

Educational Legislation and Parental Motivation for becoming Involved in Education: A Comparative Analysis between Israel and Quebec-Canada

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The increasing evidence regarding school-family collaboration, as a means to improve school effectiveness, student perseverance and academic achievement, has encouraged many countries around the globe to endorse legislation and policies to facilitate and augment greater school-family levels of participation. However, in previous studies the macro educational and legislative environments were not correlated to the motivational inclinations of parents. Based on a study recently conducted in Israel, this comparative analysis underlines the evolution of legislation and government policies in Israel and Québec-Canada. This analysis will present the similarities and differences between the key findings highlighted in the two educational systems. We will explore the extent to which state legislative policies motivate parental partnership in schools and at home. We will suggest changes that should be implemented in both countries, within schools and at regional levels. This will call for increased focus on teacher-parent cooperation to foster bonds between schools and parents. Finally, we will recommend urgently-required reforms in the Israeli legislation system to advance parental involvement in education and possibly mitigate currently existing achievement gaps.

Keywords: parental involvement, educational policies, legislation, parental motivation

Introduction

A wealth of research evidence collected over the past thirty years clearly shows the positive relationship of both family-based and school-based parental involvement (PI) on children's educational outcomes (Bryk et al., 2010; Clarke, Jero, Sidney, Fraga, & Erlichson, 2011; Crew, 2007; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Paredes, 2011; Weiss, Lopez, & Stark, 2011). More recent studies have extended this body of research, exploring what motivates PI in children's schooling using terms of psychological variables, such as parental self-efficacy, their understanding of parenting, and perceived invitations from teachers and students to become involved (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey, Whitaker & Ice, 2010; Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, Sandler et. al., 2005).

These studies, however, did not relate to broader aspects, such as government legislation and the cultural environments in which educational systems operate. Thus, these aspects may have a positive effect on motivation for PI in education.

Guided by Bronfenbrenner's framework (1979, 1986, 1989), we postulated that countries, which support PI in education, will promote a macro-system that extends educational legislation and policies to advance family-school partnerships and vice-versa. This hypothesis was tested in Israel and Quebec-Canada, both states endorsing policies that support PI in schooling.

A recent study conducted in Israel served as a trigger for this process of comparison. The analysis included the examination of educational legislations in Israel and Québec-Canada, thus linking these explorations to both home- and school-based PI. Furthermore, the inquiry was entrenched in the models and studies of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997), which focus on parents' motivations to become involved at

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home and in the school (the micro and meso-systems). The study utilized parents and teachers' inner perceptions and attitudes towards PI, which contribute to their decisions to participate in their children's education in these two educational systems.

This paper presents the two theoretical models that were used to anchor the analysis: Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1986, 1989) ecological model and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997) PI model. Then, we report a synthesis of the legislation and policies developed in both Israel and Quebec-Canada. Afterwards, we present the results of the study conducted recently in Israel and summarize the results obtained in a study conducted in Quebec-Canada on parental motivation to be involved in their elementary children's schooling. Thereafter, some similarities and differences between the findings are highlighted. We seek to understand the rationale that underlines the findings, and propose operational suggestions to support family participation at schools.

Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1986, 1989) ecological model was the predominant model used in this study to illustrate the comprehensiveness and complexity of academic achievement, and the child's school adaptation. The model assumes that the child is at the heart of four interrelated and reciprocal systems:

(1) The *micro-system* is the immediate context in which the child lives, grows and evolves (parents, friends, teachers, etc.); Bronfenbrenner (1989, p. 227) described the micro-system as: A pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical and material features, and containing other persons with distinctive characteristics of temperament, personality, and systems of beliefs.

(2) The *meso-system* refers to school-based involvement (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). The meso-system comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates (such as, for a child, the relations found among home, school, and one's neighborhood peer group; for adults, those related to family, work, and social life).

(3) The *exo-system*: Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 25) described the exo-system as: One or more settings that do not involve the developing

person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person. Examples of the exo-system in the case of a young child might include the parent's place of work, a school class attended by an older sibling, the parents' network of friends, the activities of the local school board, and so on.

(4) The *macro-system* is the cultural context in which we find one's values, rules, beliefs and influences, stereotypes, prejudices, etc. Bronfenbrenner (1989, pp. 228-229) contended: The macro-system consists of an overarching pattern of the micro-, meso-, and exo-system characteristics of a given culture, subculture, or other broader social context, with particular reference to the developmentally-investigative belied systems, resources, hazards, life-styles, opportunity structures, life course options, and patterns of social interchange that are embedded in each of these systems. The macro-system may be thought of as a societal blueprint for a particular culture, subculture, or other broader social context.

In this paper, we are particularly interested in the macro-system; that is, the legislation and policies relevant to the issue of PI and to the micro and meso-systems.

