



Parental Involvement in the Education of Children with Special Needs in Kwekwe, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The education of children with special needs poses unique challenges and requires a collaborative effort between educators and parents. Parental involvement is widely recognized as a crucial component in fostering academic success and the social-emotional development of children with special needs. This study explores parental involvement in the educational outcomes of such children through a qualitative study using a social ecological theoretical framework. We interviewed teachers who specialise in inclusive education and parents who have children with special needs and found important problems based on language and culture, poor communications between parents and school staff, parental mis-perceptions of the disability and the restricted availability of resources to nurture children with disabilities. Findings confirm that parental involvement is key to improved educational outcomes, social skills, and the emotional well-being; the most positive types of involvement included participating in Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, assisting with homework, and maintaining regular communication with teachers. Barriers to parental involvement include lack of time, insufficient knowledge about special education processes, and limited school resources. Schools and educators should adopt a more inclusive and supportive approach to engage parents, recognizing the diverse needs and backgrounds of families. Policy implications include advocacy for more comprehensive support systems to facilitate parental involvement. We recommend the development of workshops and training programs for parents to better understand special

education processes and how they can support their children, and flexible communication channels between parents and schools to accommodate parents' schedules and preferences.

Keywords: parental involvement, education, children, special needs

Introduction

Parental involvement is a critical factor in the educational success of children, particularly for those with special needs (Epstein, 2001; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). The unique challenges faced by children with special needs require a concerted effort from both educators and parents to ensure these children receive the tailored support they need (Turnbull et al., 2007). This study seeks to explore the multifaceted role of parental involvement in the education of children with special needs, examining how different types and levels of involvement impact educational outcomes (Fan & Chen, 2001). The increasing recognition of the importance of parental involvement has prompted extensive research into its benefits, yet there remains a gap in understanding the specific needs and experiences of parents of children with special needs (Lemmer, 2007). This study aims to fill this gap by offering a comprehensive analysis of the barriers and facilitators to parental involvement, as well as the impact of such involvement on the academic and social-emotional development of children with special needs. By understanding the dynamics of parental engagement, this research aims to promote effective strategies that can foster a more inclusive and supportive educational environment for these children (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Background

Parenting is a unique role that sets it apart from all other roles that people do in maturity, and parental engagement is essential. Its distinctive intense interpersonal relationships, commitment, responsibility, and practical and emotional nurture are some of its salient characteristics (Holte, 2014). Consequently, parents cannot abandon or postpone this task due to the significance of this function and the social expectations associated with it. When children are involved, especially those who are outstanding and have an intellectual disability, this becomes even more important (Ruskus & Gerulaitis, 2010). Many analysts have shown that parents' attempts to participate successfully in their children's education are hampered by a lack of information or expertise (Ruskus & Gerulaitis, 2010; Blacher & Hatton, 2007; Bjorgvinsdottir & Halldorsdottir, 2014). In turn, this ignorance about the nature and prognosis of a child's condition of disability prevents parents

from putting professional and educational advice into practice at home, which has an adverse effect on the children's overall development and academic results.

In an ideal world, parents would play a crucial role in ensuring that the academic, social, and adaptive skills that children with intellectual disabilities learn in school are continued and practiced at home. It is therefore essential that they participate in the schooling of their children who are living with a disability. Studies by Chevalier et al. (2013) and Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2007) suggest, however, that a parent's educational background may limit their ability to comprehend their child's disability in depth and prevent them from being able to support the child at home. More specifically, parents' involvement in their children's education may be hampered by poor parental education levels and parents with higher education levels tend to be more interested in their children's education than parents with lower education levels (Feliciano, 2006; Englund et al., 2004; Anderson & Minke, 2007). Compared with middle-class educated parents, parents with lesser educational attainment face greater obstacles when it comes to the education of their children. It seems that parents with higher levels of education are better able to care for and assist their disabled child at home than parents with less education. This notion is applicable to parents with a higher education and living above the poverty datum line. In order to provide a fair and just education for everyone, as envisioned by Freire (1971), it is necessary to inform, educate, and support parents who find it difficult to cater for the needs of their children living with a disability.

