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¹ This famous Mossi (biggest tribe in Burkina Faso) saying was mentioned many times during the interviews by all participants. Translated to English it says literally: If somebody helps you to wash your back, you should not forget to wash your own face. Meaning that if there is somebody who helps you, you have to work harder to show you appreciate the help and that the help will not be lost.

ABSTRACT

In the year 1992 a child education project was initiated in Burkina Faso by C.RE.D.O. (Christian **R**elief and **D**evelopment **O**rganization). This project sponsors disadvantaged children, to make it possible for them to attend school and improve their future living circumstances. However, the involvement of parents in the project and in the education of their child leaves much to be desired. To examine the causes of this perceived lack of parental involvement and what the parents need to improve this situation, multiple methods were used. During February and March 2009 interviews were conducted with parents, teachers and school directors at 11 schools in Burkina Faso and useful C.RE.D.O. documents and information were obtained as background information. According to the parents, they lacked sufficient and relevant information from C.RE.D.O. on the project and on possibilities to become more involved. The parents were not aware that C.RE.D.O. valued their involvement. Furthermore, all informants indicated that poverty also inhibits parental participation. A lack of food, and a lack of means to efficiently provide for enough food, is one of the main concerns parents have that keeps them from involving themselves in the education of their child. To increase parental involvement the parents need more stimulating information from C.RE.D.O. on the project and especially on possibilities to become involved. Next to this, the poverty of the parents has to be tackled to make improvement of involvement possible.

INTRODUCTION

C.RE.D.O. and the Sponsorship Project

Half of the population of Burkina Faso has no access to basic social services, including education (Ki & Ouedraogo, 2006). Even though education is recognized as a fundamental right for each citizen and regarded as a main instrument in poverty alleviation and the development of Burkina Faso (Hoppers, 2007). Unfortunately the government in Burkina Faso is not able to meet the educational needs of the population. Instead, NGO's are trying to fill the educational gap (Michener, 1998) (Appendix 1.). One of these NGO's is C.RE.D.O. (Table 1.).

Table 1. C.RE.D.O. sponsorship project compared with other projects.

Organization	Start of program	Number of sponsored children	Intervention areas	Approach
BORNEfonden	1995	12.000	Education, healthcare, income generating activities, wellbeing community	Community
Plan Burkina	1976	45.040	Health, water resources and hygiene, education, promotion of children's rights	Community
Compassion	2004	18.000	Education, healthcare, holistic program	Individual Child
CCFC	1997	8.000	Education, water sanitation and hygiene, health and nutrition, sustainable livelihood development, capacity building	Community
C.RE.D.O.	1992	4.133	Education, healthcare	Individual Child

C.RE.D.O. (Christian **R**elief and **D**evelopment **O**rganization) strives to empower disadvantaged people by creating better life circumstances for them. The organization developed several projects for different target groups. All the projects are aimed at empowering disadvantaged people by improving their living circumstances (Van 't Rood, 2007).

One of these projects is the Sponsorship Project (Le Projet de Parrainage). The objective of this project is to empower school age children from disadvantaged families by creating favorable conditions for access to education. The main objective has been divided into three specific objectives: 1) to make quality education accessible for disadvantaged children, 2) to ensure the success of at least 80% of the sponsored children and 3) to encourage the children and their parents to take (more) responsibility in their lives (Van 't Rood, 2007).

The last specific objective was formulated following an evaluation of the project in 2007 (Van 't Rood, 2007). The general conclusion of this participative evaluation was that *participatory approaches* needed to be introduced, to ensure the sustainability of the sponsorship project. Through participatory approaches greater accountability and empowerment should be accomplished among the children and their parents, which will increase the long term effectiveness of the project (Van 't Rood, 2007). Presently, the participation and involvement of the parents with the project is very minimal. This reflects negatively on the objectives of the project, especially the third specific objective.

According to scientific literature parental involvement in the education of their child stimulates the school success of children (Adeyemo, n.d.; Georgiou & Tourva, 2007; Lee & Bowen, 2006), improves the quality of education (Bergmann, 1996) and the capacity of the community to carry on with the program after the initial help has left (Kendall, 2007).

Moreover, Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) point out that parents themselves also acquire skills and knowledge by being involved. Van ‘t Rood (2009) states that involving parents in the education of their child positively influences both the empowerment of the child and the empowerment of the parents themselves, which in turn leads to ownership and a more sustainable project. In the appendix a further elaboration can be found on the importance of parental involvement considering the three specific objectives of the C.RE.D.O. sponsorship project (Appendix 2).

Parental school involvement has the potential to improve the sponsorship project in several ways. Therefore the present study will examine the cause of the perceived lack of involvement of the parents and how this can be changed.

The above leads to the following research questions:

1. Why are the parents not involved in the education of their child?
2. What is, according to parents/teachers/key informants, necessary to make the parents more involved with the school/project?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

What is parental involvement?

Parental involvement in the education of their children is not an easy concept to define. It is characterized by a broad range of possible activities (Georgiou, 1997). Kuperminc, Darnell and Alvarez-Jiminez (2008) describe parental involvement ‘as the degree to which a parent dedicates resources of time and energy to his or her child in a given developmental or educational domain’ (p 470). Georgiou and Tourva (2007) add that involvement of the parent in the educational domain is linked to activities both at school and at home.

According to Georgiou (1997) individual parents can be placed on a parental involvement continuum that ranges from non-existent or very low, to very active participation. The way parents participate depends on their other activities, like work, and their living conditions (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Kuperminc et al., 2008). Poverty, for instance, limits the involvement of parents in the education of their child (Mundy et al., 2007).

The most extensive and specific definition of parental involvement in the educational domain is the one stated by Epstein et al. (1997). They propose five dimensions of parental

involvement: parenting (the establishment of a home environment that supports children as students), helping with homework, communicating with the school, volunteering at school and participation in school decision making. These five dimensions represent a diversity of activities, ranging from providing the child's basic needs, like food, shelter and safety (Fantuzzo, Tighe & Childs, 2000) to guiding and motivating the child to work hard, coming to school to talk about the achievement of the child, volunteering at activities at school and becoming a member of the parent association (Onikama, Hammond & Koki, 1998). This definition of parental involvement from Epstein et al. (1997) will be used in this study.

How can parental involvement be improved?