The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) model of the parent involvement process, stipulates that, at the first level, parents decide to become involved in their child's education: (1) If they believe that it is part of their responsibilities (role construction); (2) If they feel self-efficacious to help their child succeed in school, and if they think they can improve the child's achievements, and (3) If they perceive the school's, teacher's and the child's invitations to become involved.

In the following section, we provide an overview of the legislation, policies, plans of action, and publications regarding parental involvement in Israel and Quebec-Canada, respectively.

The Macro View of PI in Israel

The following legislation and policies issued by the MOE define parents and teachers' roles and responsibilities regarding education at home and at school, since the establishment of the educational system in the state of Israel in 1948. Education for children between the ages of three to seventeen or until the completion of ten years' schooling is compulsory. Pre-school tuition is

progressive, and is determined according to socio-economic criteria (*The Compulsory Education Law 1949*).

Parents can participate in curriculum design and decide upon enrichment programs which may be added to the school curriculum. Parents have the right to determine up to 25% of the school's curriculum. Equally, parents can vote to extend the school day and add more enrichment activities to the school curriculum if 75% of the parents agree on the revisions in the curriculum. Extra activities that are not included in the core national curriculum must be approved by the parent's committee or the local municipalities that finance these extras, like special instructors or additional enrichment activities and tutorials to the school curriculum (*The Curriculum- Law 102, 1953*).

Parents have the right to choose the educational stream (secular or religious) in which their children will study. However, they are not allowed to choose the specific school their children will attend. The local school board refers children to schools, in accordance with the social integration policy (*The State Education Law, 1959*).

The Special Education Law was amended, after parents protested to include children with special needs in the mainstream educational system. This law establishes the right of children with physical, mental, emotional or behavioral disabilities to an adequate education that suits their needs. The law expresses a policy of inclusion of disabled children into regular schools to the fullest possible extent, and stipulates that children with special needs will be given the utmost assistance (*The Special Education Law 1988*).

The Children's Rights Law is based on the provisions of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (Nov., 1991). This convention stipulates the rights of the child, in general and, in regard to education, in particular, the child's rights are perceived as the responsibility of the State. Thereby, the State's responsibilities must ensure that children receive education in the broader sense. The educational system must ensure equality for all children and protect them from discrimination, regardless race, gender or religious affiliations. The role of parents is acknowledged, as well as the responsibility of the state's educational system to provide programs that complement the parent's role, and promote partnerships between parents

and other professionals, to develop the child's personality, talents and their mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential. Equally, parents are encouraged to participate in their children's education, regardless of their cultural, ethnic or social-economic background (*Children's Rights Law, 2000*).

Parents can participate in staff discussions, resulting from their child's misbehavior and pending suspension / expulsion from school (*Law 401, 2000*).

MOE policies regarding parental participation in education have been publicized in circulars and additional declarations and guidelines since 1988. Accordingly, parents' partnership as well as their role and responsibilities in education are regarded as a crucial part of their children's education. Equally, the teacher's role to promote and cope with PI in education at home and at school is explicitly defined, thus emphasizing that these relations should be based on mutual trust and respect. The emphasis on mutual trust and respect relates to tensions and conflicts that have characterized parents' interactions with teachers in the past.

Recent MOE policies (1990-2010) reiterate the importance of communication between the school and the home. Accordingly, schools should communicate regularly with parents and notify them about academic, social and health-related issues regarding their child. Teachers should develop various means with which to communicate with parents and inform them about their children's academic and social growth; for example, scheduling parent-teacher meetings, notifying parents of academic and social events at the school, and communicating via phone and e-mail as proactive measures.

MOE circulars focus on such topics as: parental representation in school committees. The overall policy of the MOE is to encourage parents' participation in classroom committees, at both the school level and the national level. Parents acting as school representatives can help decide about school uniforms and additional payments for various school activities (*Circular 1999, 2007*). Parents are obliged to inform school authorities about the child's health (2001). Parents ought to be present at school meetings where important issues are discussed, such the decision to keep a child back a year or in regard to disciplinary measures reprimanding the child's behavior (2005). The school is permitted to determine its own policy regarding homework.

Parents could participate with the school staff and help create school policy regarding the purpose, time and scope required. (2006). Other circulars inform parents about the child's health (2008) and tests that screen gifted children (2010). The MOE distributes the circulars at the various schools and it is the responsibility of the school principal to inform the school's staff. In turn, teachers have to inform parents about these regulations. However, in most schools, this is not done; likewise, parents are not always informed about the new directives (Greenbaum & Freid, 2011, p. 101).