Research from Chevalier et al. (2013) suggests that parental involvement in their children's education positively correlates with their income and educational attainment; parents with lower levels of education are less equipped to raise children and are more likely to work in low-paying occupations that require longer hours. As a result, these parents also frequently have a large family, which calls for greater dedication. Due to their increased need for parental support and care compared to typically developing children, students with disabilities are particularly badly impacted by this condition, as are those with intellectual disabilities. Policy interventions are suggested, including high-level parental training, low-income subsidy, and low-education tuition fees.

The present study shows also that barrier to complete parental involvement in education are formed by teacher related variables including lack of funding, unresolved emotional feelings, conflicts between school directors or board of management members, negative attitudes toward

parents (e.g., viewing parents as a threat or challenge rather than as valuable resources), dismissing parental observations as biased or insignificant, and a lack of teacher training on working with parents (Ruskus & Gerulaitis, 2010, Feliciano, 2006). Furthermore, school professionals enforce a strict, limited curriculum that isn't able to accommodate parents' requirements, which raises the risk of low parental engagement and participation. Because of this, parents frequently express emotions of helplessness, annoyance, and exclusion from educators and the educational process (Moore & Lasky, 1999).

Perceptual, cultural, contextual, and structural impediments prevent parents from consistently participating in their children's education, according to McKay et al. (2004). The severity of a child's disability, parental stress or sadness, lack of support, lack of knowledge and skills, lack of confidence, and financial limitations are some of the categories used to categorise the hurdles. For the benefit of their children, parents' opinions of the instructors and other school personnel, as well as misplaced expectations, all have a role in determining whether or not they continue to seek assistance and collaborate with the school (McKay et al., 2004; Feliciano, 2006, Englund et al., 2004). As a result, time constraints, insurance, transportation issues, restricted services, and childcare become dismal impediments to parental involvement in school. According to Sandall et al. (2005), parents of students with disabilities hold a low and unfavourable position in the educational system, despite the fact that educationists present parents and teachers as equal partners, and their low position serves as a barrier to their involvement in their children's education. Some parents consequently abdicate all responsibility for their children to teachers, viewing them as authority figures with the necessary training to handle any school-related issue. No doubt there are times when teachers behave accordingly, giving parents directions rather than encouraging cooperation and teamwork.

However, research also shows that the majority of parents of disabled children, including those with intellectual disabilities, are extremely poor and unable to provide for their children's educational needs, potentially leading to a lack of care on the part of the parents for their children's education. Because of this, very few disabled children in underdeveloped nations benefit from a suitable education (Pang & Richey, 2005). This is a result of low-income nations' generally poor health, nutrition, and standard of living (Chevalier et al., 2013). The degree to which parents participate in their children's schooling depends on their socioeconomic class (SES), with lower-income households often having less parental involvement. Because

of their lack of parental participation, children who grow up in poverty are therefore more likely to suffer negative effects such as poorer levels of academic success and socio-emotional well-being (Oranga & Chege Kabutha, 2013). This study thus aimed to identify, in one specific locale, how parental participation affects the academic performance and general well-being of children with exceptional needs; to determine what encourages and inhibits parental involvement in their child's special education; and to establish the various parental involvement activities and how they affect the performance of the students.

Theoretical Framework

Figure 1 – Social Ecology Theory



Social ecology theory offered a robust framework for exploring the diverse factors influencing parental involvement in the education of children with special needs in Kwekwe, Zimbabwe. This theory, articulated by Urie Bronfenbrenner, emphasizes the complex interactions between individuals and their various environmental systems. By utilizing this theory, we can comprehensively understand how different contextual factors in Kwekwe shape parental engagement in their children's education (Oranga, 2020). At the center of the social ecology model is the microsystem, which included the immediate environments where the child directly interacts, such as the home and school; the microsystem highlights the vital role of family and educators in the educational journey of children with special needs. Parental

involvement at this level includes daily activities such as assisting with homework, attending Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, and maintaining direct communication with teachers. Given the unique socio-economic context of Kwekwe, where resources were limited, the quality and consistency of these interactions are crucial for the child's educational outcomes (Moroni, 2015). This study examines how parents in Kwekwe engage with their children's education within the microsystem and identifies ways to enhance these interactions despite resource constraints.