Whether parents get involved in the education of their children depends on three variables, according to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995). The first two variables include the motivational beliefs of the parent concerning involvement. The third variable concerns the invitations parents get from others, like their child or the school, to become involved.

The first motivational belief considers the personal construction of the parenting role. Parents are likely to become involved in their child's education if they see this as part of their parenting role. The personal construction of the parental role in the education of their child, mainly depends on the parents own observation of his immediate environment. The way family and friends take up the parenting role and their level of involvement in the education of their children influences the way the parent construes his own parenting role (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). How parents see their role in the education of their child is a critical, but not sufficient aspect of becoming involved (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Bird, 2003). Parents must act on the parenting role they construct to actually become involved. To have an idea about the appropriate role is not enough to carry out the relevant behaviour.

According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995), parents need to have the idea that they have the skills and possibilities to exert the expected behaviour. They state that the second motivational belief is the personal sense of efficacy to help the child succeed in school. The parent has to believe that his involvement will be helpful to the child, the school and/or himself and that he has the capacity to exert that behaviour. The perceived (self-) efficacy of the parent is shaped by: direct experiences of the parent in earlier situations of involvement, experiences of significant others (family or friends) in similar situations of involvement, verbal persuasion of significant others that involvement is meaningful and emotional arousal of the parent when it comes to the well-being of his child (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

The third influence on parental involvement Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) recognize, are invitations from important others to become involved. These invitations are key motivators for parents to become involved, especially when the invitation comes from the school in general, the teachers or their own child(ren). The invitations are vital for becoming involved, because they tell parents that their involvement in the child's education is welcomed, valued and expected by the school (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

A behavioural change theory: The ASE-model

To make the parents more involved with the sponsorship project and in the education of their child, their present attitude and behaviour needs to be changed. However, it is not easy to change attitude and behaviour. Several scientific theories exist about behavioural change. One of the models that is assumed to have integrated different behavioural change theories is the ASE-model (De Vries, Dijkstra & Kuhlman, 1988; De Vries, 1993). The three main determinants why parents become involved in their children's education mentioned above, are consistent with the three factors for behavioural change defined by the ASE-model. According to this model the behaviour of parents originates in the motivation or intentions they have (De Vries et al., 1988; De Vries, 1993).

Parental intentions concerning the school career of their children originates in how these parents think about the consequences of the behaviour that is brought forward by these intentions. The intentions of the parents are determined by three factors: **A**ttitude, **S**ocial Influence and **E**fficacy expectation (De Vries et al., 1988; De Vries, 1993). Together with the above discussed results of earlier research on parental involvement, the three factors can be characterized as follows for the present study:

Attitude (A): Do the parents have the necessary knowledge and how positive are they about becoming more involved with the schooling of their children and the consequences of this behaviour (pro's and con's)? This depends significantly on how parents construct their parenting role. If parents believe they have a role in the education of their child they are more likely to become involved (Georgiou & Tourva, 2007).

Social influence (S): How positive are others about parental involvement in their children's school career (social norms, perceived behaviour, -opinions and -support of others)? Invitations are an important influence on becoming involved. If parents receive invitations to become involved, they feel their involvement is appreciated and meaningful (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Moreover, other people in the immediate environment

of the parents need to value and support their involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Efficacy expectation (E): Do the parents expect themselves to be able to show the proposed behaviour, do they assume they have the opportunity to show the intended behavior (possibilities, skills)? The efficacy expectation of parents determines if they think themselves able to exercise the desired behavior or action (Adeyemo, n.d.).

All three aspects of the ASE-model have to be taken into account to change the attitude and behaviour of the parents effectively. This means for instance that behavioural change is improbable when only the attitudes of the parents are tackled (De Vries et al., 1988; De Vries, 1993; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Bird, 2003).

A process of empowerment

The term 'changing behavior' could indirectly define the present parental involvement as deficit. It could put the present lack of involvement in a light of parental failure. However, doing so would neglect the influence of contextual (community) factors. Parental behaviour is not an isolated object. Contextual circumstances, such as socio-economical and demographic factors, and a lack of relevant skills, could form barriers within the ASE-model. Parental behavior is not only influenced by the intentions parents have. External factors could prevent motivated parents to put words into action. An empowerment view on parental involvement considers these contextual factors (Kellaghan, et al., 1993 in Shepard and Rose, 2005).

Empowerment is an end in itself, as well as a means to an end. It can be seen as a process to reach a certain goal, like improved parental involvement in the education of their child. A process of empowerment does not seek to change parents. Its goal is to give parents the necessary tools to overcome contextual barriers, like poverty, which will enable them to better manage the education of their child (Shepard and Rose, 2005).

According to Van 't Rood (2009), empowerment can be seen as a redistribution of power towards self-organization. This redistribution of power considers all societal opportunities and needs and is not supposed to limit anybody's freedom. To assure this, the redistribution needs to be negotiable by all the people involved. Satisfying participation in such negotiations for transformation requires people to possess certain knowledge, skills and behavior. People need to be able to organize themselves towards self-identified goals. Moreover, people should be capable to mobilize the necessary resources for this self-organization in order to initiate their own process of empowerment. Empowerment can

therefore be defined as ‘*the capacity of people to direct and control their own lives and resources: the ability to take their lives into their own hands*’ (Van ‘t Rood, 2009).

Swick and Graves (1993, in Shepard and Rose, 2005) state that empowered parents are able to make effective use of their resources, can effectively solve their problems and communicate productively with others. However, to decrease the chance of a misuse of power, empowerment should be oriented towards the development of a *caring, responsible and safe* environment (Van ‘t Rood, 2009). Hereby the capacity of *care* entails the achievement of parents of the necessary knowledge on roles, rights and duties to become more involved. A *responsible* parent should be able to understand and reflect on his/her beliefs, motivation and rights and duties. Moreover, the capacity of *safety* should enable the parents to become involved effectively. It includes the strengthening of behavior and the achievement of skills and attitudes to create physical (shelter, food, health) and social security (Van ‘t Rood, 2009). Empowered parents are able to make effective use of their resources (Swick and Graves, 1993 in Shepard and Rose, 2005).

The competences of *care* and *responsibility* show similarities with the definitions of one of the determinants of the earlier discussed ASE model. The determinant ‘Attitude’ refers also to knowledge and evaluation on proposed behavior. Therefore these three factors will be integrated and redefined into one determinant with the label ‘Attitude’: Do the parents have the necessary knowledge on roles, rights and duties to become more involved with the schooling of their children. And how do they reflect on parental involvement, the consequences of this behaviour and their own beliefs, motivation, rights and duties?

