

**Promoting Inclusive Education Practices through Parental
Involvement: The Case of Algerian Middle Schools**

تعزيز ممارسات التعليم الشامل من خلال اشراك اولياء: دراسة حالة
للمدارس المتوسطة الجزائرية

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Abstract:

Inclusive education is one best way of ensuring the full access of students with and without disabilities in the educational process. Its main salient concern is to provide an equitable learning environment wherein all students are alike. Admittedly, there is ample evidence that the educational reform towards inclusive schools, if not allied with a profound understanding to the history of inclusion, would be slow. Reviewing the literature of inclusion highlights various critical factors that cement inclusive practices at schools. Parental involvement is one significant predictor of effective inclusion. This study, henceforth, aims at investigating middle school principals' attitude towards parental involvement, and how far can this parents-schools synergy promote students' academic achievement. In essence, it seeks at expanding the inclusive consciousness of parents, either they have children with special educational needs or they do not. To obtain the necessitated data, a cohort of 13 principals at the middle level was conveniently selected for the parental involvement interview. The obtained results from this qualitatively-oriented study reveal some positive and some other negative perceptions of school-parent relations on the part of principals. Recommendations for developing and improving parental involvement issues are henceforth provided.

Key words: Algerian middle schools; barriers to parental involvement; inclusive education; parental involvement; principals' attitude;

ملخص

إنّ نظام التعليم الجامع من أرقم الطرق التي تضمن عبورا كاملا للتلاميذ كآفة
إلح المنظومة التربوية، بما فيهم ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة. وهذا النظام يهدف إلى توفير
بيئة تربوية صالحة و سوية لجميع التلاميذ.

من المسلم به وجود ما يبيد أنّ التعليم الجامع إذا لم يستصحب معه سوابقه و
ماضي الإدماج سيلون مساره بطيئا. والنظر فيما كتب عن الإدماج الشامل أبرز عن
معالم شتى و مهتمّة تؤيد فعالية تطبيقه النظام التعليمي الجامع في المدارس. و إشراك أولياء
التلاميذ أصبح مؤشرا ذا أهمية في إدماج ناعم.

تبعته دراستنا هذه في تفاعلات مديري المدارس المتوسطة الجزائرية اتجاه إشراك
أولياء التلاميذ و مديري جدد و فعالية تكافل الأولياء و المربين في دعم الطموحات
الأكاديمية. و إنّ مجتمعا هذا، أساسا، هو توضع لعالم شعور الإدماج و أساسيس الأولياء بما فيهم
أولياء التلاميذ ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة. و همّ يتسنى جمع المعلومات اللازمة، اختير ثلاثة
عشر مديرا من المدارس المتوسطة سئلوا عن مفهوم إشراك أولياء التلاميذ.

كشفت بحثنا ذو المقصد التوعوي عن انطباعات إيجابية و أخرى سلبية لدى
بعض المربين الذين اعترضوا على إشراك الأولياء و تبعنا لذلك، أصدرت تعليمات
تدعو إلى تنفيذ و تطوير عملية إشراك الأولياء في المنظومة التربوية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المدارس المتوسطة الجزائرية، التعليم الشامل، عراقيل إشراك الأولياء،
إشراك الأولياء، موقف المربين

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, there has been an expanding amount of policies overtly about inclusive education. Different countries worldwide (e.g. United States, UK, Canada, etc.) are taking serious steps towards the implementation of inclusive education in their schools. The Algerian schools are no exception. They too are earnestly striving at establishing inviting schools for all kinds of students. Key to doing so is to involve parents in the education of their children. However, moving from policy to practice is rather difficult. Educational reforms inevitably need thorough considerations of various interrelated aspects. Booth, Nes, & Stromstad (2003) put it wise when said that the numerous available initiatives "... make it difficult for staff in schools and colleges to become familiar with them all, let alone put them into practice. If they have serious intent, policies have to be linked to clear implementation strategies" (p. 35). Teachers should receive training courses on how to adeptly work with parents. Parents, on the other hand, should act like allies to support and facilitate the job for teachers by being aware to the significant importance of their involvement in their children's learning.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Inclusive Education

