and synchronization among parents and teachers.

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School Level

This article describes the importance, purpose and functions of parent-teacher meeting. The parameters of the PTM have been explored and the most important mechanisms used at the institutions have been discussed. Through documentary analysis and other available evidences; the role of PTM has been examined. Some measures for promoting the quality at the institutions through PTM have also been proposed. After reviewing the philosophy of PTM, some significant strategies and suggestions have also been given to improve the students' performance through PTM.

***Key Words: Parent-teacher meeting (PTM), Functions, Mechanisms, Communication, Coordination, Parental Involvement, Measures, Students' performance***

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## **1. Introduction**

It is highly acknowledged fact that the aim of education is the proper development of the personality of the students. It covers the development of mental, physical, social, intellectual and emotional aspects of students' personality (Lazar & Slostad, 1999). The Greeks were the earlier educationalists who provided education for the development of sound mind in a sound body (Haley, 1980).

According to Wentworth (1974), education is the process of bringing desirable changes in human beings. It can also be defined as the process of imparting or acquiring knowledge and habits through instructions or study. When learning is processing towards goals that have been established in accordance with a philosophy which has been defined for, and is understood by the learner, it is called education.

There are a number of ways for the accomplishment of students' educational process. Parent-teacher meeting is one of the stepping stones to fulfill the objectives of education (Carol & Michaelis, 1980).

The Parent-teacher meeting is a formal way for bringing parents and teachers together. It is required to be planned in terms of what data are needed and will be presented. Presentations regarding projects, achievements and tests are to be organized to make understand to the

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parents effectively. Teachers can share information with parents during the meeting. The advantage of a face-to-face meeting for information sharing is the accessibility of immediate feedback as to whether the information is both understandable to the parents and consistent with how the parents see the child (Ehly & Larsen, 1980).

Before the conference, teachers establish the goals of the meeting in their minds (Berger, 1995). The parents and other participants are invited to say what their goals are for meeting. These are written down for task accomplishment which can be checked before the meeting ends. The organized meetings maximize the effectiveness of the participants and to realize the purpose of the meeting (Miller, 2003).

It is always helpful to have some kind of roadmap to guide a task-group discussion. A set of topics, purposes or goals decided on or before the meeting starts as the first joint activity which gives members some track to judge the progress they are making with the time they have. Someone in the group should monitor the group's adherence to the agenda. This prevents excessive time being spent on trivial matters. In addition, a carefully prepared and followed agenda can facilitate for achievement of the purposes of meeting. The person taking this role should get some consensus from the group regarding the priorities they have for agenda items (Kroth & Simpson, 1977).

Consultation with other members may reduce their feelings excessively constrained by an agenda over which they had no control.

It is well understood and investigated fact that when parents engage themselves in their children's education, the learning positively relates to higher achievements. So, the more intensively parents are involved in their children's learning, the more benefits with a long-lasting impacts. There are strong indications that the most effective forms of parental involvement are those which engage parents in working directly with their children on learning activities like helping them with their reading, writing and homework etc. being an active member of Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). The parent-teacher partnership will surely lead to a successful school in terms of improvement in students' achievements and

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outcomes, and improvement in instructional capacity which are the major objectives of establishing a school (Karim, 2010).

## **2. Background of parent-teacher meeting**

The United Kingdom, having an admirable tradition of pioneering work in parental involvement in school, has given massive momentum by The Plowden Report (1967) and spawning studies like that of Van Witsen (1967). By the mid 1970s, Marsh & Price (1980) was arguing forcefully for special attention to be paid to parent-teacher relationships in the case of children with special educational needs, an argument taken up in The Warnock Report (1978) and even appearing, though deformed, in the bureaucratic fiasco of the 1981 Education Act.

The roots of parental involvements in school can be traced back to the early nineteenth century by Adult Learning Potential Institute (ALPI), in the USA, though somewhat tenuously. By the first decade of the twentieth century, relevant initiatives began to be documented with some certainty (Hubert, 1989).

One of the earliest pieces of tangible research in the United Kingdom was the survey conducted by Kingore (1993) who analyzed the views of 262 head teachers on the subject of parent-teacher co-operation (66 per cent response rate). Little difference in opinions regarding the value of such co-operation was evident with respect to age of children concerned, about 85 per cent of respondents reacting favourably. The main benefits were seen to be: (i) leading the parents to take a greater interest in the school, (ii) helping the teacher to understand the child, and (iii) encouraging the child in his lessons.