The Macro-system in Quebec-Canada

In Quebec (Canada), with the adoption of Act 180 the family and the community are an integral part of the current educational system. This act amended the legislative provisions (Government of Quebec, 1997) enacted by the Ministry of Education in order to decentralize power. This law gives parents a greater role in the school system: they must now be consulted by local authorities on a range of topics through a new structure - the School Governing Board. Other laws, such as the amendments to the Law on Public Instruction Act 124, adopted in December 2002, have also had a significant impact on the role of parents and the community in relation to school (MEQ, 2003). The expanded responsibilities of the Board, as well as the role of parents in school management are clearly defined in the Act. Its aim, in regard to equal opportunities, is to educate, socialize and qualify students while enabling them to undertake and successfully complete a course of study.

On the political level, greater openness to families and the community is reflected in some policies enacted in recent years. For example, in its Policy on Special Education, *School for all Students*, the Ministry of Education (MEQ, 1999) pledged to welcome parents into the school and support their participation, thereby creating school partnerships to form an extended educational community. Recommendations in the *Avis of the Quebec Council of Family and Child (2000), For Greater Complicity between Families and Schools*, converge in this sense. The Ministry of Health and Social Services is now working on the elaboration of a National Policy in Health, which targets the diverse environments of all people, including families, schools and

communities (for a complete review, see Deslandes, 2006a; Deslandes & Lemieux, 2005). We are also currently witnessing a proliferation of publications on this topic; for example, the document *School I Care! - Together for Student Success* (MELS, 2009), with its 13 paths to success involving concerted mobilization. In this document, the Ministry of Education of Québec reiterates the importance of the role of parents and community in supporting students. The relevance of this discourse and the practice is anchored in both the most recent state policies and the results of many studies showing the relationship with school success. The collaboration between the school, family and community is undoubtedly a contemporary issue in Quebec (Deslandes, 2006a, b). In the same vein, there have been recent calls for projectson family-school-community partnerships in different settings, low SES environments, pre-school, immigrant children, at-risk children and adolescents, etc. These projects are funded by the Ministry of Education, public grant organizations or private foundations.

The political resolve to move forward in this direction is also evident in the implementation of various programs. In this respect, we include first the *Supporting Montreal Schools Program*, established in 1997, which aims to encourage, support and strengthen the participation of parents in the success of their child's learning and to create a network of partners with community organizations. It is important to mention some larger-scale perspective initiatives, such as the *Family-School-Community, Succeeding Together Program* (MEQ, 2002), which offers a program geared towards helping nearly 200 schools with young children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The program is targeted to promote the success of these children and relies on the mobilization of all stakeholders. It has now been extended to low SES elementary schools (MELS, 2009). Note also the *Homework Assistance Program in Elementary School* (MEQ, 2004) which, during the past ten years, has provided support services to students (Deslandes, 2009). It also seeks, among other things, to stimulate local community initiatives in the schools, in hopes of promoting students' success. The Quebec government has sole responsibility for its education system, which calls for 11 years of study at the primary and secondary levels. School attendance is mandatory for children aged 6 to 16 (for a

complete review, see Deslandes, 2006a, 2009; Deslandes& Lemieux, 2005).

In summary, the PI macro-system is assigned different status in the legislation and official policies in the educational systems in Israel and Quebec-Canada (see Table 1 for a synthesis).

These differences are exemplified in the following ways:

1. When comparing the legislation in the two countries, it appears that the major legislation in Israel has not been updated for several decades. Accordingly, the main legislation regarding PI has not been revised in accordance with major economic and social changes and the expectations of Israeli families to satisfy the needs of 21st century schools. Today, children in Israel grow up in "new families" that vary in structure, in the way parents perceive their role, and as regards their parental self-efficacy in their children's education. Yet, these changes are not represented in either the main legislation or MOE policies.

By comparison, in Quebec-Canada, the main legislation has been continuously revised and updated to reflect the needs of children and parents and to assure students' success in the educational system. This is reflected in the Legislation of Quebec Act 180 (1997), including parental representation on school governing boards. Equally, support for a wide range of programs at school and community levels for children of low SES, kindergarten and immigrant children are funded by the Ministry of Education, public grants and private foundations.

2. Although the MOE in Israel manifests a positive and supportive position towards PI in the schools, as articulated explicitly in *Circular 1988*, this philosophy is not voiced in the main legislation. This highlights the difference between the roles awarded to parents' involvement in the main legislation in Israel, as opposed to the standing given to parents in the main legislation in Quebec-Canada. In the latter, the law includes detailed provisions that encourage the active

Table 1 - A Few Relevant Legislations and Published Documents in Both Israel and Quebec-Canada