The present study will be conducted following the above mentioned theoretical model, combining the ASE-model with the empowerment theory. Van ‘t Rood (2009) states that the three competences of the theory of empowerment, *care, responsibility and safety* can be identified by asking three specific questions: *what, why (purpose) and how?* The first question (*what?*) refers to the competence of care and is able to reveal the activities people care about. By asking ‘why’ the importance of the activities can be indicated. This question is connected to the competence of responsibility. The third question (*how?*) concerns the activity of safety and refers to how to master the activity at hand, in this case parental involvement. These questions make it possible to get an overview of people’s attitude or opinion about parental involvement and an idea of the parents self organization in order to empower themselves.

METHOD

The current parental involvement in the education of their child and the possibilities for improvement of involvement were studied using a multi level and a multi-method approach. During February and March of 2009 interviews with parents, teachers and school directors were conducted at 11 schools throughout Burkina Faso. Next to this, useful C.RE.D.O. information and documents were obtained.

Parents, teachers and school directors

Participants

The sponsorship project supports children at a total number of 18 primary schools within five regions in Burkina Faso. A selection of 11 schools was made, making a distinction between schools in the city centre and schools outside the city centre, including at least one school of each region. Moreover, the three C.RE.D.O. schools were specifically included as opposed to regular schools. The three C.RE.D.O. schools were developed by C.RE.D.O. whereas the 'regular schools' already existed before C.RE.D.O. implemented their intervention. Next to the teachers and the directors of the selected schools, 15 parents were randomly invited to participate in the interview. The eventual number of parents that actually attended the meeting varied greatly among the different schools (Table 2).

Table 2. Overview of participants

Schools	Total number of parents in interview group	Men	Women	Teachers and Director	City centre	Outside city centre
Ev. De Koudougou	18	8	10	8	X	
Tenado	10	4	6	5		X
Geswende	18	1	17	8	X	
Betsaleel	12	2	10	6	X	
Wubiton	8	2	6	3		X
Sakwende	40	10	30	9		X
Ev. de Po	13	5	8	5	X	
Ev. de Yako	9	5	4	4	X	
Complexe Baraka*	61	27	34	6	X	
Cren de Kayero*	8	8	0	6		X
Berekia*	20	16	4	1	X	

*C.RE.D.O. school

Moreover, background information was obtained by interviewing different members of the C.RE.D.O. staff. First of all, three members that are responsible for education at the office level were interviewed. More interviews were conducted during the fieldwork, with

four local coordinators who are more practically involved in the project. Their assumed overview position of the situation could make their point of view valuable information to the study at hand.

Procedure

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the parents of the sponsored children, the teachers and directors of the selected schools. The parents were interviewed as a group, as well as the teachers and the school director. The interview questions followed after an introduction of the people present, the subject to be discussed and an indication of the order of the interview. Both the introduction, the questions and the responses were translated from English to French and/or local languages.

A pilot study was set up to ensure the interview questions were understandable and not obtrusive or too demanding for the participants. In practice, the changes that were made after the two pilot interviews were only minimal. Therefore the data of the two pilot study schools could be added to the other results.

Measurement instruments

The interviews for the three different target groups regarded the determinants attitude, social influence, efficacy expectation and barriers of the ASE-model and the competences of care, responsibility and safety of the empowerment theory, which can be identified by the three questions: what, why and how?

Attitude

The determinant ‘Attitude’ regards the aspects of *care and responsibility* and can therefore be identified by asking ‘*what*’ and ‘*why*’.

In order to discover ‘*what*’ parental involvement is according to the participants, two questions were posed: “How are you/the parents involved with the school now?” And: “In what other ways could you/the parents contribute to the education/school of your child?” To find out the opinion of the participants about the purpose of parental involvement, the following question was asked: “Why is it important that you/parents are involved with the school?”

Social Influence

No specific question was designed to acquire information about the social influences on behavior. This was done because this topic is an easy target for social desirable answers. To avoid this, social influence was taken into account through attention marks with each question. When the subject was not automatically put forward, asking extra questions could help with identifying the influence of the environment. An exception was made for the influence of C.RE.D.O. as intervening organization and initiator of this study. An explicit question was posed about the relation of the participant with C.RE.D.O. as organization.

Efficacy Expectation

Similar to the determinant 'social influence', the efficacy expectation of the parents was taken into account implicitly through attention marks. This aspect was expected to be especially noticeable with the questions "In what other ways could you/the parents contribute to the education/school of your child?" and the final proposed question "What do you/the parents need/has to change to become more involved?" When people are able to identify appropriate behavior they do not exercise and indicate they need something to change this, it means that without these changes they do not think of themselves as capable to exercise the expected behavior.

Barriers

The 'barriers' regard the competence *safety* and can therefore be identified by asking 'how'. Barriers for effective improvement of parental involvement can be indicated by the last already mentioned question: 'What do you/the parents need/has to change to become more involved with the school?'

Analysis

The interviews of the parents and teachers/director were analyzed question by question. For each question the answers were categorized into different themes. The number of themes depended on the answers given. After defining all the themes for each question the number of times a specific theme was mentioned was counted. In accordance with the themes some relevant quotes were selected. The interviews of the parents and teachers/director were analyzed separately. However, a comparison was made after the analysis to see if the answers were consistent with or contradictory to each other.

This comparison was made to assess social desirability and to ensure completeness of the information obtained. By interviewing all groups involved in the sponsorship project

different views could be taken into account on the subject of parental involvement. This enables the study to produce more valuable information, especially when the different interviews reveal the same issues and problems.

RESULTS

Socio-economical background

Parents

Half of the population of Burkina Faso has no access to basic social services, such as drinking water, health-care and education. This prevents this part of the population from making a solid contribution to the development of the country (Ki & Ouedraogo, 2006). Moreover, approximately 90% of the population is involved in agricultural work, which is vulnerable to periodic drought (CIA World Fact Book, 2009). The parents involved in the sponsorship project of C.RE.D.O. are part of this population. They live on less than US \$ 1 per day, which is below the national poverty threshold (Ki & Ouedraogo, 2006).