Parent-teacher conference has historically been a scheduled event, where parent meets with a teacher and teacher informs the parent of the child's progress or lack thereof. More recently, research has shown that parent involvement has a significant influence on students' performance. The focus is toward promoting a partnership between parents and teachers. There has also been a trend toward student-led parent-teacher conference, involving the student as at least a participant, and frequently a leader of the discussion (Guyton & Fielstein, Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

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1989; Peel, 1995). Statistics show that 70% of US schoolchildren graduate without effective collaboration between parents and teachers. Only the teachers bear the responsibility of child education (Rosenthal & Young Sawyers, 1996).

The amount and degree of parent involvement is the most influential factor in determining students' success in school, based on a 1994 United States Department of Education Survey. However in another survey of teachers, 63% indicated that parents are less involved in their child's school life than parents were ten years ago (Hunker, 1997).

### **3. Purposes of the parent-teacher meeting**

According to the Harvard Family Research Report the major purposes of parent-teacher meeting are to guide the uneducated parents, evaluate the students' performance, understand the importance of parent-teacher meeting, review parents' cooperation with the school administration, discuss the students' problems and help to improve the teaching methodologies effectively. Teachers share achievement information with parents during the meeting. The availability of immediate feedback about a face-to-face meeting helps to improve the system of education (Weiss & Hite, 1986).

The parent-teacher meeting is an interdisciplinary forum to share and analyze all data pertinent to a child's unique needs by parents and professionals. The purpose of the meeting across the country is to what extent the objectives are achieved. It has been found that different data are disproportionately weighed by committee members, thus sometimes giving undue influence to the psychologist (Biklen & Searl Jr, 1981).

Both the teachers and parents can help the students in developing healthy environment. The school has a great responsibility to help the students to develop the outlook on life which is consistent with democratic philosophy. It should be a philosophy that helps them to face the realities of life rather than escapism. It should be a philosophy that helps them in achieving socially responsible behavior (Wazir, 2009). The administrator plays an important role in home-school relations. It is his duty to develop constructive relationships between the two by developing a climate of understanding in which parents and teachers can work harmoniously.

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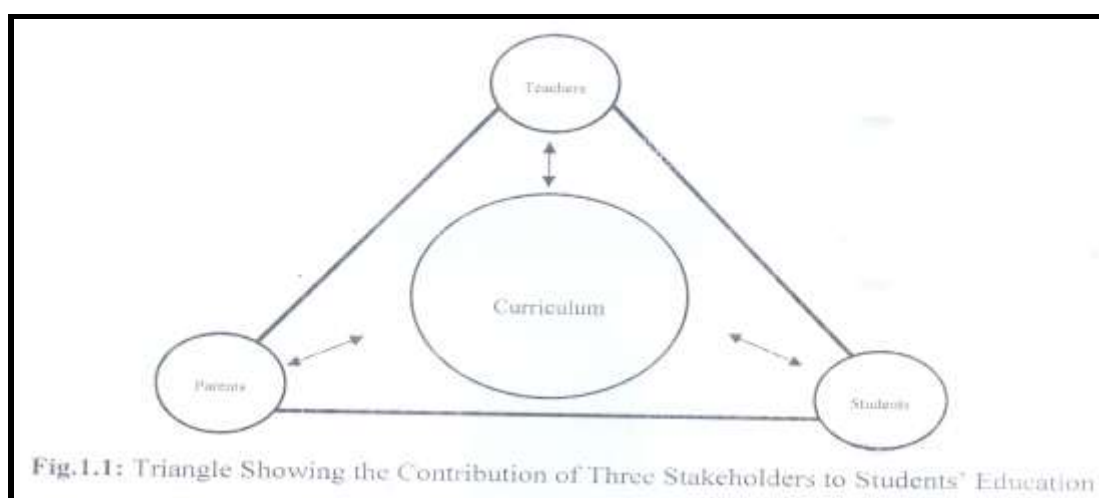
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#### 4. Three stakeholders of education

In the educational setting, behaviorism focuses on three major areas. First, the students: what the student can do at this point, and what is desirable for the student to learn to do. Second, the teacher becomes the focus of attention, because the teacher directs actions of students and represents a major source of rewards which can be made contingent on students' behavior. Third, the parents; whose prime responsibility is to pay attention to their kids where they spend more time at home than school. Student is the person who independently carries on a systematic study or detailed observation of a subject. The contribution of each one can be shown with the help of following diagram (Bricker, 1978).