Israel	Quebec
<p>Legislations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Compulsory Education Law (1949) - The State Education Law (1953) - Law –The curriculum (1959) - Law – The child's rights (2000) -Law 401-Parents participation in staff discussions (2000) <p>Circulars</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (1988) Parents' participation in education - (1999) Parents' representation --(2001) Informing the school about the child's health --(2005) Parents' participation in staff meetings regarding the child's misbehavior --(2006) Homework --(2008) Informing the school about the child's health --(2010) Informing parents about exams for the gifted 	<p>Legislations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Act 180 (1997, role of parents in the school governing board) - Act 124 (2002, greater role of parents and community) <p>Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --School for all Students (1999) --For Greater Complicity between Families and Schools (2000) --National Policy on Health (in progress) <p>Publications and Others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --School, I Care! Together for Student Success (2009) --Recent Calls for Projects on school-family-community partnerships (funded by MELS and private foundations) <p>Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Supporting Montreal Schools Program (1997) --Family-School-Community Succeeding Together Program (2002) - Homework Assistance Program in Elementary School (since 2004)

involvement of parents at schools. It also articulates that schools should offer parents and children the necessary skills and competencies needed to develop children's academic skills. The law upholds the equality of children from diverse social and economic backgrounds, and thus stipulates programs that support and help disadvantaged children with their homework, and offer other such programs after school hours. The law also requires that schools reach out and involve community members in providing assistance for children's social and academic growth in the schools.

3. In Israel, the MOE circulars include a variety of proclamations that have been individually published over the past 25 years. They are available in the MOE publications (and on-line) according to the year in which they were issued. As a result, educators and parents who wish to become acquainted with these publications cannot easily gain access to these documents, because they were not published in sequence. Consequently, parents have recently voiced their dissatisfaction by accusing the educational system of attempting to ignore parental rights and prevent parental participation in the educational system. Moreover, they expressed their disapproval and mistrust of MOE policies because schools don't inform them of the recent declarations published in the circulars, thus expressing their doubts as to whether the announced policies are actually implemented in the schools (Dormi & Eingbar, 2011). In Quebec, documents are regularly updated and made available on the Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sports (MELS), and the Federation des Comités de Parents du Quebec web sites.

In light of the preferential standing given to parental involvement in Quebec-Canada legislation, it seems that in Israel PI in main legislation and educational policies is given far less emphasis. We therefore postulated that when we study what motivates parents to become involved in education, in Israel, parents will be less motivated to become involved in their children's education than the parents in Quebec-Canada. To further explore parents' motivation in their children's education we examined two samples of parents with children in primary schools (Grades 1-6) in Israel and Quebec-Canada.

The Study in Israel

The current study draws on Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) and Walker et al.'s (2005) models of the parental involvement process. Two additional scales were used in the Israeli study of psychological variables as opposed to the Quebec study. These two scales are the *Parents' perceptions of specific invitations from the child to get involved* and the *Parents' perceptions of general invitations from the school to get involved*.

Method

Participants. The sample was comprised of 387 parents, whose children attend 10 elementary schools representing the diverse ethnic and demographic composition of the Jewish population, such as those in urban and rural areas, as well as kibbutzim in the Galilee. The majority of respondents (84%) were mothers. Nearly 87% of the respondents were from traditional families (two biological parents). About 5% of the respondents had an elementary school education; 44% had completed high school; and 51% had obtained an education at college or university. The great majority, 93%, of the respondents were employed. The size of families varied; the majority of the families, 41%, had three children; 36% had two children; 14% of the families had four children; while only 9% had one child. Almost 75% of the respondents were born in Israel; the other 25% were immigrants: 22% from the former USSR and the other 3% from Ethiopia and North and South America.

Measures: The questionnaire included items from Walker et al. (2005). It was translated into Hebrew, and then translated back into English to ensure the validity of the questionnaire. The socio-demographic characteristics were incorporated. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the following statements related to parental motivational beliefs for involvement on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, 6=strongly agree). The scales were as follows: (1) *Parental role construction* (9 items; alpha=0.85); (2) *Parental self-efficacy* (6 items; alpha=0.74), (3) *Parents' perceptions of general invitations from the school to get involved* (6 items, alpha=0.76); (4) *Parents' perceptions of specific invitations from the child to get involved* (6 items, alpha= 0.66); (5) *Parents' perceptions*

of specific invitations from the teacher to get involved (6 items, $\alpha = 0.81$); (6) *Parental involvement at home* (6 items, $\alpha = 0.87$), and (7) *Parental involvement at school* (5 items, $\alpha = 0.87$).

Procedures and Analyses

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the chief scientist at the MOE in Jerusalem, and the regional head of the Northern District of the MOE. The principals attached a letter to each questionnaire, which explained the purpose of the research to the parents and urged them to voice their opinions in the questionnaire. The questionnaires were distributed by the class teachers to the parents who were asked to return them within one week. Besides means and standard deviation scores and Pearson correlations, two separate series of hierarchical regression analyses were performed for home

and at school. First, socio-demographic characteristics were introduced followed by parents' variables (e.g., role construction and self-efficacy) and finally, invitations to increase parental involvement extended by the school, the teachers and the child were introduced.

Results

The means and standard deviations for parental involvement are presented in Table 2. The computed mean values of the scales indicate higher scores for parental involvement at home (4.30/6), parental self-efficacy (4.96/6) and role construction (4.86/9), and lower scores for parental involvement at school (2.37/5) and invitations from teachers (2.15/6); while school invitations and the teachers' invitations received the lowest scores.