The mesosystem comprises the interactions between different microsystems, such as the relationships between parents and teachers (Roberts, 2020). In Kwekwe, fostering strong collaboration between home and school is essential for the success of children with special needs. Effective communication and coordination between parents and educators can help ensure consistent support and reinforcement of educational goals (Holte, 2014). This study investigated how these mesosystem interactions can be strengthened in Kwekwe through, for example, community meetings, parent-teacher workshops, and the development of collaborative educational strategies. Understanding and improving these mesosystem connections are vital for creating a cohesive support network around the child.

The ecosystem involves broader social settings that indirectly influence the child, such as parental workplace policies, community resources, and extended family networks. In Kwekwe, factors like economic stability, the availability of community support services, and the presence of extended family can significantly impact a parent's ability to engage with their child's education (Homby, 2011). This study explores how these ecosystem factors either facilitate or hinder parental involvement. For instance, the economic activities in Kwekwe, primarily mining and agriculture, might affect parental availability and engagement. By identifying supportive workplace policies and community resources, the study aims to propose measures that can help parents in Kwekwe better support their children's educational needs.

The macrosystem encompasses cultural values, societal norms, and public policies that form the overarching context for parental involvement (Winslow, 2013). In Kwekwe, attitudes towards disability, cultural beliefs about education, and national policies like the Zimbabwean Education Act shape the environment in which parental engagement occurs. This study considers how these macrosystem factors influence parents' attitudes and behaviors toward their children's education. It advocates for culturally sensitive policies and practices that promote greater parental involvement,

recognizing the diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds of families in Kwekwe.

The chronosystem addresses the dimension of time, acknowledging that changes over time can influence development. This includes life transitions for the child, such as moving from early intervention programs to school-age services, as well as broader societal changes like evolving educational policies and technological advancements (Oranga, 2020). In Kwekwe, the study investigates how these temporal factors impact parental involvement, providing insights into how support strategies can be adapted to meet the changing needs of children and their families over time. For example, changes in national policies or economic conditions can significantly affect parental engagement (Moroni, 2015). By applying social ecology theory, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of the various environmental systems and their impact on parental involvement in the education of children with special needs in Kwekwe. This theoretical framework allows for a holistic understanding of the multiple levels of influence, identifying key areas for intervention to enhance parental engagement and improve educational outcomes for these children.

Methodology

This study employed a case study research design to explore the nature, extent, and impact of parental involvement in the education of children with special needs in Kwekwe, Zimbabwe. Utilizing a phenomenological approach allowed for an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of parents, educators, and children within this specific socio-cultural context. This approach was well-suited to capture the rich, detailed perspectives of participants and to understand the complex factors influencing their engagement in educational activities (Holte, 2014). The research was conducted in Kwekwe, a city in central Zimbabwe known for its diverse socio-economic conditions. The study setting included various educational institutions such as public and private schools, special education centers, and community organisations that support children with special needs. This diverse setting provided a comprehensive view of the different environments in which parental involvement occurs and the various challenges and facilitators that exist (Nyarko, 2011).

Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure a diverse sample of those involved in the education of children with special needs. The sample included twenty parents, ensuring a range of socio-economic statuses, educational backgrounds, and types of disabilities among

their children. Additionally, ten educators, including special education teachers and school administrators, and five representatives from community organisations supporting children with special needs were included. This diverse sample helped to provide a holistic view of the factors influencing parental involvement. Multiple qualitative data collection methods were used to gather comprehensive and nuanced information. In-depth, semi-structured interviews are conducted with parents, educators, and community representatives to delve into their experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to parental involvement (Winslow, 2013). Focus group discussions were held separately with parents and educators to facilitate the exchange of ideas and collective reflections on the issues at hand. Participant observations were conducted in various educational settings to capture the dynamics of parental involvement and the interactions between parents, children, and educators. Additionally, document analysis of relevant school policies, Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and community support program records were undertaken to understand the institutional context and support mechanisms available (Oranga, 2020).

Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the qualitative data. The process begun with the transcription of all interviews and focus group discussions. Initial coding was performed to identify repeated patterns and significant statements in the data. These codes were then grouped into broader themes that capture the essence of participants' experiences and perspectives (Roberts, 2020). The themes are analysed in relation to the research questions and the social ecology theory framework, highlighting the interplay between different environmental systems and their impact on parental involvement.