Inclusion is most commonly viewed more broadly in terms of expanding civil rights, including disabled children in regular schools, and providing equal educational chances for children with and without disabilities. It takes full account of students' right of normal schooling. Most schools strive at prevailing equity amongst children, which is deeply entrenched in inclusive practices. For several decades, numerous articles and books highlighted the importance of inclusive education at different levels. For instance, the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* (EHA) 1975 in the USA acknowledged the right of disabled students of free and adequate education in mainstream schools. Aligned with the *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* in the USA, 1994 adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), children's right to educational opportunities was well addressed. In a nutshell, creating inclusive schools is a shared endeavour by families, professionals, practitioners, policy-makers, activists, community, and so forth. In actuality, it is everyone's concern. (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2017, p. 11)

The meaning and interpretation of inclusive education has been the subject of contentious debate. Baglieri and Shapiro (2017) perceive inclusion as "... school-based arrangements in which students with and without disabilities learn together in general education settings" (p. 11). A dominant perspective about inclusion is that it provides equal educational chances for all children. Put precise, it eliminates the barriers encountered by learners to ensure the full access for all children especially those who experience disadvantage at schools. The barriers are generally related to poverty, minority ethnic status, or other cultural-related characteristics. (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2017, p. 12)

It is worth mentioning, however, that "Inclusive education ... encompasses the experiences of students with disabilities, but is not exclusive to them" (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2017, p. 12). More importantly, inclusive education seeks to diversify students' interaction. According to Baglieri and Shapiro (2017) "Inclusive education strives for pluralistic teaching practices that create contexts for learning in which every student can identify with and connect to the school and to one another" (p. 12). In inclusive schools, every student is special and merits the educational opportunities that go hand in hand with his/her interest and abilities.

Technically speaking, the effective shift of schools from policy to practice is marked with an orchestrated attempt at the system level in order for schools

to be inclusive (Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2010, pp. 98-99). Plainly, implementing inclusive education necessitates a thorough consideration of many interrelated aspects. One critical issue for successful inclusive practices is parental involvement. This stance is well captured by Hornby (2011) who rightly points out that "... the involvement of parents is required for the process of implementing individual education programs ..." (p. 17). That is, parental involvement is as much important for inclusive education as the differentiated programmes, which would help schools accommodate different state and community educational goals. This importance given to parents is well-merited since they are the utmost reliable sources of information about their children. A key aspect to successfully creating inclusive classrooms is to first know every pupil's needs, learning difficulties and disabilities, skills, and abilities. Information related to the aforementioned aspects can be perfectly disclosed by parents.

2.2 Parental Involvement

Aligning inclusive education with parental involvement is a meaningful shift towards the effective adoption of inclusive education in our schools and society. More pointedly, the significance of parental involvement in education has been acknowledged for over 40 years. In this regard, Fullan (2007) postulates that "... the research over the years has become more forceful about the need for parent and community involvement" (p.191). The "No Child Left Behind" in the USA, the "Children's Plan" in the UK, and the "Schooling Strategy" in New Zealand are some initiatives that documented the fundamental importance of parental involvement in the education of their children for ensuring better academic results (Hornby, 2011, p. 1). It is evident that "The most effective schools are now widely considered to be ones that encourage and support the involvement of parents and other family members in the education of their children" (Grant & Ray, 2010 cited in Hornby, 2011, p. 1). Logically, home is the first place wherein children start learning. As suggested by Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1997, cited in Beveridge, 2005), moving from home-based learning to formal learning at schools, children's educational progress can be boosted through creating home-school constructive channels of communication. Students' success at school correlates positively with the effective home-school transition. Additionally, there should always be a reciprocal contact between teachers and parents. In so doing, parents will ascertain that home-based learning is developed at school and teachers will ensure that school-based learning is in turn consolidated and extended at home. (p. 61)