Table 2 - Means and Standard Deviations of Parental Involvement at Home and at School in Israel

	N	Range	Mean	S.D.	Reliability
Parental involvement at Home	388	1 - 6	4.30	1.36	0.87
Parental involvement at School	388	1 - 6	2.37	1.21	0.87
Role-construction	390	1 - 6	4.86	0.80	0.85
Parental self-efficacy	390	2 - 6	4.96	0.80	0.85
The school's invitation to the parents	389	2.2 - 6	4.77	0.81	0.76
The child's invitation	388	1.5 - 6	3.70	0.88	0.66

Parental Involvement at home

The first step explains 3% of the variance. Parents who are not highly educated are more involved at home than other parents ($\beta = -0.31$, $p < 0.05$). The second step accounts for 6.6% of the variance with role construction ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$) and parental self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.313$, $p < 0.01$) as significant predictive variables. The third step accounts for 8.5% of the variance with the child's invitation as the most powerful predictor ($\beta = 0.50$, $p < 0.001$). The entire model, which explains 18% of the variance in PI at home, [$F_{(386)} = 7.16$, $p < 0.01$], includes the following positively significant variables - child's invitation, parental

role construction, and parental self-efficacy; and the negatively significant variables - participants' education and teachers' and schools' invitation. In other words, parents with lower education are more involved at home compared to educated parents. Teachers' and schools' invitations do not motivate parents to become involved at home.

Parental Involvement at school

The first step explains 3.3% of the variance in parental involvement at school, with the participants' gender being the only significant predictor ($\beta = -0.368$, $p < 0.05$). Obviously, mothers, once again, are more involved at school than

fathers. The second step that accounts for 1.5% of the variance has one significant predictor, parental role construction ($\beta=0.18$, $p<0.05$). The final model accounts for 18.7% of the variance in parental involvement at school [$F_{(386)}=7.48$, $p<0.001$]. The most dominant variable is the child's invitation to get involved ($\beta=0.27$, $p<0.001$), followed by the teachers' invitations ($\beta=0.268$,

$p<0.001$), and the participants' gender ($\beta=-0.368$, $p<0.05$). (See Table 4).

In short, to enhance parental involvement at home, teachers in Israel should work mainly with children and make them aware of the importance of parents' participation in their education. To improve parental involvement at school, the results suggest the importance of both teachers' and children's invitations.

Table 3 - Hierarchical Regression Coefficients for Predicting Parental Involvement at Home in Israel

Model block	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Participant's gender	-.0111	-0.143	-0.200
Participant's education level	-0.218	-0.262	-0.312*
Participant's employment	0.374	0.424	0.374
Family structure	0.347	0.323	0.245
Number of children	0.000	0.031	0.006
Born in Israel	0.284	0.179	0.100
Parental Role Construction		0.278**	0.279*
Parental self-efficacy		0.313**	0.321*
The school's invitation to the parents			-0.171~
The child's invitation			0.501***
The teachers' invitation			-.153~
R ²	0.29	0.095	0.180
F	1.79	4.71***	7.16***

Note : ~ $P<0.06$ * $P<0.05$ ** $P<0.01$ *** $P<0.001$ N=387

Summary of the findings of the study conducted in Quebec-Canada

In their research conducted with 1,227 parents of children from seven elementary schools in Quebec, Deslandes and Bertrand (2004) examined the first level of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) model of parental involvement processes. More specifically, they postulated that parents' decisions to become involved in their child's school activities are based on their understanding of their role as a parent, their feelings of competence, and teachers' invitations to participate. Approximately 84% of the respondents were mothers. Nearly 69% came from traditional families (two biological parents). Almost 68% of the participants had outside work. About 49% of the children whose parents participated were girls, and 51% were boys.

Exactly 3% of the respondents had less than a high school education; 47% had a high school diploma or a secondary level trade certificate; and 50% had a college or university education. The four scales that were employed: *parent's role construction*, *parent's self-efficacy*, *parent's perceptions of teacher invitations*, and *parent's reports of parental practices of involvement* were adapted from the "Sharing the Dream! Parent Questionnaire" (Jones et al., 2000). The *parent's reports of involvement* activities scales also include items from questionnaires designed by Epstein and her colleagues (1993; 1996). Their analysis led them to identify two models: *parental involvement at home* and *parental involvement at school*. Separate regression analyses were conducted, introducing first individual and family characteristics as control

variables, followed by the other variables (*Stepwise*).

The computed mean values of the scales indicate higher scores for parental involvement at home (5.07/6), parental self-efficacy (4.97/6) and role construction (4.85/6), and lower scores for parental involvement at school (2.27/6) and invitations from teachers (1.86/6) (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2004).