Ethical considerations were paramount in this study. All participants were provided with detailed information about the study and gave their written consent to participate. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymising data and protecting participants' identities. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Special care was taken to handle sensitive information, particularly when discussing challenges and barriers faced by parents and children (Roberts, 2020).

The study involved a diverse group of participants, categorised into parents, educators, and NGO representatives as presented in the table 1 below. This diverse demographic composition provided a comprehensive

perspective on parental involvement in the education of children with disabilities.

Findings

The findings illuminate the multifaceted nature of parental involvement, shaped by socio-economic constraints, cultural attitudes, and institutional support mechanisms. The analysis highlights both the opportunities for enhancing parental participation and the systemic barriers that need to be addressed to improve educational outcomes for children with disabilities.

Table 1: Demographic Data of Participants

Category	Sub-category	N participants	Education Level	Employment Status
Parents	Mothers	12	5 Secondary School, 7 College/University	3 Employed, 7 Self-employed, 2 Unemployed,
	Fathers	8	3 Secondary School, 5 College/University	2 Employed, 6 Self-employed,
Educators	Heads of Schools	3	3 University Degree	Full-time Employment
	Special Education Teachers	5	2 University Degree, 3 Diploma	Full-time Employment
	School Administrators	2	2 Diploma	Full-time Employment
NGO Reps.	Advocacy & Support Specialists	2	2 University Degree	Full-time Employment
	Program Managers	2	2 University Degree	Full-time Employment
	Community Outreach Coordinators	1	University Degree	Full-time Employment

Poor Communication Between Parents and School Staff

Lack of communication between parents and school staff is a typical barrier to parental involvement in the education of children with special

needs. Both parties' hectic schedules, misunderstandings or miscommunications, different expectations or priorities, and a lack of efficient communication channels are some prevalent causes. A communication breakdown can result in miscommunication, missed opportunities for cooperation, and eventually have an adverse effect on the education and general wellbeing of the child. To guarantee the best assistance for the child, it is critical that parents and school personnel place a high priority on open and transparent communication. One participant noted that

There is little support in schools to help parents especially in Zimbabwe. There are a lot of challenges to that. Some schools do not involve parents at all. The only time they call parents to school is when they need information about child and normally at the beginning of year. The other time is when the child is hurt or is sick. In most cases there is no communication. Some schools may want to involve parents but face the challenge of parents not cooperating. Some parents may not have time to go to school frequently due to work commitments and hustling especially in this economic situation we are in. Some schools are trying their best to help parents via WhatsApp and other platforms. (T2)

Restricted Resources and Assistance

A major obstacle to parental involvement can be limited access to resources and support. Parents may feel overburdened and uncertain about how to effectively assist their child's education when they lack access to essential resources, such as details about their child's unique requirements, programs that are offered, or support networks. It may also be challenging for parents to effectively advocate for their child within the educational system as a result of this lack of assistance. Parents' participation in school events and meetings may also be further restricted by budgetary limitations or a lack of mobility. In order to guarantee that parents of children with special needs have access to the tools and support they require, it is critical that communities and schools collaborate. A key informant noted that

Some children are properly cared for and some are neglected due to various reasons. Some parents are not financially stable such that they fail to provide for the child's basic needs like food, medication, proper shelter, school fees, transport to school, assistive devices etc.

Some parents may be financially stable but still neglect the child due to denial, lack of knowledge. (T1)

Belief that the Special Education System is Intimidating/ Overwhelming

One of the biggest obstacles to parental involvement in the education of children with special needs is feeling overburdened or scared by the special education system. For parents who have never navigated that before, it can be intimidating due to its intricate structure, which includes confusing terminology, rules, and procedures. Parents may become reluctant to actively interact with school personnel or take part in decision-making processes pertaining to their child's education as a result of feeling confused, frustrated, and powerless. Parents who experience feelings of overwhelm or intimidation may find it more difficult to participate in meetings, raise concerns, or successfully advocate for their child's needs. This may lead to a lack of parent-teacher cooperation possibilities, which may eventually affect the calibre of instruction and assistance offered. A participant noted that;

I have headache helping his siblings with homework and by the time am done with them I am already tired. I do not neglect him but his needs are just too much for me to cope with. (P1)

It's critical that schools provide a warm, inclusive climate that promotes family involvement, give parents clear and accessible information, and assist them in navigating the special education system. By removing these obstacles, parents will have greater confidence to support their child's needs and take an active role in their education.

