

Parents' Engagement in Early Childhood Education and Care: Enhancing Child Development and Community Well-Being

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Abstract

This study examined parents' engagement in early childhood education and care services for children aged four to six years in attached settings in primary schools in Tanzania. Using data generated primarily through interviews with parents and pre-school teachers, this paper presents an interpretive study and a case study approach. It used thematic analysis to explore the engagement of parents and families in enhancing children's learning and community well-being. This study was conducted in two locations: the urban and the rural areas and comprised 20 participants, 12 parents and eight early childhood teachers in four early year's centres (i.e. two centres in each location). The findings highlighted that parents and families did not become involved in their children's learning in the classroom context, were not aware they could participate in the early childhood education centres, and teachers did not encourage them to participate in the classroom. This study suggests that to build and maintain active parental participation in the settings and to purposefully transform participation, it is necessary for government policy planners and educational administrators to provide suitable capacity buildings where children, parents, families, community and teachers can interact.

Keywords

Child development; Community well-being; Early childhood education and care; Parents' engagement; Pre-school education

Introduction

The concept of early childhood education and care (ECEC) is theorised in the literature as a support to children's growth, development, learning, and survival [1, 2]. It includes education, health, nutrition and hygiene, and social-emotional and physical development from birth to compulsory entry into primary school in formal, informal and non-formal settings [1-4]. Early childhood education and care is conceptualised as a holistic view integrating both education and care, which has sometimes been called *educare* [1, 5]. In Tanzania, ECEC services for children under six years of age are delivered in a setting attached to primary schools whenever possible. The government of Tanzania formalised education for children aged four/five to six years and directed each primary school to have an attached class for that group of children. For various reasons, including a lack of resources, not all primary

schools managed to implement the policy [6, 7]. Currently, the overwhelming majority of children receive early education services in private centres and public settings which are mainly located in the urban areas. This study uses early childhood education and care and pre-school education interchangeably.

With reference to the focus of this study, parent and community engagement in children's education is increasingly viewed as an important support to children's

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learning in early care and education programmes and throughout the school years [8]. The term “engagement” is used in this study to describe parents, families, and community efforts to promote their children’s healthy development and learning through activities that can be encouraged by educators in child care and early education stimulation [8].

This study makes a case that effective parent, family, and community engagement during a child’s learning and development from early years through the early grades is a key contributor to children’s positive academic and social outcomes [9, 10]. During this period, young children acquire foundational competencies including language skills, literacy, early mathematics, and social-emotional/behavioural skills that strongly affect their capacity for early learning [1, 2, 11]. It is theorised in the literature that when young children fall behind in developing these skills, they often face a difficult path for the rest of their school years [9, 10, 11]. For example, longitudinal studies indicate that children who have weak language skills upon primary school entry are more likely to struggle while learning to read, and weak reading skills in third grade greatly hamper children’s learning across the curriculum in later grades [11, 12]. While high-quality teaching in pre-schools and the early grades is essential, parents can also play a vital role in helping children acquire foundational competencies that fuel school success [9]. However, this appears not to be the case in the Tanzanian context. Anecdotes suggested that Tanzanian parents and community thought only teachers are responsible in the child’s learning and development at the ECEC settings. Therefore, the focus of this study is to examine parents’ engagement in ECEC, and how they enhance child development and community well-being in home and in the ECEC settings. The few exiting studies conducted in Tanzania have not explored the role of parents, families, and community in their children’s learning and development. There is a knowledge gap on how parents and families participate in building the foundation of their children’s learning in the early stages. The current study is therefore worthwhile, timely, and needed.

The main research question was:

How do parents’ engagement in early childhood education and care enhance positive outcomes for children and community well-being?

It was divided into two sub-questions:

1. What are the strategies that parents and their families employ to support their children’s learning, development, and community well-being?
2. In what ways do the early childhood education and care settings involve parents and families in the education of their children?

Research Methods

Design, Settings, Sample and Recruitment

This interpretive study employs a case study design [13], to enable investigation of parents’ engagement in ECEC in the Tanzanian context. This study used an interpretivist methodology [14], because of its potential to generate rich data.