#### 5. Students' Interaction with Teachers

Interaction is process of communication and mutual relations between two or more individuals. Interaction is the indicator of student-teacher relations (Haley, 1980). elaborated that interaction measures a distinctive type of situation within a classroom characterized by more or less predictable results and carrying with it definite implication concerning the teacher's commitment in regard to how students learn. A fair teacher deliberately adheres to a policy of non interference with student individual choice and action and a democratic teacher observes his cultural role; that a leader in developing insights may contribute to the culture's amendments.

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## **6. Student-teacher relationship**

Student-teacher relationship is a key feature of school life. Students' involvement has a positive effect for students themselves, teachers and schools. Students' engagement having both behavioral and effective elements is beneficial. It is a fact that teacher occupies the most crucial position in the entire spectrum of educational setup. He influences the future personnel and economic lives of people. A good teacher is that who provides the maximum guidance to the learners. Moreover the teacher who educates children deserves more honour than parents (Grossman, 1972).

Caswell concluded that parent-teacher conferences also allow the participants to know each other (Caswell, 1958). Professionals can form hypotheses about the families, and families can grow to trust and respect the teacher. A comprehensive picture of a child can be drawn when the home and school cooperate in sharing information about the child themselves, their contexts and their goals for the child.

## **7. Guidelines for meetings**

Some basic meeting guidelines and consultative skills like rapport building, empathy, tolerance for individual differences, careful listening, flexible problem solving strategy and immediate feedback are vital for holding effective conferences (Mori, 1983).

A location should be chosen for the conference that indicates its importance. The area should be pleasant, comfortable and as free from distracting noise as possible. It also should be private enough so that confidential information can be safely shared. If at all possible, the conference time should be free from interruptions. Egan narrated the following guidelines for parent-teacher conference (Egan, 1982).

1- The meeting should be well planned and organized. Presentations on students' achievements should be structured and prearranged to make the important information more understandable to the parents. It is sometimes helpful to prepare descriptive charts of the child's grades or overall progress on several dimensions so that all the participants in the conference can see trends and real picture of students' performance. The presenter must have

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an accurate and simple way to explain scores from standardized tests included in the conference agenda (Tse, 2010). It will be frustrating for everyone if teachers cannot clearly explain what each of the scores mean.

2- Teachers need to plan for those who have to attend the meeting for important decision making. All key caregivers like, parents (or foster parents) and grandparents should be able to attend.

3- Before the conference, teachers should set the goals of meeting and make these explicit at the outset. These are written down so that task accomplishment can be checked before the meeting ends. These comfortable outlines are helpful for the participants.

4- Teachers must make certain strategy by the end of the meeting. Conferences are seen as useful only if they result in some action. The last few minutes of a conference can be devoted for summarizing and clarifying the actions planned. It is necessary to ensure that the most critical problem is being addressed and that chosen strategies are being implemented and successful.

Canter also proposed following steps to open lines of communication with parents at the parent-teacher conference (Canter, 1976):

1. Speak the language of the family; use their words and definitions.
2. Understand the family's rules and rituals.
3. Try to build a collaborative system rather than an adversarial behaviour.

The tone of parent-teacher meeting should be balanced so that all involved can understand what the student is doing well and what s/he can improve. Achievement in balanced agenda sends the message that school values students' strengths and has high expectations for all (Davies, Henderson, Johnson, & Mapp, 2007).

The best way to make PTM more productive is to establish a family collaborative relationship which can promote communication and a "let's work together" attitude. If both the parents and teachers enter the meeting determined to help the child, the result will be concrete and constructive (Miller, 2003).

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## **8. Functions of conference**

Parent-teacher conferences, proficiently done, can serve a number of important functions for both parents and teachers. It provides a platform for collaboration and cooperation for the solution of problems. Home and school represent the important influences on the preadolescent child. Cooperative efforts are likely to be successful. The old maxim, “Nothing succeeds like success,” is appropriate in this case (Darling, 1983).

