

# Parental Involvement in Education

## **Parental involvement in Education amongst Nigerians parents in Sweden**

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## **Table of content**

Abstract.....	4
Introduction.....	4
Background.....	5
Literature review.....	9
Theoretical perspectives.....	15
The aim of the study.....	18
Methodology.....	18
Results.....	23
Discussion.....	32
Recommendation.....	37
References.....	48
Appendix 1.....	49
Appendix 2.....	50
Appendix 3.....	62

**Abstract**

Parental involvement is the foundation of every child's progress in school. Those whose parents are fully involved in their education tend to do better academically than those whose parents are not. This qualitative study explores the parent's perception of their involvement in education of their children. The method employed was a semi-structured interview and the participants were 12 Nigerian parents who had children within the age range of 6-13 in three schools in Stockholm, Sweden. The findings from this study indicate that parents acknowledge the importance of parental involvement in education while at the same time acknowledging the challenges experienced in participating fully in the education of their children.

## **Introduction**

Education plays a crucial role in the economic well-being of individuals in the society and as a result no child should be left behind in the educational race. Thus, this is an era of increasing concern about the quality of education in the society. Most parents pay close attention to their children's education. There have been several studies over the past 30 years that have explored the significant and the influencing factors in children's educational achievement. (Bouakaz, 2007; Wikelund & Cotton, 1989). There are certain factors documented in research literature that could hinder parental involvement in education especially among immigrant parents (Bouakaz, 2007; Wikelund & Cotton, 1989; Jeynes, 2007; Griph, 2015; Osama, 2013). The degree to which parents are involved in their children's education is one of the most important factors affecting children's success in school (Epstein, 1995). The assertion that there are links between parent involvement and children's achievements is further supported by Pelletier & Brent (2002). They described parents as being the first teacher that children encounter in life and who provides experiences that stimulate children's skill development and favorable way of life that enhances school success. While several studies have been done on parental involvement in education in Sweden for some immigrant groups (Wikelund & Cotton, 1989; Jeynes, 2007), there is still a need for further research on parental involvement in education for immigrant minority especially from Africa who are recent arrivals in Sweden. Thus, the impetus of this study and the overall goal is to explore parental involvement among Nigerian parents in Sweden; a group that has hitherto not received same attention by researchers in Sweden. The result of this work will hopefully provide platforms where the participating parents share their understanding of parental involvement and how and the challenges experienced in fully supporting their children's education.

### **1.0 Multicultural Sweden**

Sweden is seen as a multicultural country since about 200 nationalities have a representation in the population of Sweden. The number of inhabitants of foreign origins in Sweden is 1,877,050. It is about 18.4% of the total inhabitants of Sweden in 2019 that are of foreign origins (Statistics Sweden: Foreign-born persons by country of birth, age,

sex, and year, retrieved 4th Feb, 2019). The rapidly growth in diversity of the Swedish society seems not to slow down. According to the data from the statistics Sweden shows that the number of foreign-born persons has been steadily increasing.

Table 1. Population trend of foreign-born inhabitants of Sweden, 2000 – 2018.

Year	2000	2005	2014	2018
Number	1,003,798	1,125,790	1,603,551	1,877,050

Ref: Swedish Population Board (Foreign-born persons by country of birth, age, sex, and year, retrieved 4th Feb, 2019).

In the year 2000, foreign born persons made up 12% of the total population and 10 years later, in 2014 their share of the total population had increased to 16%. AS of Feb 4, 2019, the population of foreign-born persons is about 18.4% of the total inhabitants in Sweden. Currently, more than 1,877,050 people residing in Sweden are born outside Sweden. According to the Swedish National Agency for Education, 23.8% of the pupils attending elementary school (multiculturalism Grundskolan) in 2014/2015 academic year have foreign language as their second language. Lorentz & Ländenperä (2010) pointed out that it is of great importance for upcoming teachers to have the knowledge of different languages. They are to put into consideration that their audience could be people of different languages or culture. This would help them in their choice of language during teachings to enhance teaching and learning in schools as an intercultural setting.