The sample consisted of 20 participants in total i.e. 12 parents, six were from the two urban settings (i.e. three parents in each centre) and another six from the two rural settings (i.e. three parents from each centre). Also, there were eight teachers; one Head Teacher and one classroom teacher from each centre. Four pre-school centres were used, two in each location, i.e. in the rural and the urban settings. In general, 13 were female and seven were male participants. For parents to participate in the study the criterion was any parent and/or guardian who felt they could work with the researcher in the study and were identified by Head Teachers sending them letters of invitation. ECEC teachers were also identified by their Head Teachers. The schools were selected through a telephone interview with the Ward Education officers in the particular location. The criteria were only schools that had an attached ECEC setting and were accessible to the researcher. The selection of schools stopped when the researcher achieved participation of the two ECEC settings in each area that met the criteria.

Data Generation and Analysis

The current study reported in this paper was an interpretive inquiry, taking a case study approach [14, 15]. Data used for the analysis was from interviews carried out with each of the parents, Head Teachers, and classroom teachers. Parents were interviewed twice from 30 to 45 minutes in duration at a place of the parents’ choosing, either the family home or in the ECEC setting with appointments. Teachers were interviewed during break and lunch time for 40 to 50 minutes. The interviews used

a topic guide with the first interview focussed on their views and perceptions in relation to their ECEC services for their children and community well-being. Their views were sought on the provision of current ECEC services in the context of the family's use of services or programmes, and their participation in the classroom. The focus was on how the ECEC settings involved parents and families in the education of their child. The second interview was about examining the strategies that parents and their families employed to support their children's learning and development (i.e. self-regulated learning, socio-emotional learning, and promoting of positive relationships with teachers and adults and interactions with peers). The intention was to understand the strategies used by parents for promoting their child's learning and development including discussion of the roles of other family members, the role of the community and use of community resources such as playgrounds, and the ECEC setting and their child. The researcher wished to gain knowledge on how their support for their child could enhance positive outcomes for children and community well-being.

All the study participants gave their consent for the interviews to be digitally recorded and fully transcribed for analysis. To conceal the identity of the study participants, no names were recorded on the audio-tapes. Names used in this study are pseudonyms. However, to be safe during the interview, extensive notes were taken by the researcher and reviewed immediately afterwards. With the help of NVivo version 10 software developed by QSR International [16], the researcher coded all the data, addressing the research questions for each separate participant. An inductive and deductive thematic analysis [17, 18] was carried out. The data was grouped into the topical themes that emerged from the research questions, and performed for each participant separately. The topical themes were:

Theme 1: *The strategies which parents and their families employed to support their children's learning, development, and community well-being, with sub-themes including self-regulation skills, socio-emotional skills, and promoting of positive relationships with teachers/adults and interaction with peers.*

Theme 2: *How the early childhood education and care settings involved parents and families in the education of their child.*

This used two themes and three sub-themes that were

drawn from the research questions and data analysis.

To ensure consistency, information was coded by two researchers with each of the researchers contributing to the identification of the themes in a subset of the interviews and cross-checking the identification of themes recognised by the other researcher over the course of the analysis. To enhance accuracy the researcher reviewed the data analysis in detail to ensure that she had captured the participants' intended meanings and descriptions in relation to the research focus. In the quotes and constructs that are used to illustrate the findings, all names used are pseudonyms.

Ethics

Ethics approval for the study was obtained from the state government ECE Director's office and the regional education department in Tanzania. The procedures involved obtaining fully informed consent from ECE Directors, regional education officials, teachers, and parents. Participant confidentiality was protected through systematic anonymity of any potentially identifying material in data generated through interviews prior to analysis, and the use of codes and pseudonyms.

Findings

The findings presented in this section are mainly based on analysis of the interviews with the parents and families since their points of view are the main focus of this study. However, to make more clarity and understanding about the topic under study the findings were supplemented by Head Teachers and ECEC classroom teachers. The parents gave their views and understanding of the concept of ECEC services, and the wide range of strategies that they and their families used to support their children's learning and development. Head Teachers and ECEC teachers reported on how their settings involved parents in the education and development of their children.

The analysis is located under the two topical themes: *a first theme was about the strategies that parents and their families employed to support their children's learning, development, and community well-being, with sub- adults and interaction with peers. A second theme was about how the early childhood education and care settings/teachers involved parents and families in the education of their child.* Representative quotes have been given to clarify the points under discussion.

The strategies which parents and their families employed to support their children's learning and community well-being

This section is opening up by presenting the findings related to various strategies which parents and their families employed to support their children's learning and development.