In the case of children with special educational needs, the importance of parental involvement is unquestionable. Children who possess needs at the level of social, economic, ethnic, or any kind of disability, inevitably need provident care on the part of their parents and teachers. Parents of disabled children usually rely on the information and implications they get from the specialists, and they wish, not only to communicate these information to schools so that suitable provisions are developed, but they also seek guidance from teachers regarding effective strategies at home. Teachers in turn ought to be in constant contact with parents to ensure that school learning is extended at home following the right strategies. With agreement between parents and teachers, there would be no place for discontinuities in learning which in most cases disturb achieving educational goals (Beveridge, 2005, p. 62). Precisely, effective inclusion of children primarily necessitates the inclusion of parents too. Parents are in fact an integral part in the process of schooling; they need to be involved in all child-related decisions. They need to ensure that their children, albeit disabled, will be treated equally as their same age peers. Parents are usually afraid of their children to be excluded because they are different. Schools in this case should prioritise parents' role in providing additional support and information on how to cope with children's stress and difficulties (Baily, 1998 cited in Beveridge, 2005, p. 62; Jones, 2004, p. 93; Dean, 1996, p. 20). Logically, it is for this reason that parental involvement concept was first introduced. In this spectrum, Openshaw (2008) declares that "The vast majority of partnerships between home, school, and community are developed to identify and address the needs of children and families who are experiencing difficulties." (p. 284)

2.2.1 Barriers to Parental Involvement

It is proposed that, if ever parental involvement is to be effective, professionals need to know and appreciate the barriers that work on undermining parental involvement in the education of their children. Hornby (2011) summarised succinctly the situation when acknowledged that "Without a thorough appreciation of these barriers, it is not possible for professionals to fully understand what is necessary to develop effective parental involvement" (p. 9). The attitude of professionals and parents towards parental involvement, children-related issues like age are some key factors that need to be put under a close scrutiny.

2.2.1.1 Attitude of Professionals toward Parents

The importance of parental involvement has been widely documented. It is claimed to be a precursor for creating inclusive schools and henceforth enhancing children's potential for learning. Notwithstanding the outlined benefits that parental involvement might bring out, gaps between policy and practice are still encountered (Hornby, 2011, p. 2). In the words of Hornby (2011) "The gap between rhetoric and reality regarding parental involvement in their children's education has long been considered to be at least partly due to limitations posed by attitudes that professionals, such as psychologists and teachers, often have toward parents" (p. 4). There is a tendency for teachers to view parents as real adversaries. Parents are usually viewed as less able and vulnerable. In addition, professionals are most commonly in favour of 'professional distance'. They feel comfortable when working on their own without being disturbed by any external factor. For them, parents who interfere in teachers' work are a mere nuisance. (Hornby, 2011, p. 4)

2.2.1.2 Parents' Beliefs about Parental Involvement

It is critically important for children's education the way how parents view their role. Parents who demarcate their role in getting children to school will certainly feel no need to be involved neither in home-based nor in school-based learning. For them, children have the complete responsibility over their own learning (Hornby, 2011, p. 12). Notably, this attitude is more prevalent in some countries than others. In Algeria, most parents prefer to step back and watch their children progress in their learning without getting involved. It is by the last couple of years that a significant increase in parental involvement markedly noticed at schools.

In a study conducted by Clark (1983) on students from low-income black families, found that parents of those high-achieving students interact constructively with schools and profoundly believe that in doing so they would effectively help their children to do better at school.

The way how parents think about parental involvement is of fundamental significance. In this regard, Richards and Armstrong (2011) postulate that they "... often hear parents of children with impairments express reluctance to seek out close contact with teachers. They fear being a nuisance or putting their child's problems too closely under scrutiny" (p. 139). It is true that lack of confidence can act like a serious barrier to parental involvement. Sometimes, and because of the difference between parents' first language and the language of instruction, parents feel themselves unable to direct an effective communication with teachers. The lack of confidence can also

result from past experiences which were negative either with children's previous schools, or during parents' own schooling. Another reason for lack of confidence is when parents believe that they are not academically competent enough to help out their children. They devalue their knowledge and competences. Along the same lines, parents are ready to be actively involved in their children's learning when they understand that children's success depends on both ability and effort. Academic achievement cannot be contributed to intelligence only. Contrariwise, parents who think that intelligence is stable and that success is got due to children's efforts and intelligence, will not feel the need to parental involvement. They think that things like supporting children, attending parent-teacher meetings, helping children in their homework are a waste of time. For them, children's innate ability can rid them of all the aforementioned responsibilities. (Hornby, 2011, pp. 12-13)