### **1.1 Migration and Nigerians in Sweden**

The last two decades have seen a rise in migration to Sweden; mostly refugee fleeing from war and violence such as from Somalia and from Syria. The number of Nigerians in Sweden is small compared to the number of people from these countries. Since 1907, there has been a steady increase in migration of Nigerians to Sweden. The major migration of Nigerians to Sweden happened during the Nigerian civil war 1967-1969, 1976 to early 80s during the oil boom (most of the migrants came for studies) and late eighties, nineties and from 2000 till date due to economic down turn and high rate of

unemployment. The trend of migration has continued and according to Nilsson (2004), the Nigerian immigration level was ranked amongst the highest in the list of African immigrants in Sweden (Nilsson 2004:5). In the year 1993, it was recorded that the number of Nigerian born immigrant is 444 but the number increased to 701 in 2000 and in 2001 the number increased again to 757. In 2005, it increased to 1444 and in 2010, it increased to 2997. In 2015, the number was 4669 and the number kept increasing till to 5408 in 2018 (Swedish Population Board, 2019) and most of the Nigerian population in Sweden is concentrated within Stockholm, Malmö and Göteborg.

Table 2. Nigerian-born immigrants in Sweden 1993-2018

Year	1993	2000	2001	2005	2010	2015	2018
Number	444	701	757	1444	2997	4669	5408

Ref: Swedish Population Board (Foreign-born persons by country of birth, age, sex, and year, retrieved 4th Feb, 2019).

The figures might be far greater than what is provided in the table above because there are many Nigerian immigrants who are not officially documented: those who have the residence permit of other countries or are citizens of other countries but reside in Sweden by virtue of bilateral agreement between all members of the Euro zone. Furthermore, it includes those in the process of asylum-seeking and non-asylum seeker who are just in Sweden for better economic fortunes. It is believed that most of the earlier Nigerian immigrants to Sweden became professionals, owing to their education while the less educated ones settled in jobs that required proficiency in Swedish language. In this present dispensation, most Nigerian immigrants are doing jobs that have less demand for Swedish language, jobs that are very demanding or jobs that are carried out at odd hours of the day. All these could hinder their learning and development in the Swedish language and their involvement in their children's educational engagement.

## **1.2 Education of immigrant minorities**

The number of children of immigrant parents is increasing in Sweden and their

performances in school have been explored by several researchers such as Johnsson J.O. & Rudolphi F. (2011). They are of the view that the performances of the children of immigrant parents could be looked at from different angles: their school performance and the educational choice. Their study shows that children of immigrant parents perform poorly in school but could be favoured in their choice of academic upper secondary education. A large proportion of them eventually have low grade or incomplete grades. Furthermore, statistics has shown that immigrants perform poorly in school. Immigrant students in Sweden “on average” have weaker educational outcomes at all levels of education” (OECD 2010, p.7). According to Swedish National Agency for Education (SNEA 2008, p.9), “In the group of students of foreign background, almost every fourth student left compulsory school without basic qualifications, in comparison with every tenth student in compulsory school as a whole”. Their record shows that the achievements become lower if the student was born abroad or entered school system late. Factors like isolation from accessing their cultural and social capital, which are essential in enhancing educational performance, segregation, financial difficulties, housing problems, and physiological factors hinder students' positive integration and language acquisition.

### **1.3 Parental involvement and participation**

Parental support is defined by the Swedish government as an activity of parents with children between 0 and 18 years of age, promoting children’s health, psychosocial development and strengthening the parent’s social networking (Swedish National Board of Health & Welfare, 2008). Jeynes (2007, p.83) also defines Parental involvement as parental participation in the educational processes and experiences of their children (2007; 83, Lpo 2018) while Johanson & Wahlberg (1993) is of the view that parental involvement is a combination of commitment to the students and active participation on the part of both parents and the school staff. While both Jeynes (2007) and Johanson & Wahlberg (1993) agree on the primary roles of parents in parental involvement, they are of divergent views on the nature of parental involvement. While Jeynes (2007) believes the parents have the sole responsibility in parental involvement Johanson & Wahlberg (1993) see parental involvement as a combined effort and as collaboration between the

students, the parents and the school staff. Parental involvement as Wikelund & Cotton (1989) noted has to do with various aspects of parents' efforts toward the success of their children's education in school. There are various forms in which parents can spur their children toward a good academic performance. These include attending school functions, monitoring of homework, providing adequate study environment and time for their children, directly teaching them certain aspects (both academic and non-academic) of their studies at home. (Wikelund & Cotton, 1989). The willingness of the parents to become fully involved premise on the respect accorded them by the schools and whether they feel welcome in the school (Henderson, et al. 2007). Parents can be discouraged, disappointed and feel frustrated when they notice that teachers view them as having a negative effect or deficiency that can hinder a progressive workable relationship (Nieto, 2004; McCarthey, 2000).