Teachers

The living and working conditions of teachers are very poor. There is a lack of appropriate housing for teachers, the school environment is unattractive and the teaching materials are often inadequate (Ki & Ouedraogo, 2006). Furthermore, interviews with C.RE.D.O. staff revealed that the background education of teachers, especially in rural areas, is very limited. Their teaching qualities are poor and they have almost no experience in teaching children.

Relation participants and C.RE.D.O.

Parents

For the majority of the parents the interview was their first meeting with C.RE.D.O.. At one school the parents saw this as an indication that they had no real relationship with C.RE.D.O.. However, at most schools the parents felt that the meeting was beneficial and encouraging to become more involved in the education of their child.

Despite the lack of meetings with C.RE.D.O., most of the parents had a solid idea of what C.RE.D.O. was doing for their child through the sponsorship project. However, the contribution of C.RE.D.O. to the health of the sponsored children does not seem clear to the parents. At some schools parents said that C.RE.D.O. takes care of their child when he is sick,

whereas at other schools parents mentioned that help with healthcare was occasional and irregular. Although the yearly medical check-up of the sponsored children was commonly acknowledged.

The sponsorship project led parents at four schools to leave the care for their child in C.RE.D.O.'s hands. A father at Evangelique de Tenado said:

'...I am grateful, C.RE.D.O. supports my child since last year and that is very good, I leave the care for my child to C.RE.D.O., that is all I have to say...'

However, not all the parents agreed with this view on the relationship with C.RE.D.O.. At six schools the parents stated that they were grateful for the help given by C.RE.D.O., but also realized they have their own responsibility concerning the education of their child.

Teachers

The teachers had difficulties in defining their relationship with C.RE.D.O. and in describing what C.RE.D.O. does. However, almost all the teachers mentioned that the training they receive from C.RE.D.O. is very beneficial to them. It was said that these training sessions help them to improve their job. Most of the teachers thought of the project as beneficial for the children in the first place and for them or the school in the second place. However, they acknowledged their relationship with C.RE.D.O. is good.

Present parental involvement

Parents

The parents mentioned a broad range of involvement activities, regarding both involvement at school and at home. The most obvious way of involvement seemed to be participating in the parent association. At ten schools parents said that they contributed financially to the parent association and two fathers mentioned that they were member of the association. Moreover, a lot of parents, except the parents at two schools in Ouagadougou centre, said to contribute products or wood to the school canteen, to clean the schoolyard and built shelters for the children.

At ten of the schools the parents said they follow their child at home, by checking his copybooks. At all schools, except one, parents mentioned they encourage their child to make his homework and learn his lessons. Another aspect parents at seven schools mentioned is that

they sometimes come to school to ask the teacher about the results of their child and to inform the teacher when their child is ill.

Teachers

At at least half of the schools the response of the teachers contradicted the answers given by the parents. One teacher at Geswende, Ouagadougou, commented that:

'...Some parents are more interested in the education of their children than others, it is like in normal life, some are more interested in one subject than in another...'

The teachers did not agree on the causes of the differences in involvement, some said it is because the parents experience a lack of means, others said it is because of unwillingness and ignorance of the parents.

At most schools parents seemed to come to school to talk to the teachers, but mainly when the test results are known and not during the rest of the year. Some of the parents are only interested in the results of their children and not in the difficulties the children might face with their education. At four schools the teachers mentioned that there are also parents who are not at all interested in the education of their child. According to these teachers, these parents think that C.RE.D.O. takes care of their child.

Importance of parental involvement

Parents

At all the schools parents had a general idea about why their involvement in the education of their children is important. First of all, the parents said that education is important for their children and themselves to guarantee a better future. This was explicitly mentioned at nine schools. At eight schools parents stated that the care of their children is first of all their responsibility, including taking care of the education of the child. At half of the schools the parents mentioned that the child has to study at home to be successful in school, because there is no time to learn the lessons at school completely. According to parents at eight schools they are obliged to be involved, because their child is being sponsored by C.RE.D.O.. At four schools the parents illustrated this with a Mossi (biggest tribe in Burkina Faso) saying:

'...Ned sân sêdegd f pooré, bi fo me widg f nenga...'

This saying means literally that if somebody helps you to wash your back, you should not forget to wash your own face. Meaning that if there is somebody who helps you, you have to work harder to show you appreciate the help and that the help will not be lost.

There was one school (Complexe Baraka, Bobo-Dioulasso) where it was noticeable that the parents had been sensitized about the importance of parental involvement. This school has been developed by C.RE.D.O. and the parents were involved in the development from the start. The parents had established two associations, a parent association and a mother association. The number of parents attending the meeting was enormous (Table 2.) and there seemed to be less problems at this school concerning the involvement of the parents compared to other schools.

At Berekia in Leo on the other hand, it was clear that the parents had no idea about the importance of parental involvement and the way they could be involved in the education of their child. This school just started, only had one class and no building of its own. The contrast between the answers of these parents and the parents at Complexe Baraka were significant considering awareness of involvement possibilities.

Teachers

The view of the teachers about the importance of parental involvement was consistent with that of the parents. At six schools the teachers mentioned that parental involvement is important because the child has to learn and be followed at home to be successful. According to a teacher at Geswende, Ouagadougou:

‘...At school there is no time to study, there is only time for the lesson, but no time to practice the lesson and memorise it. Therefore the child has to study at home and the teacher cannot visit all the children at home to check if they are studying. That is the duty of the parents...’

At seven schools the teachers saw the parents as responsible for their child’s life and his education. Some of these teachers also mentioned the Mossi saying. At two schools the teachers and director mentioned that involvement of the parents is very important, because the development of a child is influenced by the parents, the school and the child himself.

Other possibilities for parental involvement

Parents

At five schools the parents directly indicated that they did not know in what other ways they could contribute or be involved more. A 'lack of means' was the main reason given for not being able to come up with other ways of being involved in the education of their child.

At half of the schools, the parents stated that the child needs enough food to perform well at school and that they therefore would keep trying to give their child food in the morning and in the evening. Another often made suggestion was coming to school more often to tell and ask the teachers about their children and to show the child that they care about his education.

Teachers

Almost all the teachers agree that the parents could come to school more, to ask for and give information about the child. Moreover, the majority of teachers stated that parents should give their children more time at home to study and check their homework. A teacher at Evangelique de Yako:

'...Parents have to give their children 'passion for their schoolwork', they have to encourage them to work hard in class...'