Parental Involvement at home

The significant control variables were as follows: family size and family structure, and the child's level of schooling. In other words, the younger the child, the smaller the size of the family, and traditional families as opposed to non-traditional families predicted 22% of the variance

Table 4 - Hierarchical Regression Coefficients for Predicting Parental Involvement at School in Israel

Model block	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Participant's gender	- 0.368 *	-0.377*	-.320*
Participant's education level	-0.005	0.002	0.030
Participant's employment	0.217	0.227	0.254
Family structure	0.236	0.212	0.163
Number of children	0.090	0.101	0.097
Born in Israel	-0.065	~0.096	-0.167
Parental Role Construction		0.180*	0.109
Parental self-efficacy		0.013	0.010
The school's invitation to the parents			0.007
The child's invitation			0.313***
The teachers' invitation			0.268***
R ²	0.033	0.048	0.187
F	2.05 *	2.26*	7.48***

Note : ~ P<0.06 * P<0.05 **P<0.01 ***P<0.001 N=387

in parental involvement at home. Then, parents' self-efficacy (9%), followed by perceptions of teachers' invitations (1%), predicted parental involvement at home, providing a total of 32% of the explained variance in parental involvement at home.

Parental Involvement at school

The significant control variables included parents' level of schooling, small family size, and younger boys (5% of the variance in parental involvement at school). Then, the more parents perceived invitations from the teachers (15%) and the more they felt their involvement was part of their parenting responsibilities (8%), the more they were involved at school. The whole model explained 28% of the variance in parental involvement at school. In summary, whatever the students and family characteristics, when it

comes to parental involvement at home, it is important to foster parental self-efficacy. Regarding parental involvement in school, it is imperative to pay attention to teachers' invitations to parents, and then, to parental role construction.

Discussion

The aim of this paper was two-fold: it intended to examine the macro educational and legislative milieu that promotes school and family partnerships in Israel and Quebec-Canada, as well as the setting and circumstances that motivate parents to become involved in their children's education at home and at school. This process has some limitations. First, the two studies were conducted several years apart from

one another. The study in Israel is the more recent one, wherein two supplementary measures were used that were not employed in the Quebec study. Secondly, the two samples were heterogeneous in different ways. In the Quebec sample, there were more participants from non-traditional families, while the Israeli sample included more immigrant participants. Nevertheless, the objective of the paper was to highlight various similarities and differences between the key findings in the two studies. Two elements retain our attention: perceived teachers' invitations and children's invitations to parents to become involved. These will be the focus of our discussion.

A similarity: Perceived teachers' invitations

Interestingly, the scores obtained for perceived teachers' invitations to parents were rather low in both studies. Yet, this variable predicts parents' involvement at school in the two settings. As formulated in both studies, these invitations are meant to be specific and personalized. They communicate to the parents that their involvement is both required and desired. Through their invitations, teachers can make their expectations explicit regarding parental involvement. They also make parents aware of the value of their help and support. Likewise, they help parents to develop a better understanding of the child's needs and the needs of the school (Deslandes, 2004a, 2010a; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

In the Quebec macro view of parental involvement, we understood that there was a strong political desire to support parental involvement. One may wonder about the reasons for the low level of teachers' invitations to parents, when there seems to be such agreement as to the importance of parental involvement. It is thus necessary to examine the reasons underlying this observation, especially as in 2001 the Quebec Ministry of Education published a reference frame of 12 competencies that pre-service teachers must develop before entering the field. Two of the 12 competencies relate to the work with parents and they translate as requirements for teachers. Competency 5 dwells on learning progress and the competency levels that students must reach. The teachers are required to explain clearly to students and their parents the expected outcomes and to provide feedback with respect to students' learning

progress levels. Suggestions for ways to support parents are on the agenda in relations with parents. Competency 9 is unquestionably the most explicit about the responsibilities attributed to teachers. The latter are required to involve parents and inform them about their child's success and school life. Different expectations described therein go beyond information on programs, work at home, school rules, and suggestions on how to help and support their child. They also include expectations regarding communications via memos, e-mail, etc. or other contributions made by parents who have various talents or interests. They increasingly call for dialogue based on a relationship of trust that makes a division of labor with the family possible. For almost ten years, the *University du Québec at Trois-Rivières* has been offering a compulsory course to all pre-service teachers, entitled "School, Families, Communities and Multiculturalism" (Deslandes, 2006a, b; 2010b; Deslandes, Fournier & Morin, 2008). As far as we know, this course is not offered in all Quebec universities.

Even though the reported study was conducted in 2004, Deslandes (in press) does not believe things have changed much over the past ten years. In the current contexts, where working conditions have deteriorated over the last decade; teachers, worn out and overwhelmed, pressured by expectations of efficient performance and the hectic pace of everyday life, struggle to keep control and maintain equilibrium. Consequently, they pay attention almost exclusively to parents of students who have learning or behavior problems. Observations collected by teachers express a willingness to work with *all* parents. However, this is often forgotten in the daily grind. Challenges facing teachers appear to have increased exponentially (Deslandes, in press). However, there is hope because there seems to be a renewal of interest in family-school-community partnerships among new researchers in Quebec, spurred by grants through different types of funding, both public and private.