## **2.0 Literature review**

This review covers both international and recent Swedish research on parental involvement. The database searched were ERIC and Google scholar and search terms used were "parental involvement", "parental participation", "parental engagement" parents, and parental involvement in education. Parental involvement is a vast area of study which has been researched on in the recent past and in this present era. It has been approached from different perspectives with each giving varying results. This review will be limited to studies that are both culturally specific to recent arrival immigrant parents but also other communities that experience similar challenges in education and where parent's engagement has made a difference to the children's education.

### **2.1. Studies on parental involvement and participation**

The education of African Americans and parental involvement has been the focus of several studies including Williams' (2012) study in a predominantly African American inner city-school in Maryland, USA. The goal was to understand the different views of parental involvement at a predominantly African American inner-city high school. Williams (2012) conducted a qualitative study with 10 staff-members and 15 parents at

the inner-city public high school in Maryland, USA. The study helps to understand the perception of these parents and their engagement with the school. The study explores the various ways parents and school staff at a predominantly African American inner-city high school perceives parental involvement and un-involvement. Furthermore, it tries to find out how the various definitions of parental involvement might cause wrong perception about the interest of African American parents in their children's education. The study also indicated the likely reasons for parental un-involvement found in African American inner city-school.

The main themes that emerged in respect of the meanings of parental involvement are as follows; Communication, participation at school, Participation outside of school, achieve and believe and village keepers. The result shows that some of the people interviewed have similar views as the earlier understanding of parental involvement. The result as well brought to notice, areas in which the earlier models may not be suitable to address the context of inner-city school Williams (2012).

A similar study to Lopez & Raquel (2011) carried out a study on how different immigrant American parents get involved in their children's education. The goals of the study were to examine the impact of the involvement of African American parents on students' academic achievements and compare with the impact of European American parents along with Asian American parents students' academic achievements. They explored the factors affecting parental involvement and the academic achievement of African American students. The study suggests that the parents of Asian and European students are more involved in school related activities than parents of African American students. Unlike the Asian and European American students, African students are more likely to face barriers which could be in the form of unemployed parents, low social economic status, parents' doing more than one job to sustain the family, and not excluding other societal issues. It is worthy of note that there are certain instances of success in parental involvement witnessed among African American students. This could be linked to combination of community involvement and leadership which help in overcoming economic and societal disparities (Lopez & Raquel, 2011). Williams (2012) and Lopez & Raquel (2011) studies are somewhat related because both were carried out multicultural

settings. Though Williams (2012) focused more on how parents and staff of African American inner-city school view parental involvement, it did not focus on the performance of the parents of African American students as compared to immigrant parents of different race. Lopez & Raquel (2011) focused more on the effective implementation of the different views of parental involvement with respect to immigrant parents of different races. It compared how immigrant parents of different races participate in their children's education

African American parents have made a lot of improvements because of parental involvement programs which focused on the themes; outreach, indigenous research and empowerment (Abdul-Adil.et.al.2006). With focus on these themes, Abdul-Adil's (2006) study on African Americans suggests some practical strategies for enhancing inner-city African American parental involvement and school success among inner-city African American families. Abdul-Adil concludes that, different parents could have different perspectives of their roles in parental involvement and having the knowledge of what some parents view as parental involvement could help in the expansion of the characteristics of parental involvement. Hence, Jackson (2005) deemed it necessary to critically look at what mothers from low-income neighborhood view as their roles in parental involvement. Their work demonstrated how African American mothers from low-income neighborhood view their roles in the course of their children learning mathematics. The work focused on the involvement in children's education of 10 mothers. It forms the basis for the expansion of the characterization of parental involvement. It made evident the parents actions in terms of 'intellectual resources' in the children's education and encourages practices which could be traditionally visible and invisible to the school (Civil. et.al.2002). The results demonstrated that the traditional understanding of parental involvement may not take cognizance of the ways that low-income parents intentionally involve themselves in their children's education. The result also made evident the challenges that some of the parents face in respect of the children's learning of Mathematics. Jackson (2005) tried to get a broader idea of what parents view as parental involvement and the hindrance to them.