A majority of the teachers mentioned that parents should do their best to feed the child in the morning, to motivate the child and make sure he is in good condition. At one school the teachers suggested that parents could become more involved by attending parent meetings. A teacher at another school mentioned that parents could facilitate and be valuable to the curriculum of the school. It was said that the children could learn a lot from the practical experience parents have.

Necessary for improving parental involvement

Parents

At nine schools, the parents suggested that their involvement could improve if their problem of food insecurity is solved. They mentioned the provision of enough food as their first concern. However, one of the fathers at Evangelique de Koudougou argued that giving food to the families is not the solution to the problem:

'...We talked about giving food to the parents, but I think it would be better to develop some activities with which parents can earn money...'

Instead of directly giving food to the families, parents also came up with other solutions to solve the problem of food insecurity. At ten schools parents said they need a financial contribution to develop income generating activities for women. Parents at five schools mentioned that all the fathers are farmers and that better tools to work on the land could help them to increase the production. A father in Po raised the issue as follows:

'...We need more commitment from C.RE.D.O., their attention is focused on the individual child, but they forget the environment of the child. Even though a lot of children grow up in extreme poverty and difficult circumstances...'

At four schools parents said that they need more meetings and information to become more involved. A mother at Betsaleel, Ouagadougou stated:

'...At this time we do not contribute because nobody asked us to contribute. But if somebody asked us, we could contribute...'

In addition, a lot of parents indicated that they need more information about the sponsorship project in general.

Parents at three schools asked for literacy courses for themselves, to enable them to help their children. However, not all the parents agreed on this, some mentioned that it would be too much to ask after 20 years of no education at all.

Teachers

The answers given by the teachers are in accordance with the suggestions of the parents themselves. At seven schools the teachers explicitly mentioned that the main problem parents are facing is a lack of means. Teachers at six schools said that the parents need food at home to feed their children. To get more means teachers at seven schools suggested to give parents a financial contribution to develop income generating activities. At three schools teachers said that the fathers need better tools to work on the land. A teacher at Baraka, Bobo Dioulasso stated:

'...There is a need for money, with money parents can develop income generating activities next to their

activities as a farmer. Because when the rain season is over most of the parents are at home waiting for the rain to come again. How can they feed their child when they sit at home and do nothing...?'

Teachers at four schools said that C.RE.D.O. should think about improving the living conditions of the child, because the achievement of a child at school is heavily influenced by the situation at home. At Geswende, Ouagadougou, teachers said that the achievements of sponsored children were lower than that of other children and that this was mainly due to the difficult circumstances at home.

Teachers also gave their concern about the other children in the school that were not sponsored. At five schools it was mentioned that all the children live in the same difficult circumstances and that it would help if C.RE.D.O. could sponsor all the children at the school.

At seven schools teachers mentioned that the parents need sensitization on the importance of education and parental involvement. A teacher at Cren de Kayero, Leo, said:

'...Sensitization is the most important thing that needs to happen right now to get the parents more involved in the education of their child...'

Next to sensitization, four schools stated that there should be more meetings with parents of the sponsored children. At three schools it was mentioned illiteracy makes it more difficult for the parents to get involved in the education of their child. The teachers suggested literacy courses for the parents, to enable them to help their children at home with their homework and to check their copybooks.

Results regarding the ASE-empowerment model

The following paragraph will discuss the results of the study according to the ASE-empowerment model proposed in the theoretical background of this study. An interpretation of the results according to this model will enable the study to draw practical conclusions and discuss implications for the C.RE.D.O. sponsorship project regarding the situation on parental involvement. The attitude, social influence and efficacy expectation of the parents will be discussed, as well as the possible barriers that prevents them from becoming involved.

Attitude

The results indicated that the parents had some idea of the possible roles they could play in the education of their child, but especially lacked knowledge on their rights and duties.

According to the teachers the parents are often not aware of the importance of education and the contribution they ought to make. The parents themselves did not indicate a complete lack of awareness. Although they seemed to recognize the value of education and often showed a willingness to invest in the education of their child, parents were not aware of the ways to participate. The fact that parents are unaware of the possibilities to participate combined with their other daily activities and worries, makes involvement in the education of their child not one of the parent's priorities.

Social influence

The environment of the parents within the C.RE.D.O. sponsorship project, like family members and neighbors, does not have a particular negative attitude towards education and parental involvement. The most immediate environment does not deny the importance of education. However, they do not prioritize or encourage it either; other daily activities are more valued and supported.

On the contrary, the wider environment emphasizes the importance of education. Both the schools and C.RE.D.O., consider education and parental involvement to be of great value for children and their parents. However, C.RE.D.O., does not share this opinion explicitly with the parents by informing or inviting them. All together, due to different reasons, both the immediate and wider environment do not explicitly support the parents to become involved.

Efficacy expectation

The parents indicated that they lack the means and literacy to participate in the education of their child effectively. They only partly expect themselves to be capable of participating in the education of their child. The teachers shared this view of the parents. Most of them indicated that illiteracy influences the efficacy expectation of the parents.

Barriers

Both the teachers and the parents themselves indicated several barriers that could prevent parents from becoming more involved in the education of their child. They all mentioned that the present lack of information on the importance of education and on the possibilities for parental involvement keeps the parents from becoming (more) involved. Moreover, the teachers and the parents themselves indicated that a lack of food, and a lack of means to efficiently provide for their basic needs, is one of the main concerns parents have that keeps them from involving themselves in the education of their child. Lastly, the parents

consider their illiteracy to be a barrier in effectively helping their children with their schoolwork and in effectively communicating with the teachers. Moreover, both the parents and the teachers raised their concern about the home situation of the children. They stated that the home environment has a major influence on the performance of children in school and that it would be beneficial when the sponsorship project could also show concern for the home situation of the child.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In the year 1992 a child education project was initiated in Burkina Faso by C.RE.D.O. (Christian Relief and Development Organization). This project sponsors disadvantaged children, to make it possible for them to attend school and improve their future living circumstances. However, the involvement of parents in the project and in the education of their child leaves much to be desired. To examine the causes of this perceived lack of parental involvement and what the parents need to improve this situation, multiple methods were used. During February and March 2009 interviews were conducted with parents, teachers and school directors at 11 schools in Burkina Faso and useful C.RE.D.O. documents and information were obtained as background information. The interviews with the parents, teachers and school directors, revealed two main reasons why parents are not involved in the education of their child. According to the parents, they lacked sufficient and relevant information from C.RE.D.O. on the project and on possibilities to become more involved. The parents were not aware that C.RE.D.O. valued their involvement. Furthermore, all informants indicated that poverty also inhibits participation.