Commonly parents and the other participants enter the meeting with lofty emotions about the issues (Gartner, 1971). Parents blame the teachers and simultaneously feel guilty about their child’s problems. Teachers may feel defensive and inadequate in the face of their difficulties with a particular child. Often teachers fear the meetings and try to say as little as possible. Parents also feel fright what they will hear about their children, and so they volunteer very little. The conferences therefore demand more preparation, time and skill than is typically allotted to it. The conference, done poorly, can solidify all members into unpleasant relationships in which the child is the ultimate loser. Anyhow the PTM should be utilized at maximum level.

## **9. Participants of parent-teacher meeting**

At the placement committee meeting, it is useful for the teacher to be aware of the roles of all the participants. The exact framework of such committees differs slightly according to the problems presented by the students. The following are some of the people who are frequently present at placement committee meetings with a brief description of the kinds of input a teacher may expect from each (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2004).

### **9.1. School psychologist**

The services of school psychologist are usually taken for the individual intellectual and personality assessment of the child. During PTM, the psychologist observes the child’s behaviors and consults with the referring teacher to ascertain what program modifications or behavioral strategies already have been tried and what approach will be useful to be applied next. Certified or licensed psychologists holding extensive training in assessment, classroom management, child therapy, teacher consultation and school organizational dynamics are

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necessary to diagnose the emotional disturbance and maladjustment. In rare instances psychiatrists may take the place of psychologists to diagnose the mental retardation and emotional disturbance (Marion, 1981).

### **9.2. Principal**

The principal/head of the institution acts as chairperson of the meeting, the chairperson's role is to coordinate information sharing and facilitate decision making. The chairperson is often the key in establishing how the parents will be treated at the meeting. If he or she is supportive according to the placement committee's decision then parents are likely to be cooperative (Barnard & Powell, 1976).

### **9.3. Teachers**

The teachers, who have the most knowledge concerning a particular child, are present to provide input on classroom behaviors and describe what the special classroom parameters are. Though regular class teachers sometimes are intimidated at these meetings yet they must remember how critically important their input is for the committee (Topping, 1986).

### **9.4. Parents**

The parents are crucial part of the meeting. Parents' input is sought about the consistency between in-school and at-home behaviors. Parents often have much information to share about their children but frequently need support from other committee members to present it (Van Witsen, 1967). Parents may have pragmatic powerful feelings that color their communication. Some of these feelings may be frightful, antagonistic or rebellious. It is an error to ignore such feelings. Sometimes the respective tutor is assigned the duty to assist parents in asking questions and to remind them of their rights.

### **9.5. Physician**

Ross proposed that in rare instances medical doctors may sit in the committee to provide specialized input about health-related problems (Ross, 1993).

## **10. Communicating at multiple levels**

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During communication, the interaction occurs at multiple levels. Most simply, it is useful to understand that communication takes place at content and emotional levels. The words delivered by teachers in the PTM with specific tone have everlasting impacts on parents' and students' behaviour. The tone and expression matter a lot to make the hearers understand effectively regarding the betterment of the students (Kuppuswamy, 1982).

Topping (1986) described following important communication guidelines on the side of the school to:

1. Take responsibility for messages to deliver in such a way that the person receiving the message can realize that expressed thoughts and feelings are genuine.
2. Achieve congruence between verbal and nonverbal messages. Nonverbal aspects of communication, such as facial expression and body language can assist the listener in understanding more clearly than the content of verbal message.
3. Check listeners to see whether message is being received or not? Provide additional information when message has been unintentionally vague or misunderstood.
4. Discuss other people's behavior descriptively and objectively.

## **11. Additional methods of communication**

An enormous amount of professional time is spent in meetings. There are faculty meetings, team meetings, school and building committee meetings, classroom meeting, meetings with individual students and parent-teacher meetings. The PTM is the most effective activity. In addition to parent-teacher conferences, teachers interact with parents through report cards, special reports, telephone calls and home visits.

Report cards are considered important for communication with parents. Teachers should be able to clearly explain and support grading decisions on report cards because these are issued only periodically through the year. The teachers find it necessary to contact parents through report cards (Tse, 2010). Special reports to parents can be about weekly academic and behavioral updates. Telephone is frequently used for contact which is fastest source for

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communications in modern era whereas home visits have become less common in recent days. Sometimes home visiting is an assigned task of the school social worker or home-school coordinator. This specialization tends to discourage teachers from visiting homes. When the circumstances allow, however, home visits can be a very significant way of joining with parents (Apter & Conoley, 1984).