Self-Regulation Skills

One of the most frequent strategies parents reported using in supporting their children was self-regulation skills. This usually consisted of building a specific routine within the home environment, whereby children were given different responsibilities, including tidying their bedrooms, taking a shower and brushing their teeth, assisting or carrying out chores within the family. Self-regulation refers to the child's ability to manage skills including socio-emotions skills, behaviours and mortal skills to enable them to take part actively within their environment (Gates & Guo, 2014; Smith et al., 2013). Parents felt that these activities helped children to develop their organisational skills and to become independent. They reported they did not go into the classroom and support children in linking home learning activities with the ECEC activities including cognitive skills. Quotes from three parents illustrate how they expressed this:

I guide my kid to clean after herself, I teach her basically to be responsible for her own materials, for instance, whatever she takes out, she puts it back. And I tell her that, I do not like to repeat many times for the same thing. So I basically do my best for her and her brothers and sisters to be independent, and responsible for their own stuff. Oh!.....Of course.....I do not know if I am allowed to go to the children's centre, otherwise I would love to go. [Karola, an urban mother/ Interview].

I and my wife, we encourage him to be independent so he knows like he has to clean his room before dinner so he knows that if the room is not clean, dinner is not being served until it is. Like a teeth brush and if he has not got her teeth brush it is her responsibility to remember where he puts the teeth brush. There are days that his mother had forgotten to put his lunch box in his school bag, and he said, Oh! Mom that is your job and his mother said, no, it is not my job. My job is to prepare a lunch but you need to remember to grab it off and put it in your school bag. So my suggestion to my fellow parents is, we should make

our children learn to be independent [Bernard, an urban father/Interview].

Yeah! I help him to wake up in the morning, taking shower, also he dresses school uniform on himself and do all those sorts of things and then off to school. His sister sometimes reminds him to take his exercise books and pencils for pre-school. Although we keep on informing that he has to remember collecting school stuffs for himself. No..... Here in the rural areas we parents are not going to the classroom, I am not sure for urban parents. But if I am told to go no problem, I will go to see what my kid do at the centre [Sela, a rural mother/Interview].

The above quotes indicate how parents tried to support their children at home with self-regulation and control and independence, to reinforce the child's confidence and so that they would be able to respond to similar situations in their future life. The support focused on building the child's confidence in solving problems, creativity, responsibilities and to build their own voices. The quotes from parents indicated that parents were not aware that they could go into the classroom but they showed interest in attending. This implies that the government, educational practitioners and ECEC teachers had not told parents about the importance of their involvement in their children's learning in the classroom context, so that they could link the home environments with that of the pre-school. This area needs to be addressed so that teachers and parents can collaborate in children's learning.

Socio-Emotional Skills

Another aspect parents mentioned in supporting their children's learning and development was socio-emotional development skills. Here, parents were concerned about assisting their child to develop skills related to forming and maintaining positive peer and adult relationships, as well as responding to challenges, or to hurtful or harmful behaviour from their peers. Essential strategies discussed by parents were spending time in the family talking, analysing what is happening within their community, and practising with their child how to respond to certain social situations they may encounter in their everyday lives including building friendships. In this way, families sought to support their child in building their social skills especially in relation to developing positive peer relationships. The following three quotes illustrate typical ways the parents expressed this:

Our kid now is a bit older, she is six years old, so we can actually sit her down and talk about things with her. You know in the rural areas many parents do not like their girls to attend schools, girls are there to get married and they view schools are for boys. But we are different; we need all our children to attend schools from kindergarten to higher levels. So what we do is just sit down and talk to her about how to live and make friends, good things and bad things ... about consequences and things like that. So we probably more talk about it as a family, with sisters and brothers ... [Rebeca, a rural mother].

Yes, we help him to deal with different situations whether good or bad....for example, one day our boy said, he had a friend at the pre-school centre who didn't want to play his games ... and his mother suggested why don't you suggest that one day you can do his play and then the next day he can do yours, and he said that he tried but it did not seem to work for himSo we suggested him to try to keep talking with his friend if still not working can speak with their teacher to assist. After one week he came home happy that they solved their misunderstandings. So I found myself happy, I saw my advice worked. So I think teachers should do this at the best by teaching our children how to make interactions on each other [Ezekiel, an urban father].

My child is not tolerant for whoever bored him, I know him very much, always when he comes back from the centre we find him disappointed or upset, he has a lot of issues happened at his pre-school centre with friends. So what I do with my family is just to talk with him how to handle issues and make good friends (We see our roles as) just giving him strategies, giving him ideas. That's going to be our role because as I said you cannot tell him what to do. We would like to see him be able to resolve issues and problems for himself. So our support to him is great because he was getting frightened here for a while until I spoke to his teacher and it got stopped. We think teachers also do a lot to make sure he is able to resolve problems with other peers, whether it is in a play or whatever [Neema, an urban mother].