Limitations

Several limitations have to be kept in mind when considering the results of this study. The language barrier between the researchers and the participants could have influenced the outcome of the interviews. Especially where the interviews had to be translated from a local language into French and then to English. The extensive translations could have distorted the answer originally given by the participant. Also, the concern is raised that the parents who attended the meeting and actively participated were already more involved compared to the parents who did not actively participate in the meeting or who did not attend at all. This could imply that the obtained information is incomplete and could explain why the parents seemed to regard their present involvement more positively than other key informants did. Finally, it

has to be added that the interviews with the teachers and the school director could often be characterized by silence and the need to reframe and repeat questions. At most schools only one or two teachers responded, leaving the school director to give the majority of the answers. This could be caused by a lack of knowledge on and experience with C.RE.D.O. and the subject of parental involvement or by their relative position to power.

Although these limitations have to be kept in mind, they do not pose real threats to the validity of the study. The language barrier was an issue with all the interviews and can therefore be regarded as not influential on the validity. Moreover, research was conducted at multiple levels and multiple methods were used to gather the needed information. This process is also known as triangulation. Triangulation can counter all threats to validity. It reduces inappropriate certainty and enhances interpretability (Robson, 2004). By interviewing not only the parents but also the teachers and school directors the data could be compared and differences could be accounted for. The interviews with the teachers and parents revealed the same issues and problems with parental involvement, despite the difficulties the interviews faced. The outcomes of the interviews can therefore be seen as useful information for the study at hand. Next to this, useful information from C.RE.D.O. was obtained for background information and to verify the findings from the interviews. The different interviews and documents also added positively to the information given in the interviews with parents and teachers. Therefore, despite the limitations, two main conclusions remain.

Two main conclusions

First of all, the parents within the C.RE.D.O. sponsorship project do not receive enough information from C.RE.D.O. on the implications of the sponsorship project and the possibilities to become involved. Secondly, a lack of food and a lack of means to efficiently provide for food does not only influence the believes of parents concerning their involvement, it also has direct practical implications on the opportunities for parents to become involved.

Parental involvement has the potential to empower both children and parents. However, the main conclusions of this study indicate that there are two obstacles that prevent parents from becoming involved effectively and thus from becoming empowered. This disempowering effect forms a clear contrast with the empowerment vision C.RE.D.O. shows in the objectives of the sponsorship project. To ensure the long-term effectiveness of the sponsorship project, the involvement of the parents needs to be improved.

Parents need more and stimulating information

Currently it is not obvious to the parents within the C.RE.D.O. sponsorship project that the organization values their involvement. A positive attitude towards parents could make them more aware that C.RE.D.O. wants them to participate. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) state that a critical element of a positive attitude are the invitations that are sent to parents to become (more) involved. These invitations show parents that their involvement is meaningful and important. Effective invitations empower parents, they give them ideas and opportunities on how to become involved. C.RE.D.O. could encourage the parents in several ways, by providing more stimulating information about the work of C.RE.D.O. in general, the implications of the sponsorship project in particular and the importance of education. For instance, other organizations have had positive experiences with the introduction of a contract of sponsorship. The contract stated the responsibilities of both the beneficiaries and the organization which enabled the organization to assure the participation of the beneficiaries (Appendix 1.).

Despite stimulating information and invitations, actual involvement can remain difficult. Kellaghan et al. (1993 in Shepard and Rose, 2005) indicate that it should be taken into account that families with a lower socio-economical position tend to conform to and take on an inferior, helpless posture towards the people and programs that initially were designed to help them, because of their relative position to power within the larger social structure. This often inhibits them from becoming 'empowered'. Moreover, this stereotype is often reinforced by the attitude and biases of the people and programs that offer assistance, because they see lower socioeconomic families as unwilling or unable to become involved in the education of their child (Swick and Graves, 1993 in Shepard and Rose, 2005).

However, the results of this study indicate that the majority of the parents within the C.RE.D.O. sponsorship project are willing to participate in the project and the education of their child. A remarkable example of the will and capability of the parents was seen at Complexe Baraka in Bobo-Dioulasso. At this school it was noticeable that the parents had been sensitized about the importance of parental involvement. The number of parents attending the meeting was much larger than in the other communities and there seemed to be less problems at this school concerning the involvement of the parents.

Parents need support to improve the home environment

According to Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005), more stimulating information and invitations of C.RE.D.O. can empower the parents. However, real empowerment requires

more than just this. Parents need more than information and opportunities on how to become involved. Van ‘t Rood (2009) suggests that they need to be able to create physical and social security in order to be involved effectively. The results indicated that poor life circumstances make gathering enough food a daily first priority for the parents. A lack of food and means to efficiently provide for enough food are main concerns parents have that keeps them from involving themselves in the education of their child. To give the parents more opportunities to become involved, their living conditions need to be improved.

Therefore, C.RE.D.O. could consider to let their sponsorship project intervene in more areas than education alone and to support the home environment of the sponsored children as well. They could take other local organizations with sponsoring projects as a guide in this process. The majority of these organizations do not just direct their help to the individual sponsored child, they also try to help the family and community around the child (Appendix 1.)

Building the capacity of communities not only enables parents to become more involved with the education of their child, it also has the potential to make them capable of eventually running the project themselves. It prevents the parents from getting too dependent on C.RE.D.O. and could make the sponsoring project more sustainable.

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APPENDICES

1. Local organizations with sponsorship projects
2. The importance of parental involvement

APPENDIX 1.

Local organizations with sponsorship projects

Four organization with sponsorship projects were interviewed in order to to compare their project with the project of C.RE.D.O.. The four organizations are BORNEfonden, Plan Burkina, CCFC and Compassion.

Sponsorship approach

The sponsorship program of both BORNEfonden, Plan Burkina and CCFC is not just directed to the individual sponsored child, it also tries to help the family and community around the child. CCFC switched to this approach recently, after working with a school based approach in the past.

BORNEfonden:

'...just helping the children would not be a coherent development project, you would just have some small princes and princesses that would get a lot of help, but you would still have some very poor families that don't get assistance...'

