

MANAGING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY IN PRIMARY SCHOOL ASSESSMENTS BY MANAGING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

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KEY WORDS

pre-service teacher, contract cheating, parental engagement, K-12, teacher training

K-12 teachers have been challenged beyond measure during the COVID19 pandemic, not only because they had to rise to the occasion and deliver lessons remotely with little to no prior training, but they have had to face and deal with parents who have also been “in their classrooms”, something that wasn’t necessarily addressed in their pre-service training.

We have observed within K-12 sector in a Middle Eastern country that primary teachers grapple with the involvement of parents whether in a traditional classroom setting or during virtual lessons when assessing student work. While parents are crucial to the success of a primary student’s learning journey (Cooper, 2001; Pattal et al, 2008; van Voorhis, 2011), they can go beyond the point of acceptable support where they do the homework, the project and effectively are being assessed, rather than their child’s ability (Pomerantz, Ang and Ng, 2005; Hill and Tyson, 2009). Wei et al (2019) posited that such parental involvement and engagement is more prevalent in primary/elementary schools. Moreover, studies have shown that this kind of support from parents can hamper student growth as independent learners and impact their understanding of acceptable support when completing assessments (Pattal et al, 2008; Hill and Tyson, 2009).

This is a complex issue. When parents do the assessment for the children and then encourage them to present the work as their own, they are effectively teaching the children to accept others’ work as their own, to submit that work and get graded for it. This may very well be the basis for behaviour that in later

academic life will be termed as ‘contract cheating’. Moreover, teachers are faced with the dilemma of how to address this issue with school management, how to fairly grade such assessments and how to manage such parents.

This study carried forward the pilot case study by Khan and Mulani (2020) that highlighted how assessments sent to be completed at home garnered more contributions from parents while those completed at school were better tools to assess students’ learning.

Through review of open access higher education programs offered on teacher training in the country, we identified seven accredited university-programs that included topics such as discussing assessment designs, curriculum design, methods of consistency of judgement, feedback, even classroom management, leadership etc.

However, when we looked at primary schools in a Middle Eastern country and acquired teacher feedback to understand the barriers and challenges faced by teachers, the issues revolved around setting up and grading assessments that can ‘authentically’ assess student learning. The problems recorded ranged in areas such as assessment design, grading rubric, parents challenging projects done by parents and graded low.

Studies have shed light on the importance of teacher education that encompasses instruction and classroom management, particularly teachers’ professional development (Berliner, 1994; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Conway and Clark, 2003). However, we found that ‘classroom management’ does not necessarily

include managing parents, parents' expectations nor child's expectations with reference to parental involvement. The Singapore National Institute of Education's includes "service to the profession and community" as pillar of 21st century teacher attribute, however, does not include parents or parental involvement explicitly (UNESCO, 2021). Researchers have in fact posited the need for frameworks that extend beyond teachers to include stakeholders such as parents (Kirschner and Selinger, 2003).

Based on teacher feedback that help us understand the depth of the issues faced in the classroom, authors then propose a holistic framework as part of pre-service teacher training to help student teachers develop rubrics and clear instructions for 'authentic' assessment appropriate to student grade level in a manner that dissuades parental overt involvement, prepares pre-service teachers to manage student and parental expectations from assessments and most importantly to educate parents on the importance of independent learning of their children.

Through review of existing frameworks and informed by studies such as (1) Lim, Chai and Churchill

(2011) who propose a framework to pre-service teachers' competencies in using technologies, (2) National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (1999) that highlights importance of teachers to reflect about their practice and experience, (3) the study by Manasia, Ianos and Chicioteanu (2019) that provides a readiness model to prepare pre-service teachers for sustainable development and others, this study proposes a framework for pre-service teacher training based on strategic dimensions such as:

- Rethinking Assessment Instructions and Rubrics
- Recognising Parents as Integral Cogs of Student Development
- Managing Boundaries of Parental Involvement in Student Assessments
- Developing Communication and Partnership with Parents and Students
- Reflecting on Practice

The proposed framework aims to provide clear guidelines and examples from classroom scenarios to help pre-service teachers develop the required skills needed to establish and maintain integrity in primary classrooms in partnership with parents.

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