In the findings, the researcher noted a clear consistency in the use of language relating to talking and acting when parents share their strategies for supporting their children's learning and development to achieve positive outcome. Their explanations often focused on what they do and how they act to improve their children.

Fathers and Mothers described various strategies that they used themselves, and some also talked explicitly about the family's involvement when talking with their child. In addition, some of the parents talked about actively working with the ECEC teachers to support their child. This implies how parents and teachers can work together to support children's development in order to enhance positive outcomes.

Promoting Positive Relationships with Teachers/Adults and Interaction with Peers

Another area where parents showed support for their children was with building positive relationship with adults and peers. During the interview parents talked about the benefits of the relationships their children had developed with peers and adults, especially ECEC teachers, and members of their extended family as well as other people in the wider community. The following two quotes illustrate the views:

Of course with her I would say, I probably eager to support her with what she does, what she sees and who she interacts too. Here in the village there are traditional ceremonies, I usually go with her because I am leading a group of local dancers and singers, and I am a professional dancer and singer, so my girl likes dancing so I just mix her with other kids and I usually see her relate to her peers and other adults peacefully. So I will make sure I support her dream on dancing and singing because she shows to love much more and I have already started on supporting her and she has many friends regardless their age. I am not sure if teachers teach traditional dances and songs for them. I they invite me I will enjoy singing and dancing with children [Agnes, rural mother].

I think it is good for our children to have other adults whom they can interact with without fear, so I and my family here we usually encourage our child to have a respect to all people. We parents should be close to our kids in order to know their interest and to talk to them how to get good friends, relationships, and how to be tolerant in case some friends bull them in one way or another. Building relationship with different people could help our kid in his future life and higher levels of schools. Although at home we are not teaching pre-school subjects learning activities, teachers do [Belito, an urban father].

From the above quotes it can be seen that parents

talked about the benefits of relationship building not only with peers but also with other adults. Parents narrated their support for children's social development and indicated the benefits for the larger community. They felt that building warm interactions made them grow with confidence and without fear, and this could be helpful for them within society. Children have the rights to express their views and opinions freely on all matters of concern to them and those views should be taken seriously. The development of respect for the child's parents and adults and his or her own cultural identity, values and language; development of friendship among all peoples needs to start from the home environment and then link to the ECEC setting. Some parents articulated a range of strategies they used within the family to try and support their child's learning and development. These strategies differed from one family to another according to the sociocultural context, including attitudes, feelings, values, and experiences of different families.

Parents seemed not to be involved in academic issues, and reported that teachers were responsible for teaching subject learning activities. This could not be right because children need to be guided in all aspects; their explanations showed that for them it was not a priority to teach their children cognitive skills. Overall, the findings indicate that parents were helping their children only in non-cognitive skills and thought that teachers were responsible for cognitive skills. This area needs to be addressed.

How the Early Childhood Education and Care Settings Involved Parents and Families in Education of their Child

This section presents results from Head Teachers and ECEC classroom teachers about the extent they involved parents and families in the education of their children in the ECEC settings. Head Teachers and classroom teachers in both locations reported they were not involving parents, families, and community in the teaching and learning of their children. In their teaching they focussed on cognitive skills such as writing, reading, and arithmetic (3Rs), following the instructions from the syllabus and the teachers' guide which seemed to be formal and structured. All teacher participants said that it was not common in their area to find parents in the classrooms. They were more involved in non-academic activities including building classrooms, maintenance, renovations, school meetings, and events. Quotes from three teachers

illustrate how they expressed this:

It is not easy to tell parents to come and support teaching in the classroom because it is not a common thing here. Parents are doing school-based manual activities such as building classrooms, maintenances, renovations, school meetings and events. Parents and community are the ones running these ECEC settings so they are struggling to raise their income for their family household and contribution to school development [Raphael, a rural Head Teacher].

I think we are not aware if parents can come and help us in teaching and learning of their children, and the ECEC settings have no playground in which they could come to help us in supervising children's play. No fences around the ECEC setting so all the time children remain in the classrooms. Teacher-child ratio is high, for example, in my class there are 75 children with a sole teacher and no teaching and learning materials [Roger, an urban classroom teacher].