With all three organizations, the need of a particular community is indicated by the community itself and managed by a locally formed committee. This committee cooperates and has to answer to the organization they are working with to ensure their plans are in accordance with the overall policy of respectively BORNEfonden, Plan or CCFC. All three organizations request a contribution of the community when projects are implemented, financially or by other means. This is done in order to initiate participation of the communities and to create local ownership of the different projects.

BORNEfonden:

'...we don't want to do assistance, we want to do development. And development depends on both parties otherwise you won't get anywhere. You will be able to do something but the minute you pull the plug out of the village it will just stop and deteriorate...'

Moreover, BORNEfonden and CCFC explicitly try to build the capacity of the communities to enable them to run the projects themselves, for instance by offering literacy

courses for the committee members. The eventual goal of all three organizations is to withdraw from the targeted communities slowly.

Compassion's sponsorship program is mostly directed to the individual child. Incidentally the family of the child receives support through 'family gifts' the sponsor can choose to give. However, the organization indicates this as a weakness of their intervention:

'...The sponsorship targets the child. This is one of the weaknesses. But we recognise that the child has a home and until you do something for the family itself the child will not finally develop and our outcomes will not be achieved...'

Strategy for parental involvement

All the organization make an effort to inform the involved communities about the implications of the sponsorship project. Both BORNEfonden and CCFC organize different meetings when they start in a new area, to inform the villagers about the objective of their organization and to determine whether the people are willing to participate. Plan Burkina mainly works with the community leaders and informs the families of the sponsored children.

CCFC:

'...Because when we arrive we tell them, this is not our program, it is your program and you are the one who is responsible for the implementation. So if you do right, you will see the benefits and if not you will lose and your children also...'

Compassion recently started to set up a contract with the parents of the sponsored children, including information about the sponsorship and the contribution of the parents. The contract was introduced after an increase of incidences of children not attending school or parents refusing the conditions of the sponsorship project after it already started.

As was mentioned in the previous paragraph, BORNEfonden, Plan and CCFC stimulate participation and ownership during the project by involving and training the community members during the whole implementation process. Moreover, a (financial) contribution is requested. BORNEfonden describes their system as follows:

'...This is the way to develop a community, first you contribute more then they, but you tell them in time you have to contribute more and more and we stop contributing. In this way you involve the families and help them with their development and the community gradually will get the ownership over the different activities...'

Moreover, all organizations consider sensitization activities to be an important weapon in getting people involved. Not just at the start of the project, but also after implementation.

Compassion and BORNEfonden try to create awareness by giving information and by showing the parents what, for instance, education and healthcare can do for them.

BORNEfonden:

‘...By giving the parents literacy courses they are able to experience the benefits of education themselves...’

Moreover, BORNEfonden experienced that creating a school garden and assuring a school meal that is not paid by the family, helps the parents accept the fact that being in school takes time. BORNEfonden tries to show the parents that they have more time for their own development (literacy) or income generating activities, when their child is in school. The organization states:

‘...parents who develop themselves will be more interested in the development of their child, ask more about achievements at school and check whether the child attends the school...’

All organizations stated that sensitization is a long process that takes time and patience.

Compassion:

‘...It takes education, it takes time, it takes impact, for people to see and follow...’

Reasons for limited involvement

All four organizations indicate ‘ignorance’ as the main reason for minimal parental involvement with the education of their child. They state that a lack of participation is often caused by the fact that the parents are ‘uncivilized’, do not know how to participate and do not realize the importance of education. Plan Burkina and BORNEfonden mentioned explicitly that limited involvement is not necessarily due to a lack of means of the parents, but that it is a matter of how they handle the priorities in their lives.

BORNEfonden:

‘... when the child works on the farm there will be a profit in a few months time, the benefit of going to school will only be seen after 10 to 16 years. This is why some parents don’t enrol their children in school, because for them the short term benefits are more important to survive...’

Compassion added that a difference has to be made between mothers and fathers.

According to this organization mothers care more for the wellbeing of their children and are more engaged with their schooling. Moreover, BORNEfonden stated that a long distance between the home and the school is another significant barrier in making parents understand the benefits of education.

Table 1. Different Sponsorship Projects in Burkina Faso

Organization	Start of program	Number of sponsored children	Intervention areas	Approach
BORNEfonden	1995	12.000	Education, healthcare, income generating activities, community wellbeing	Community
Plan Burkina	1976	45.040	Health, water resources and hygiene, education, promotion of children’s rights	Community
Compassion	2004	18.000	Education, healthcare, holistic program	Individual Child
CCFC	1997	8.000	Education, water sanitation and hygiene, health and nutrition, sustainable livelihood development, capacity building	Community
C.RE.D.O.	1992	4.133	Education, healthcare	Individual Child

APPENDIX 2.

The importance of parental involvement

The objective of the sponsorship project is 'to give boys and girls from disadvantaged families a dignified and responsible life (to empower them) by creating favorable conditions for access to an effective education'. Parental involvement can be seen as one of the conditions that influences the effectiveness of a child's education. Increased parental involvement can reflect positively on all three of the stated specific objectives. To emphasize the importance of parental involvement for the three objectives of the sponsorship project, their relation will be discussed below.

School success

'To ensure the success of at least 80% of the sponsored children'

According to Epstein (1995), a child is not an isolated actor in his own development and achievement in school; he grows and learns within three major contexts: the family, the school and the community. Fantuzzo, Tighe and Childs (2000) adds that the family context has the most significant influence on the development of young children, because it is the first place where the child gets in touch with the world around him. Ecological theories of human development have gained popularity in recent years, as a reaction on the recognition of the influence of contextual factors. These theories highlight the importance of the child's wider environment, like parenting quality and culture, instead of focusing only on individual characteristics of the child (Booth, 2003).

One of the more known theories on the development of children is the ecological systems theory developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner. According to this theory, the development of a child is influenced by the interactions between his immediate environment and the larger social and cultural environment around him (Booth, 2003). The theory recognizes four environmental systems around the child that influence his development. These systems are 'the microsystem', 'the mesosystem', 'the exosystem' and 'the macrosystem'. The microsystem consists of the direct experiences of the individual with his immediate environment. For instance, the relations of the child with others at home and at school. The mesosystem concerns the relations among the people in the microsystem. For instance, the relationship between practices at home and at school. Equality between the practices within these different environments is beneficial for the developing child (Rogoff, 2003).