Nevertheless, besides perceived teachers' invitations, it is still necessary for parents to feel challenged and become convinced that involvement in their child's education is part of their parental responsibilities (role construction). Well-developed and meaningful teachers' invitations and meeting opportunities to promote a better understanding of positive parenting and

to increase parents' self-efficacy appear to be promising avenues (Deslandes, 2004b; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2004).

A difference: Perceived child's invitations

In the Israeli study, the child's invitation to get involved had the most dominant effect on parental motivation for involvement at home and school. This is in accordance with former studies that stress the powerful potential of a child's invitation to advance parental involvement, because parents want their children to be successful at school, and they act in response to this invitation. The child's invitation conveys a clear message to the parent: the child's need for the parent's active involvement (Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski & Apostoleris, 1997; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994), and an emotional response for involvement (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Schaedel et al., in press).

Furthermore, children value their parents' help and tend to share their feelings with the parents in regard to what happens to them at school, asking for parents' assistance with homework, reviewing for a test or help in preparing a research project (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Burow, 1995; Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001; Schaedel & Lazarowitz, 2005; Schaedel, Lazarowitz & Azaiza, 2007). The child's invitation for the parents' involvement at school may relate to his request to talk with his teacher, take part in a school trip or a special school event. In conclusion, it expresses the child's need for, and willingness to accept parental help.

Israeli parents openly receive their children's invitations for help. This is in accordance with their perception of their parenting role. The great majority of participants were born in Israel and obtained higher education (51%). These parents may perceive their parenting style as progressive and friendly. Their concern and compliance to talk with their children and listen to what is happening at school is possibly in accordance with their child-centered orientation in raising their children.

Other parents_ for example, immigrants from the former USSR (22%), Ethiopia, and South America (3%) - are undoubtedly equally interested in helping their children, since they regard the academic success of their children in school as key to their successful integration into Israeli culture and their future economic and social advancement in Israeli society. The result of the

child's invitation being a dominant factor for parents' involvement is in line with other studies in the US, Israel and Canada. Walker et al.'s (2005) findings of primary schools in the US established that the child's invitation was the strongest predictor of parents' home-based involvement.

In Israel, Lavenda's (2011) results indicate that among Jewish parents of junior and high school students, the child's invitation is a dominant factor for parental involvement. Similarly, Deslandes and Bertrand (2005) found that adolescents' invitations were of paramount importance in parents' decisions to become involved at home.

Nonetheless, teachers' invitations in the Quebec-Canada study, and home-based teachers' invitation in Israel were not a very significant factor for parental involvement. In Israel, this finding is not unexpected because the macro-system and educational legislation has not undergone reform in regard to parental involvement. According to recent research recommendations, this is apparent in the main legislation and MOE circulars which, up until today have not been updated, according to the current needs of families and children (Friedman & Fisher, 2002).

Although the teachers' school-based invitation was significant, this may not truly necessarily express the teachers' interest to encourage parents to participate in academic or pedagogical activities. These are created in school to help parents understand and support their child's academic advancement. Teachers' invitation to parents may have an inverse effect on parents' involvement. They may invite parents when their child demonstrates disruptive behavior or when the child experiences difficulties in his academic progress. Teachers may also invite parents who have a low sense of responsibility for the child's academic or social behavior, and do not fulfill the administrative directives of the school. Obviously, parents do not react to such invitations with great motivation.

Recently, in Israel, there has been a growing movement led by parents, university professors and the press, which voices disappointment in the low achievement results of students in the national Achievements of Students Growth and Effectiveness Measures for Schools (GRMS), and the international exams of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). This was evident in the last political election. This

Conclusions and Recommendations

movement stresses the importance of PI in the schools, since the schools and the MOE have not been successful thus far in closing the achievement gap that exists in the fragmented Israeli society among the Jewish sector (low and high SES student) and the wide achievement gap between Jewish and Arab students. These groups stress the urgency for cooperation between schools and families to improve the quality of students' achievement results.

A recent survey that examined the content of pre-service courses for teachers in the universities and teacher preparation courses for schools in Israel indicates that only a few courses that relate to schools and families are compulsory, and that the majority of these courses are taken as electives (Greenbaum & Fried, 2011). Furthermore, these courses focus on diverse characteristics of families and fail to address the issues that prevent families from getting involved in the schools. The current study stresses the need for future teachers to take a few mandatory courses that prepare them to deal with different types of families, and train pre-service teachers to develop skills and knowledge to help them bridge the gaps between schools and families and between schools and the various services and organizations in the community.