2.2.1.3 Child Factors

When accounting for the gap between policy and practice of parental involvement, child factors such as age are also considered. When addressing the issue of age, it is widely known that parental involvement is greater at primary schools and tends to decline during middle and secondary school. Primary school kids usually feel safe and proud with their parents' involvement, whereas middle and secondary school learners are less keen about their parents' involvement. They appreciate parental involvement only when it comes to making decisions, doing home works, etc. (Hornby, 2011, p. 16). According to Elias, Patrikakou, and Weissberg (2007) "... middle school transition and establishing a positive trajectory into the teen years require a parent-school-community partnership ..." (p. 542)

2.2.2 Competences Needed for Effective Parental Involvement

In retrospect to the last 30 years, the amount of publications, articles, and books tackling the issue of parental involvement has been escalating day by day. They all strive at giving a comprehensible knowledge on how to successfully build up a professionals-parents kind of relationships (e.g. Grant & Ray, 2010, Hornby, 2010, Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwin, Soodak, & Shogren, 2011). The central importance for these books is to highlight the essential knowledge and skills needed by professionals if effective relations with parents are to be established. First, teachers must be sufficiently aware of the different barriers that might hamper the parental involvement, which most commonly have to do with child, family, parent-teacher, sand societal factors. Not only this, but teachers need also to be knowledgeable and well-

armed with suitable strategies required for bettering the parental involvement organised by schools, which comprises of guidelines for meetings and other parents related activities.

Furthermore, teachers need to consider, accept, and respect parents' various points of view. Not only this, but they ought to show competence in helping parents of children with disabilities. Of course, special attention is also given to parents who themselves have certain difficulties like being too aggressive or overprotective of their children. Knowledge on how to deal with such type of parents without getting into conflicts is mandatory (p. 8). Indeed, for parental involvement to be optimally effective, parents and teachers need to respect and understand each other's roles. Their relation should be built upon a reciprocal trust, help, and respect (Openshaw, 2008, p. 283). Along the same line, Hornby (2011) rightly points out that in order to build up an effective work between schools and parents; teachers are highly required to be genuine. To amplify, they should act like normal people who say they do not know something when they really do not know rather than hiding behind a professional facade of competence. Furthermore, teachers should always show respect to parents' viewpoints even if they run counter to teachers' opinions. Of course, the same goes for parents. Most importantly, teachers must develop an empathic understanding to parents' experiences with their children especially disabled children. In so doing, a productive parent-teacher relationship will evolve. In addition to being empathetic, teachers should hold pessimistic but realistic views children's progress. They should be honest about children's strengths and weaknesses. (p. 7)

2.2.3 Partnership Model for Parental Involvement in Education

According to Hornby (2011) "In the literature on parental involvement, various approaches to parent-professional relationships can be identified, each defined by a different set of assumptions, goals, and strategies" (p. 27). She forcefully argues that "The most appropriate model ... is considered to be the partnership model. This is one in which professionals are viewed as experts on education and parents are viewed as experts on their children" (p. 29). This view aligns with Epstein's (2010) who postulates that "... partnership is a better approach. In partnership, educators, families and community members work together to share information, guide students, solve problems, and celebrate success. Partnerships recognize the shared responsibilities of home, school, and community for children's learning and development." (p. 4)

For Turnbull et al. (2011 cited in Hornby, 2011) effective teacher-parents partnership is fundamentally based on seven principles namely trust, respect, competence, communication; commitment, equality, and advocacy.