Barriers Based on Language or Culture

Language or cultural barriers present significant challenges to parental involvement in the education of children with special needs. When parents do not speak the primary language used in the school or community, they may struggle to communicate effectively with teachers, administrators, or other parents. This leads to misunderstandings, miscommunication, and feelings of isolation or exclusion. Additionally, cultural differences in beliefs, values, and educational practices can impact how parents perceive and engage with the special education system. Parents from different cultural backgrounds have varying expectations of their role in their child's education, as well as different attitudes towards disability and special needs. These

differences create barriers to collaboration, trust, and understanding between parents and school staff, hindering effective communication and partnership in supporting the child's educational needs. It's important for schools to recognize and address language and cultural barriers by providing interpretation services, offering culturally responsive communication and support, and fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment that respects and values the diversity of families. By bridging these barriers, schools better engage parents in the education of children with special needs and make it more likely that families will feel empowered to advocate for their child's success.

Parental Perception

It's important for parents to advocate for their child's needs and work closely with educators to ensure the best possible outcomes for their child. Parents are their child's strongest advocates and know their child best, including their strengths, challenges, and unique needs. By actively participating in their child's education and working closely with educators, parents can help ensure that their child receives the support, resources, and accommodations necessary to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. If parents feel lack hope in a brighter future of the child with disabilities, they will likely fail to engage themselves in the education of their children. Parents with a child with extreme disability may see sending a child to school as a waste of resources. Some parents with children with disabilities view the school as place where the child goes to so as to lessen their burden of caring for the child for the whole day. One participant noted that;

I don't go to the school of my disabled child because it's a waste a time, as the school will be caring for him , I will also be having time to myself or do something productive for the family.

When parents advocate for their child, they can help ensure that their child's individualised needs are met, whether it be through specialised instruction, assistive technology, or additional support services. By communicating openly and effectively with educators, parents can provide valuable insights into their child's learning style, preferences, and progress, and help to tailor educational plans and interventions to meet their child's specific needs. Another participant noted that;

"I am a concerned parent and I believe my child can succeed academically, hence I do communicate with the teachers of my child

to find out on his progress and he if shows behaviour change in the unacceptable way. I would want to find out the cause of the maladaptive behaviour. Though at times my visits are not welcomed by teachers and school authority". P3

Collaboration between parents and educators fosters a team approach to supporting the child's development and success. By working together, parents and educators can share information, set goals, monitor progress, and make informed decisions that benefit the child's overall well-being and academic achievement. This partnership also helps build trust, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to the child's growth and development. Ultimately, when parents advocate for their child's needs and actively engage with educators, they play a vital role in shaping their child's educational experience and ensuring that their child receives the best possible support and opportunities for success. A key informant noted that;

The parents in some cases are not given the same educational rights because some children with disabilities may be denied enrolment at nearest schools due to severity of the disability. If parent is not well up the child may stay at home and not go to school. T2

I had to send my child to school that is far from where I stay. The authorities of a nearby school asked to take my child elsewhere after he had attended 3days at the school. They said that they cannot cope with my child who has autism. P3

Discussion

The present study of parental involvement in the education of children with special needs in Kwekwe reveals both unique challenges and commonalities with other African countries. By comparing these findings with similar studies conducted across the continent, we can gain a deeper understanding of the regional trends and specific contextual factors influencing parental engagement in special education (Holte, 2014). In Kwekwe, as in many other African settings, socio-economic barriers significantly impact parental involvement. Economic constraints, limited access to resources, and inadequate support services are recurring themes. Studies of rural areas of South Africa, for example, have highlighted that poverty and limited access to specialised educational resources hinder parents' ability to support their children effectively (Oranga, 2020).

Similarly, in Kwekwe, the economic activities predominantly revolve around mining and agriculture, which demand significant time and energy from parents, leaving less time for active involvement in their children's education. Cultural attitudes towards disability also play a crucial role in shaping parental involvement. In many African countries, including Zimbabwe, societal stigma and traditional beliefs about disability can deter parents from seeking support or engaging openly with educators (Winslow, 2013). For example, research in Nigeria and Kenya has shown that cultural stigmatization leads to isolation of families with children with special needs, reducing their access to educational and community resources. In Kwekwe, these cultural barriers similarly impact the willingness and ability of parents to participate in their children's education (Munia, 2014).