Reforms in the main legislation should address such issues as parents' responsibilities and rights. These may include declarations relating to the school curriculum and strategies to develop communication between families and schools. Although some of these directives have already been published in the MOE circulars, their inclusion in the main legislation will articulate their added value to school-family interactions. Furthermore, these reforms should not be altered without public debate. The major legislation should clearly state both schools' and parents' rights and responsibilities, as well as the school's mission statement (a joint agreement between the school and parents). Accordingly, the mission statement of each school will be different because of the differences in parents' cultural and social needs and expectations, which vary from one school location to the other. Each school will be able to develop its own autonomous mission statement, which will present the goals and expectations of both schools and parents.

We hope that this comparative analysis contributes an innovative perspective to the existing body research in the field of parents' motivational beliefs in education. This study incorporates a multi-level perspective, as suggested by Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986, 1989), adding the analysis of legislation and policies to previous research studies based on the first level of the Hoover-Dempsey (1995, 1997) models. The contrasts between the macro-system in Israel and that of Quebec-Canada indicate that main legislations, MOE policies, and politicians' actions have different priorities and demands for promoting PI in each of the respective countries.

Consequently, in Israel, it is apparent that the main legislations and the policies of the MOE circulars related to PI need to be updated and revised. This should initiate an indispensable supportive course of action in regard to PI, which will address the growing need for active cooperation between families and schools. Today, it has become apparent that the schools themselves cannot raise students' achievement levels and close the achievement gaps among the diverse groups existing in multi-cultural Israeli society, without PI at home and at school. The main responsibilities of parents' association representatives at the local and national levels have not been defined thus far in the main legislation. This should be amended, and the rights of the local and national associations should be clearly articulated.

Reforms in the macro-system and at the legislative national level are critical to increasing parents' involvement. However, revolutionizing actions at the regional level, the exo-system within the communities, and the meso-system at schools are equally important. Public leaders from higher education as well as parents and politicians should raise the needs to amend the legal status of parental representation, and update and extend educational legislation for PI. The MOE should allocate funds to schools at the periphery, low SES communities and minorities (Arabs), thereby helping these schools to empower parents of low self-efficacy and parental role construction to acquire the necessary skills needed to advance their children's growth. In addition, in regard to schools catering to low SES communities, a committee responsible for child and family affairs

should be formed. Committee participants may include professional representatives from diverse fields, such as social work, health, law and education, as well as social activists, parents' association representatives and businessmen. This committee should advocate children's and families' rights and work in partnership to solve conflicts between schools and families. It should also help develop children's academic, social, physical and emotional growth. This committee should receive financial support from government and local funds.

Within the school, a staff member should be nominated to be in charge of the school-family partnership. This person should develop a comprehensive school program that will integrate parents' involvement in the school's various pedagogical and social activities. The school principal also plays an important role in advancing PI within the school. His support and commitment to PI are essential components for the program's successful implementation (Bauch & Goldring, 2000; Deslandes, 2006 a, b; in press). An egalitarian management style that empowers the staff and the parents may support the collaboration between both parents and teachers. Equally, the principal has to support the teachers as professionals, and augment the pedagogic goals of the curriculum. These goals expand the students' competencies in literacy and math, and consequently evaluate their academic progress (Addi-Racah & Aviv- Elyashiv, 2008; Deslandes, 2010; Deslandes et al., 2008; Epstein, 2011; Schaedel & Lazarowitz, 2005).

The majority of school staff needs to undergo training so as to better work with families (Deslandes, in press). Few teacher preparation programs include instruction on how to work in partnership with families and the community. Teachers ought to help facilitate understanding and practical strategies to engage effectively with families of diverse cultures and social status. This

also includes workshops to assist parents with strategies that develop and encourage literacy and math assistance. (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007; Schaedel & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2005; Schaedel, Lazarowitz & Azaiza, 2007).

In-service students, who train to become future teachers, should be required to take courses that develop their skills and knowledge about how to communicate with parents of diverse backgrounds. Immigrant families need support to better understand how schools work and what is expected of families and students. School staff, other agencies, and community volunteers can also help orient the families, and facilitate their involvement in school. Developing school family programs requires a vision, caution and wisdom on the part of all involved parties, including the school principal, staff, families, and members of the school community, academics and politicians. Their joint effort will contribute to children's academic and social growth.

All in all, whether in Israel or in Quebec-Canada, once legislation and policies are implemented as *top-down* measures, the implementation of *down-top* measures must soon follow. Parents, teachers, the school principals and other key actors must show their willingness to promote PI and realize that it is part of their professional responsibilities. They should feel well-equipped to work effectively with parents, be aware of the parents' life context conditions, and be supported by the administrators at the school level, and at the district level. As mentioned previously, teachers' working conditions at school must be improved, so that they can look upon their work with parents as a universal measure that applies to all children's parents, and not only to those parents of children who have learning or behavior problems.

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