## **12. Parents as educators**

The notion of parents as educators is a new one. Karim (2010) traced it back to the eighteenth century in the United States of America, when there were reports of child-rearing advice being communicated to mothers in training pamphlets. This practice is thought to have been imported from Europe, where it had clearly been prevalent for some decades before. However, as Bricker (1978) noted, there is a sense in which parents acting as educators must be a phenomenon as old as human culture itself dating back beyond Caxton, William, [inventor of printing press, (1422~25-1492)] to oral transmission.

While reports of parents acting as educator were not uncommon in Europe in the seventeenth century, it was not until the rapid growth of the schooling system which had consolidated it into a widely available resource that the notion of parental involvement in school could be tolerated, and this does not begin to be documented until the nineteenth century (Dumber, 1984).

Current development reflects that parental involvement in school is appreciable for the professionals. However, parents acting as educators in their own right, not necessarily in consultation with the school, are a different ball game entirely. Parents' participation in activities which are essentially school-based and skill-oriented is encouraged from the school administration (Iqbal, 1977).

## **13. Follow-up work**

Bricker (1978) revealed that a dynamic community relation program creates complainants or critics too. Many critics can become friends and supporters of the school. Many people put

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their complaints /suggestions anonymously in complaint box placed by the school administration because of the shortage of time or fear of facing the administration. Criticism is the beginning of the relationship, not the end. There is need for follow-up work if possible through a phone call, a letter or a personal visit. There might also be an opportunity to tell the complainant how the school has offered time and effort to resolve his complaint. Let him know that his interest in the school is important.

A file of critics' names should be maintained. These people can be utilized on committees. They can be called in to answer questionnaires. Invitations can be sent to them on special events because they can serve as barometers of opinion in their particular segment of the community (Conoley & Conoley, 1982).

Public meetings are also important in this respect because a number of issues may be highlighted and resolved through different persons who are not directly associated to school (McGoldrick & Carter, 1980).

Marion (1981) elaborated that such meetings can seldom be decision-making, and therefore they are likely to be dull and disappointing to some of the audiences. This does not mean that they are not useful. Public meetings can be constructive and productive if they are called and designed for specific purposes. The basic requirements are good speakers, effective visual aids and prepared speeches. Another technique is the small-group discussion method. Issues can be presented in a general meeting and then discussed in small groups by trained leaders. After discussion, summaries are prepared to be given to the whole group and to interested citizens (Ehly, Conoley, & Rosenthal, 1985).

#### **14. The relationships with the parents**

Berger (1983) presumed that there may be the strain and tension between school and home due to the unhealthy discussion. It will be no surprise that the teachers frequently mention that the parents of the children are the cause of such tension. In many cases, non-cooperative behavior of parents and perceived lack of support from home remain serious impediment to some forms of resolution. Relationships between teachers and parents, having potential,

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should be utilized to resolve issues related pupils' behavior instead of confrontation or conflict (Pappano, 2007).

## **15. Discussion and conclusion**

Parent-teacher meeting is an important component of ongoing home-school communication and family involvement in school. Years of research demonstrates that parental involvement in school can lead to positive benefits for children and youth such as increased school attendance, personality development, and high academic and improved attitude about school. Such meetings achieve their maximum potential and cause to enhance the quality of education. Home-school communication predicts positive outcomes for students and schools

The parent-teacher meeting is an opportunity for parents to learn about their children's progress in school and for teachers to gain insight into their studies' home and community lives. Parent perspectives on students' strength and needs, learning styles, and nonschool learning opportunities can help teachers shape their instructional methods. The PTM is most effective in giving tips to parents related to career counseling, removing deficiencies of the teachers, improving parents' cooperation with school administration, enhancing teaching methodologies, evaluating and comparing the performance of other students in a broader sense.

## **16. Recommendations**

It is highly recommended that the school administration should organize PTM on regular basis and should create conducive environment to discuss students' educational and personal matters for the purpose to improve students' performance. PTM should be organized with specific agenda points rather than general chatting and gossiping. Consequently the significant matters should be highlighted and resolved. On the other side, parents should participate in such meetings which are exceptionally advantageous for enhancing the quality of education. The parents or guardians should share even minor things minutely for the

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betterment of their kids. This is the way through which the quality of education can be enhanced by conducting regular parent-teacher meetings.

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