Parents are running these settings and due to poverty they fail to contribute in monetary forms in order to buy teaching and learning materials. I think the government could introduce the system to allow parents to come in the classrooms to assist teachers with such overcrowded classrooms with a sole teacher [Albert, an urban Head Teacher].

I think parents cannot agree to come in the classroom because teachers are responsible for teaching, they would think they are wasting their time for doing their farms activities to raise their income. And parents did not attend teacher education how can they teach children [Michael, rural classroom teacher].

The analysis of these findings indicated that teachers conceptualised teaching as just cognitive learning such as writing, reading, and arithmetic (3Rs). None of the teachers mentioned teaching non-cognitive skills. Instead they questioned the professional expertise of parents, that they did not attend teacher education. These views may run counter to the principles of early years learning which needs to be spontaneous and according to children's needs and interests. This area needs to be addressed so that parents, teachers and adults, understand the role of collaboration between them in order to enhance a child's development and community well-being at large. As a matter of fact, some parents showed their interest in participating in the

ECEC settings if they were invited.

Furthermore, all parent participants in the rural and urban location mentioned their involvement and participation in various community activities such as school-based manual activities and events, parents' meetings, and contributions in monetary form. The following three quotes illustrate this point:

Yes....! Parents play a great role in ECEC settings. We are involved in various school-based activities such as attending parents' meetings, school events, volunteer works such as building and/or renovations and maintenances of classrooms, making desks and tables as well as money contribution in order to develop our children's settings. We are not involved in the classroom to see how our children learn, and I think it is not our roles but rather teachers' roles. [Alpher, an urban father].

The early childhood education and care services are not supported by the government. Parents and community run these settings through monetary contributions. School boards and parents committees had the role of making logistics on how to run the school development including making budget for school requirements such as buying text books, paying school security guard, and all other related needs to school development. The role of teaching our children belongs to teachers themselves. But I suggest the government to take roles of running pre-schools because not all parents manage to make contribution in monetary form [Belito, an urban father].

My husband is doing carpentry activities and I am doing farm activities in a communal form with my friends in order to raise our income. *"I used to grow sunflowers in previous years and harvest very little because sunflower in our area is very vulnerable to disease and poor farming methods. Last year I changed and grow maize but due to whether changes this year were very drought all crops have dried out. So what can I donate? I think my child will not continue with the pre-school"*. The government is not supporting education for young children [Tripho, a rural mother]. (The italic phrase was narrated two times with great feelings and emphasis).

Parents' data indicates that their engagement in the ECEC settings was through school-based activities and events and not in classroom contexts. Their involvement was in terms of paying fees, attending school meetings

and events, and school-based manual activities such as building classrooms, maintenance, renovations and furniture. Parents mentioned the local committees and school boards where some parents are representatives and they have roles of preparing a budget and making logistics on how the settings could be funded and conducted.

However, parents reported the difficulties the committees face in collection of money from the community and especially for parents who have no children at the ECEC settings and the other poor people. As a result parents with children at the settings found it was compulsory for them to contribute. Overall, if the local communities are important in the development of pre-school education, then proper logistics are needed to make sure that all community members participate in educational matters and not just parents with children in the ECEC settings.

Discussion

The aim of this article was to examine parents' engagement in ECEC and how their involvement may enhance child development and community well-being. So, the study examined different strategies used by parents and families to support their child's learning and development in the home environment, as well as their engagement in the pre-school settings. This study has explored both theoretical constructs and teaching and organisational strategies to increase parent engagement and positive learning outcomes for children and community well-being. Active parent, families, and teacher, participation in the ECEC setting is expected to enhance positive outcomes for children, their families and their community well-being [8, 19].

The findings indicated that for all of the parents, the concept of early childhood education and care had not been conceptualised as it should be, but rather parents thought it was an attendance of children at the ECEC settings and teachers taught them how to write, read, and arithmetic processes (3Rs). Parents described the range of supportive aspects, also identified in the literature, to guide their children in the non-cognitive skills in the home environment, especially self-regulation learning skills, socio-emotional learning skills, and promoting positive relationship with adults and peers [9, 19].