For effective partnership to be maintained there should be mutual trust and respect between parents and teachers. They need to listen to each other's views and give due considerations, build up confidentiality, use sound judgments, and be honest when dealing with each other. In addition, an effective partnership requires competence. Teachers need to be competent in developing new knowledge and skills which would in return open opportunities for parental involvement. In so doing, learners' potential for learning would be raised both at school and at home. Communication is another aspect for effective partnership. Teachers need to listen carefully to parents who are considered as trustful and reliable sources of information about learners' needs. Parents on the other hand need also to listen to teachers who can envisage learners' actual progress at school. Needless to say, both parents and teachers should show commitment, availability, and accessibility to this attitude. Furthermore, managing learners' learning should be done equally on the part of teachers and parents; teachers are responsible for their learning at schools and parents at home. They can help each other by providing guidance on how to deal with learners at school and at home. The last point for effective partnership is anticipating problems and providing the utmost workable solutions. Teachers and parents need to be proactive and skillful enough to advocate opportunities for children. (pp. 30-31)

3. The Study

This part addresses the methodological considerations of the research. It sheds light on the research approach, data collection tools, and the population and sampling technique. It further tackles the procedures followed for the collection of the data. At the end, a number of recommendations are given as an impetus to ameliorate the development of inclusive schools.

3.1 Research Aims and Questions

For many decades the importance of parental involvement has been documented in the educational literature. It is a crucial aspect that contributes to the success of students. Therefore, this research aims at investigating how far Algerian middle schools are ready to establish parent-school relationships as a step towards building up inclusive schools. In essence, it seeks to examine principals' perspectives on how parents are

invited to take part in school activities and what procedures are used to eliminate the barriers that hinder parents' involvement. Of course, parents' attitude towards their involvement in their children's learning is another concern of this study. It is explored through principals' words.

In light of the aforementioned research aims, this study strives to answer the following questions:

RQ1: Do Algerian middle schools support parent-school relations?

RQ2: What is the school principals' attitude towards parental involvement?

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Research Approach

The nature of this study necessitated the use of the qualitative approach. Notoriously, a qualitative study "... involves data collection procedures that result primarily in open-ended, non-numerical data which is then analysed primarily but non-statistical methods" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 24). It is generally employed to get in-depth knowledge about attitudes, opinions, and perceptions towards a particular phenomenon. In this spectrum, the descriptive analytical method was employed to depict factual information and describe principals' perceptions to parental involvement.

3.2.2 Research Strategies

Denscombe (2010) portrays research strategy as "... a plan of actions designed to achieve a specific goal" (p. 3). This research employed the collective case study where more than one middle school is involved to investigate a unique phenomenon, particular population, group, school, etc. (Wallace, 1998, p. 16). It is presumably believed that the study of different case studies rather than one would provide researchers with thick description and more comprehensive findings about the target phenomenon.

3.2.3 Population and Research Sample

The target population this research addresses is middle school principals in Mila Province. Following the non-probability sampling in which "Individuals are selected by no chance, but by some other means" (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003, p. 170), 13 Algerian middle schools were selected. Accordingly, the sample of this study comprises 13 middle school principals (4 females and 9 males) who will set for the survey interview. In fact, the

schools targeted to the study were chosen based on the accessibility and geographical distance.

3.2.4 Data Collection Tools

To gather the necessitated data regarding principals' views towards parental involvement, a structured interview that was developed by Hornby (1990) is used. Interviews are potentially useful in gathering factual information. According to Creswell (2012) interviews "... provide useful information when you cannot directly observe participants, and they permit participants to describe detailed personal information" (p. 218). It is through interviews that "... participants can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings" (Creswell, 2012, p. 218). The researcher used the face-to-face type of interviews which is described by Creswell (2012) as "... a data collection process in which the researcher asks questions to and records answers from only one participant in the study at a time" (p. 218). The qualitative data are analysed using qualitative content analysis.

3.2.5 Procedures

This study seeks to get in-depth insights about middle school principals' perception towards parental involvement. To this end, the researcher got the permission from all principals of the 13 selected middle schools to be visited and interviewed. Every principal was interviewed on a different day from the others. The interview lasted from 30 to 45 minutes.