Communication between parents and educators is another critical factor influencing parental involvement. In urban centers of countries like Ghana and Tanzania, studies have found that effective communication strategies, such as regular parent-teacher meetings and the use of mobile technology, can enhance parental engagement (Nyarko, 2011). In Kwekwe, the establishment of flexible communication channels is identified as a key area for improvement. By adopting similar strategies, such as using SMS or community radio for updates and information dissemination, Kwekwe schools can potentially increase parental involvement despite the technological and infrastructural limitations. Community support and collaboration are also vital (Roberts, 2020). In Uganda, for example, community-based rehabilitation programs have been successful in mobilizing local resources and fostering a supportive network for families of children with special needs. These programs emphasize the importance of community involvement in educational initiatives. In Kwekwe, strengthening partnerships between schools and local community organizations can similarly enhance support services and create a more inclusive environment for these children.

Policy frameworks and government support vary significantly across African countries and directly affect parental involvement. In Botswana and Namibia, progressive policies and substantial government investment in special education have led to better support systems and higher levels of parental engagement (Holte, 2014). Zimbabwe, including Kwekwe, can benefit from advocating for stronger policy support and increased funding for special education. This would address some of the systemic challenges faced by parents and educators in providing adequate

support for children with special needs. Training and capacity building for both parents and educators are critical. In Ethiopia and Zambia, initiatives to train parents on special education needs and effective parenting strategies have shown positive outcomes in enhancing parental involvement (Moroni, 2015). In Kwekwe, similar training programs can empower parents with the knowledge and skills needed to support their children's education more effectively.

Conclusion

This study shows that many factors prevent parents from being involved in their children's education when they have an intellectual disability. These factors include low parental education levels, teachers' disapproval of parents' involvement in their children's education, parental economic constraints, societal perceptions and stigmatization of intellectual disabilities, ignorance of the prognosis of intellectual disabilities, parental stress and depression, a lack of support, parental perceptions of teachers and school staff, a lack of clear channels of communication between the home and school, the number of siblings in the family, the severity of the child's disability, discrepancies in the language used by staff members and parents, and the absence of policy guidelines or frameworks. Parental involvement in the education of students with intellectual disabilities has also been hampered by the lack of intentional initiatives to promote inclusion and by the complete absence of planned in-service seminars for teachers working with students living with disabilities. As the interviews made clear, parents would become more engaged in their children's education if they felt competent and capable and if teachers encouraged them to do so. For this reason, it is important to empower parents as recommended. Unfortunately, lack of parental enlightenment and emancipation and other reasons as discussed above have served as formidable barriers to the full participation of parents of learners with disabilities in schools worldwide but most especially in developing countries. This calls for urgent redress measures for the benefit of all learners, and even more so, those living with disabilities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance parental involvement in the education of children with special needs in Kwekwe, Zimbabwe. These recommendations address the identified barriers and leverage existing strengths within the community to improve educational outcomes for these children.

Schools should establish clear, consistent, and flexible communication strategies to facilitate better engagement between parents and school staff: regular meetings, using platforms such as WhatsApp or SMS for updates, and ensuring that there are accessible communication channels for parents who may not be able to attend in person are needed.

Schools, communities, and government agencies should collaborate to provide better resources and support services for parents. This includes offering information about special education programs, available assistance, and connecting parents with support networks.

Implement training programs for parents to help them understand the special education system, their rights, and effective ways to support their children's learning and development.

Schools should create a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere that encourages parents to participate, ensuring that all parents feel respected and valued, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Schools should provide interpretation services, culturally responsive communication, and educational support that takes into account the diversity of the families they serve.

Schools should encourage and support parents to be active advocates for their children by providing guidance on how to engage with the educational system, express concerns, and ensure that their children's needs are met.

Community-based programs should be developed to mobilise resources, create support networks, and facilitate collaboration between local organizations, schools, and families.

Advocacy for stronger policy frameworks and increased government funding for special education should be a priority. This includes improving accessibility to schools, addressing stigma, and providing more specialized services.

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