The exosystem consists of settings in which the child does not directly participate. The influences of these settings are indirect, like the influence of the quality of healthcare and social services. Another influential setting in the exosystem is the workplace of the parents. This determines to a large extent whether the parents are able to perform their parenting role effectively. The most outer system is the macro system. At this level the child is influenced by the ideology and organization of social institutions in a community and culture. The way the community is organized and functions will have an impact on the development of the child (Rogoff, 2003).

The micro system of the child and the larger systems surrounding the child are seen as separate from each other. However it is acknowledged that they influence one another and that these influences are bi-directional (Rogoff, 2003). For instance, the child has an influence on the people in his home situation, but people in his home situation also influence the child.

The home and the school environment of the child are both represented in the micro system that surround the child, they are the primary contexts in which a child grows and develops. Parental involvement in the education of their child stimulates a connection among people in these two important micro systems. When this connection (in the mesosystem) develops in a positive way it creates congruence in behaviour, values and attitudes across these two important settings of a child's life (Lee & Bowen, 2006). According to Lee and Bowen (2006), congruence between the school and home environment of children increases the probability of improvement of the achievements of the child in school . This is consistent with findings from other studies that parental involvement has a positive influence on the achievements of children (Adeyemo, n.d.; Georgiou & Tourva, 2007).

Quality education

'To make quality education accessible for disadvantaged children'

Bergmann (1996) states that the quality of education can be analyzed by considering 3 central and 1 general component. The 3 central components are 'output', 'process' and 'input' quality. 'Output' refers to student achievement, the quantity and quality of what children have learned. Functional literacy, a minimum mastery of basic mathematical operations and the capacity to solve every day problems, are minimum levels of 'output' (Garcia-Huidobro & Bernadot, 1993 in Bergmann, 1996). The 'process' quality refers to the quality of the teacher-student interaction. The 'process' is good when the teaching methods used complement the particular situation so that the opportunities for students to learn are at their best. 'Process' quality is an important aspect of the quality of education that can be influenced by the school

and parents (Bergmann, 1996). 'Input' quality consists of 2 components, pedagogical and physical quality. Pedagogical quality is the extent to which the learning input is consistent with professional standards. Physical quality refers to the actual quality of the material that is used (Bergmann, 1996).

Next to these central components, there is a more general component of quality that deals with the socio-cultural values of the society. This 'value' quality concerns the degree to which the dominant value system of a society is represented in the objectives of the educational system (Bergmann, 1996). This is a very important aspect of the way parents perceive the quality of and value the education of their children and their role in it.

In order to get parents involved in the education of their children, a wide range of programs have been developed. Most of these programs focus on creating formal structures, like a parent association. Research indicates that the quality of education and school services improves when parent associations are established (Kendall, 2007). However, not all schools can benefit from such associations. Especially in poor countries parents often face difficulties paying the fees for the parent association. This creates problems with the funding of school services and can result in a situation where the school is less likely to have the means to provide quality services (Mundy et al., 2007).

A smaller number of programs try to empower parents to create their own definitions of quality and to implement projects designed to improve this quality (Mundy et al., 2007). When parents participate in what should be taught to children, the curriculum of the school can become more relevant and meaningful to the economic and social situation of the community at large, which in turn increases the chance of parental involvement in the education of their child (Capacci Carneal, 2004). These programs also improve the quality of education, especially in the eyes of the local community, and are often sustained by the local community. The community is able to carry on with the program after the initial help has left (Kendall, 2007).

When the content of education is relevant and meaningful to parents and the community at large, perceived external efficiency of education will increase. The perceived external efficiency is the potential of education to provide access to income in general and paid jobs in particular (Bergmann, 1996). The last, more general, component of quality, 'value' quality, can be linked to this perceived external efficiency of education. When parents perceive the external efficiency of education to be low, they are less likely to be interested and involved in the education of their child, because they do not see any advantages of education if there is a lack of employment afterwards (Bergmann, 1996).

Involvement of all the people concerned with the education of children creates a higher commitment among all of them and this will lead to increased motivation to reach the objectives of the educational system (Niane, 2003). Especially when the objectives of the educational system reflect the dominant value system of the society. To reach quality education for their children parents should have the opportunity to participate in decision making and project implementation from the start of the enrolment of their child in the educational system. When parents are involved with the education of their children from the start, they are more aware of their roles in the education of their child and the influence they can exercise (Niane, 2003).

Empowerment and sustainability

'To encourage the children and their parents to take (more) responsibility in their lives (based on empowerment and sustainability)'

Involving the parents with the education of their child positively influences both the empowerment of the child and the empowerment of the parents themselves, which in turn leads to a more sustainable project. Despite the centrality of the term, empowerment has been defined in many different ways. To indicate the influence of parental involvement on their empowerment, a clear definition of the concept is necessary.

Empowerment is an end in itself, as well as a means to an end. The final goal of empowerment has been stated as enabling people to better manage their lives by providing them with the necessary tools (Shepard and Rose, 2005). Lyons, Smuts and Stephens (2001), define the process of empowerment as an increase in influence and control through the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Empowered people are more than just adequately adjusted to their situation. In order to become empowered the people involved need to be transformed, together with their society (Van 't Rood, 2009).

According to Van 't Rood (2009), central to this transformation process is a redistribution of power that considers all societal opportunities and needs and does not limit anybody's freedom. To ensure this freedom the redistribution of power needs to be negotiable and all the people involved must be able to take part in these negotiations. Satisfying participation in such negotiations for transformation requires people to possess certain knowledge, skills and behavior. People need to be able to organize themselves towards self-identified goals. Moreover, people should be capable to mobilize the necessary resources for this self-organization in order to initiate their own process of empowerment. Empowerment

can therefore be defined as ‘*the capacity of people to direct and control their own lives and resources: the ability to take their lives into their own hands*’ (Van ‘t Rood, 2009).

Considering the sponsorship project, to empower the children and their parents does not necessarily mean to change them, but to enable them to direct and control their own lives and resources. As mentioned before, the development of a child is influenced both at home, at school and in the community (Epstein, 1995). However, the most important influence and therefore the first responsibility lies at home with the parents (Fantuzzo, Tighe & Childs, 2000). A child is an important part of the ‘life and resources’ of his parents. This makes the education of the child an aspect parents can not only learn from, they should also be able to ‘direct and control’ it and therefore be involved in.

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