The interview comprises four aspects with 11 elements to be investigated concerning parental involvement. The first part is parents' potential contributions (policy formation, acting as a resource, collaborating with teachers, and sharing information on children). The second aspect addresses the issue of parental needs (channels of communication, liaison with school staff, parent education, and parent support). The other three questions focused on three related aspects: (encouraging parents into school, involving diverse parents, and professional development for teachers).

The researcher excluded "Liaison with School Staff" part of interview because there are no home visits in Algeria. So, only 10 elements of the interview were remained. Data were collected and analysed using the descriptive method of research.

3.2.6 Discussion and Analysis of the Results

I. Parents' Potential Contributions

Policy Formation

Parental involvement needs to be mandated by the ministry of education so that both teachers and parents are aware about their rights and responsibilities. The responses gathered from the study sample showed that there is no written policy that regulates and organises parental involvement in the Algerian schools. Interviewees reported that all schools have Parents Association. Representatives of this association are selected through elections at the level of schools and can be renewed yearly. Parents are supported to take part and be active members of this association through school meetings. However, principals argue that most parents do not give much importance to this association and refuse to take part in it. When asked about how parents' voices are sought, principals said that this issue is rather deemphasised. Views about schools are generally discussed in the Parent Association meeting (which are rarely held) or through face to face meetings with principals and teachers. When asked whether there are rooms set aside for parents' use, most principals said there are no available rooms.

Acting as a Resource

Schools usually seek help from parents concerning the difficulties and disabilities of their children. Parents are reliable and trustworthy resources of information; they know quite well what best ways should be used to respond to the needs of the students. When asked whether parents do any further voluntary works at school, principal said that most parents are there only to ask about their children progress in education. This is their priority. Schools are no exception. Parents are usually contacted by schools to assist their children at home and provide home-based learning. It is essential for the continuity of school-based learning.

Collaborating with Teachers

According to the interviewed principals, school results are generally communicated to parents through teacher-parent meetings. For this sake, schools allocated parent-teacher meeting hours with one hour per week for every teacher, in addition to open days for parents at the end of every school term. In these meetings, parents provide suggestions regarding the skills they want their children to develop as part of the personal and social education curricula. Teachers on the other hand also enlighten parents with

suggestions and views on how to assess and develop their children's skills at home.

Sharing Information on Children

Different information about children with special educational needs, learning difficulties, and socially-related problems are generally communicated by parents through school visits and through contacting children's previous schools. Information are compiled and stored in laptops and later disseminated to teachers at staff meetings to be penned down in different school documents. Further information regarding children's strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, abilities, skills, and talents are also communicated through parent-teacher visits. These are valuable insights which teachers, but not all, take into consideration when planning lessons. To encompass students' diverse needs, teachers tend to differentiate their lessons.

II. Parental Needs

Channels of Communication

When asked about how information are transmitted to parents about their rights, responsibilities, and school organisations, 7 respondents said that the process is usually done through children. That is, children take the notes or petitions written by the school to their parents. More recently, and according to the answers given by 6 principals, schools started contacting parents through phone calls. It is worth mentioning that schools contact parents most commonly when there are problems related to their children. It is quite rare when schools contact parents to inform them about how great their children are doing at studies, discuss difficulties encountered by children, or inform them about their children's progress in learning. For home visits, all interviewed principals confirmed that home visits are utterly rare arranged, if not at all. Moving to another point, teachers who have certain issues and concerns to exchange with parents request the administration to write a petition and send it with children. In some cases (e.g. parents and teachers are relatives), phone calls are permitted and so does home visits. When parents go to schools for meeting teachers, supervisors usually guide them to the place where they await the teacher. Meanwhile the supervisor informs the target teacher with the visit.

Parent Education

In actuality, parents are never invited to observe neither their children nor the other children's progress at school. They are only invited when child-relation issues or problems are raised. Parents' job is limited to providing the school staff with the necessary information about their children, help teachers solve the learning difficulties encountered by learners, and help children in home-based learning. When questioned about parenting courses, principals said that no such a thing exists. Parents who are akin about their children's education usually seek information and advice about parenting courses either from teachers or from the internet.