The focus of this paper has been on the strategies that parents reported that they and their families attempted to use with the intention of enhancing child's development and community well-being. Many of the parents reflected

in their interviews that they did not always succeed, and in light of this, they reported how they tried to ensure that their child had strong supportive relationships with peers and other adults outside the immediate family. Interestingly, parents also encouraged their child to be independent and to be involved in community events such as in the local dances and songs. The parents in this study encouraged their children not to be reliant on them and to interact with other adults and be involved in the community events. This finding is supported by Gates and Guo [19] who reported that the parents, especially mothers had a high level of communication with their children and encouraged their children to be self-reliant and confident

In addition, the findings have shown that in the Tanzanian situation, the ECEC settings are within the hands of the local administration, that is, Parents' Committees and School Boards. It was argued that the role of these two organisations is to ensure quality learning for children by maintaining buildings and grounds, providing plenty of quality learning resources, materials, and an emotionally safe teaching and learning environment with qualified teachers. The intention is to enable the child to enjoy a conducive teaching and learning environment. In the Tanzanian context this was difficult to accomplish, in the pre-schools in this study, building facilities were poor and not completed and the local community seemed unable to manage the provision of quality teaching and learning resources, let alone the donation in monetary form. It is at this point that the significance of government in prioritising working with ECEC settings and providing available resources can be particularly highlighted. Therefore, this study suggests that the government policy makers need to set clear policies regarding how ECEC could be funded and conducted.

The findings have shown that parents and community members were not happy about the required contribution in monetary form but did take part in school-based manual activities and events. When it came to their involvement in the actual teaching and learning activities, they reported not being aware that they were responsible for supporting their children's learning in the classrooms in collaboration with teachers. The few studies available in Tanzania, indicate that parents, family, and community involvement in ECEC in the classroom context was non-existent or unsuccessful [6, 20-22]. A study by Mtahabwa [21] on early child development and care in Tanzania indicates that parents' participation in ECEC was mainly through social matters including paying ECEC set fees. Parents' participation at the classroom level such as

storytelling, singing songs or collection of local materials for use by children was not evidenced. The researcher argues that involvement of parents and community in children's learning builds a strong connection with teachers and children, and this could help to identify learning difficulties and developmental delays in children, if any, and find joint efforts in addressing the problem. The finding of parents and community involvement in children's learning is supported by Ghirotto and Mazzoni [9] who suggest that parent and guardian's involvement in children's education is gradually viewed as an essential support to children's learning in ECEC programs and throughout the school years. Many writers report the participation of parents and families in their children's learning has been successful in developing the potential of children's development [8, 10].

This study suggests that changes need to be made by raising the awareness of parents as to their power and roles in children's learning. Scaffolding which supports children to move from their original way of knowing to greater development of their thoughts is one example. This technique refers to the guidance and interactional support given by an adult; teacher or knowledgeable peers in children's learning [23-26]. From socio-cultural perspectives scaffolding permits children to do as much as they can by themselves while what they cannot do is filled in by teachers, parents and others who are significant in children's activities, so that they utilize their *Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)* [26]. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) "is the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers [26].

To build and maintain active parents' participation in the ECEC settings required the government policy planners and educational administrators to provide a building to enable parents, families, community and teachers to strengthen their interactions and to encourage participation to achieve positive outcomes. These positive outcomes will be an increase in children's learning and independence, confidence within and among the parents, and parent participation in their children's learning experiences at the settings (Mitchell et al., 2008). The result will mean actively embedding the ECEC centres within the wider community which will support community development and community well-being, and strengthen parenting. These findings reframe our understanding of

ECEC services as child-centred, places with community-supported teaching and learning. This could lead to the design of focused and sustainable mechanisms to support the work of teachers and the confidence of parents in parenting.

The implications to be drawn from the foregoing are that ECEC practitioners and educational administrators should recognise the range of purposive strategies used with parents and families and seek ways of strengthening these, and working actively with parents to do this. This encourages a collaborative-based approach, rather than making any assumptions about deficits in parenting. The strategies discussed above for supporting self-regulation skills, socio-emotional skills, and relationship with adults and peers have demonstrated how parents actively carried this through in the home environment. Now a variety of means needs to be utilised to communicate parent's knowledge about their children to ECEC teachers. Exploring strategies used by parents offers valuable information about how activities in the ECEC settings might complement and reinforce the home environment to support learning and development of the children. This is particularly important at times when particular children are facing difficulties and adverse events, whether these occur in home, in pre-schools, or in the wider community setting.

There is a need for close collaboration between teachers, parents, and families and for teachers to encourage parents to attend the classroom context in order to share knowledge about the children with each other. Parents know their children best as they are with them for longer than teachers who are only with children for a short period of time. So there is a need for government policy planners and education administrators to support parents, families, and teachers through capacity building so that they all recognise the importance of working in a collaborative way in order to enhance a child's development and community well-being at large.

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