Parent Support

One-to-one conversations are held at schools during teacher-parent meetings where parents can talk over their concerns with teachers. Parents of children with the same difficulties are most likely to communicate their concerns to each other when they meet in the parents association. Workshops for parent-parent meetings are never created at schools. Generally, parents, when faced with serious difficulties, are counseled to visit specialists like psychologists.

IV. Further Questions Related to Parental Involvement

Encouraging Parents into School

All principals said that schools use different activities to ensure parental involvement. There are open days which are organised by the end of every trimester. Parents in open days discuss their children's results, weaknesses, and problems with teachers and try to find mutual solutions. There are also weekly meetings. Every teacher has a meeting hour which is dedicated to parents who often come either to ask about how well their children are progressing at studies, or to discuss their problems and needs to find effective solutions with teachers. When asked about how schools overcome the barriers that deter the involvement of parents, 5 principals reported that there are no barriers and that parents are always invited and welcomed to school meetings. 2 principals said that the only barrier they face is the negative attitude some teachers have towards parental involvement. Either in open days or in the weekly meeting hour, some teachers always make excuses for not meeting parents. The other 6 principals said there are no barriers because most of parents refuse to be involved in their children's education. There are even parents who do not know in which level their children are studying.

Involving Diverse Parents

Principals of the 13 schools reported that there are no associations or interventions that schools create for parents of disabled and gifted children. It is true that schools welcome meetings and communication with parents of different ethnical backgrounds as well as parents of students with special educational needs and gifted students, but parents are never given the opportunity to interfere with the school programme. Their contributions are limited to student's placement in the classroom, giving insights about their children's strengths and weaknesses, and taking part in parents' association. It is quite noteworthy to state, however, that parents' voices are heard when planning for suitable provisions to take care of disabled and gifted students at school. Another point that the interviewees stressed is that communication with parents is usually disorganised. To illustrate, there are no associations or workshops that solely care for gifted students and others for disabled students.

Professional Development for Teachers

When interviewees were asked about how teachers are trained on parental involvement, 9 principals said that teachers usually receive pre and in-service trainings wherein they tackle parental involvement. On the other hand, 5 principals acknowledged that parental involvement is not well-addressed in teacher training programmes. The training addresses various teaching-related issues such as educational legislation, didactics, psychopedagogy, computer science, and so forth. These courses aim at developing and promoting communication, critical thinking, cognitive skills, etc. However, there is no separate course in which teachers are trained on how to effectively work with parents. For the second question, all principals confirmed that parents are never involved in teacher' training. Whether their children are gifted or disabled, parents are always put aside. Parents are given the chance to communicate their needs and problems only through school visits.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, the important focus has been on developing clear awareness towards parental involvement as an avenue to effectively establishing inclusive-driven schools in Algeria. It is based on the premise that inclusive education inevitably necessitates parental involvement for its optimal effectiveness. For this reason, a structured interview developed by Hornby (1990) was used. The findings indicated several gaps that would work as an incentive for future improvement to parental involvement and teacher trainings. Significantly, principals showed some negative attitude to parental

involvement. However, positive attitude was notably marked. They believe that parents are a significant and reliable source of information about children. Accordingly, schools are required to profess commitment and have serious steps towards parental involvement. In so doing, they will shape learners' knowledge in alignment with developing a lifelong passion for learning.

Parental involvement is inescapably focal step towards inclusive education. In light of the descriptive data gathered from the interview, a number of recommendations are given:

- Teachers should develop an effective teacher-parent partnership instead of regarding parents as adversaries. Of course the partnership ought to be built upon mutual trust, respect, and understanding.
- It is commendable that schools work on dismantling barriers that poses unique challenges to teachers.
- Teachers should receive training courses on parental involvement, and so does the children's parents.
- A glance through the literature denotes the significance of having a rich repertoire of theoretical knowledge about inclusive education and parental involvement which would in return assure an effective practice at schools. Surely, knowledgeable teachers make their own particular contributions to educational research
- Teachers need to show great care and develop their counseling skills when dealing with problems raised by parents.
- Parents are highly recommended to be active members in school associations like 'Parents' Association'.

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