## 2.2 Studies on parental involvement of immigrant minorities in Sweden

Recent years have seen a notable increase in studies on parental involvement in immigrant contexts in Sweden. Bouakaz (2007) qualitatively explored what hinders and what promotes parental involvement in education. The researcher critically looked at the influence of the relationship between the home and the school on parental interaction in schools within predominantly Arab inhabited areas in Sweden where the parent's only spoken language is Arabic. Bouakaz (2007) in his work showed that parents usually want to protect their children from the school, whereas the school sometimes wants to protect the children from the parents. This can be attributed to situations where parents feel that their child are becoming "too Swedish", or the teachers are of the concern that the child might suffer from some kind of "religious oppression" in the home. Bouakaz (2007) identified home-focused parental involvement as a key form of parental involvement. This means that parents play an active role in the upbringing of their children, help them with their school work and ensure that they arrive at the school and take care of their general needs. Parental involvement includes the parents visiting the school and making themselves available at meetings and other school organized activities. The teachers and the school's collaboration with the parents might seem not important as long as everything runs in accordance with the teachers' expectations. Complementary teaching methods could be a way through which parents protect their children. Parents could organize extracurricular activities outside the school hours in the form of homework or native language instruction in a bid to protect the cultural heritage (language, identity culture, and religion) and make efforts to protect their children and other young people from the influence of what the parents call the "street culture". Bouakaz (2007) identified and analysed the various forms of collaboration between school and home. He suggested ways (collaboration) of reducing barriers caused by language problems or cultural differences. Some of these forms of collaboration include:

- *Learning meetings* (workshops): This involves arranging meetings to assist teachers and parents with tips and advice that supports the children and things that could facilitate learning at home or in the school.
- *Two-way communication*: This involves creating effective forms of communication with respect to what is happening in the school and the children's performance, development and overall progress.

- *Volunteer work*: This involves recruiting and organizing parents for support and assistance.
- *Homework assistance*: This involves providing parents with adequate information and ideas with respect to how to help children with their homework.
- *Decision making*: This involves carrying parents along in school decision making, giving parents the position leaders and representatives.
- *Cooperation with the local community*: This involves identifying resources and services from the community and integrating them into ways of strengthening the family and school activities, the children's learning and development, (Bouakaz, 2007; 2009).

Furthermore, Bouakaz (2007) indicated that parents' limitations in Swedish language make them not to have good knowledge of the operations of the school system in Sweden. These difficulties can be attributed to socio-cultural barriers. The differences in traditions, values and norms as regards the parents and teachers relationship cause hindrances to cooperation and communication. Bouakaz (2007) suggested changes in the attitudes and approaches of schools towards the parents to improve collaboration in multicultural schools. This could be in the form of changes in policy and strategies.

Another study targeting a different immigrant group of parents is reported by Osman (2013) on Somali Parents and Parental Involvement in Compulsory Schools in Flen, Sweden. The study was carried out to understand the Somali parents' perception of parental involvement. The data collected from conducted interviews with 16 Somali parents in Flen city showed that Somali parents have a view regarding parental involvement which separates school and home functions. The study indicated that many parents were not aware of the required level of parental involvement or lacked the competence to involve in their children's education. This study on the other hand, showed that language, education level, school experiences, segregation and social conditions were some of the most important factors that affect their level of parental involvement. It is evident that parents in this study were excluded from participating in their children education due to language, cultural, social, educational or/and organizational limitations.

Griph (2015) conducted a qualitative research on the role of cultural background in

parent-teacher relationship using 9 parents and 4 teachers. The study sought to analyse how cultural background of parents with Russian origin can influence their communication with teachers in elementary school and preschool class in Göteborg, Sweden. Griph (2015) conducted the quantitative research using 9 parents and 4 teachers. The study shows cultural mismatch. It indicated a cultural influence between the parents and the teachers and this affects their communication. People's way of life and circumstances could greatly influence the communication between the parents just as the knowledge of Swedish language, occupation, and education could also affect it (Griph, 2015).

Parental involvement in a multicultural preschool could be associated with similar or different challenges as in a monocultures or predominantly-one-cultural preschool. Amini (2011) conducted a study on Parental Involvement in Multicultural Preschool setting which is a challenge for education. Amini (2011) conducted a qualitative study with 7 parent, 3 teachers and a school manager in Göteborg Sweden. One of the aims of the research is to throw more light on how parents and teachers in a particular multicultural preschool carry out the parental involvement, what stimulates parental involvement and what hinders it. Furthermore, the goals include finding ways of improving condition and improving the level of parental involvement in the same preschool using some organised activities. The researched work explore the following: What is the perception of the parents and the school staff about participation? Secondary, are there ways of getting the parents more involved? Finally, what are the hindrances to parental involvement? The result showed that the parent were willing to improve in their parental involvement in different activities and their relations with the school. The major hindrance are in terms of language and communication, cultural differences in view of children's upbringing, the nature of jobs of the parents and lack of informal social network support. Furthermore, creating further activities in the preschool which could inspire more parental involvement might not require so much money or time and could adequately be incorporated into the daily activities of the preschool (Amini, 2011).

These studies have similarities in certain ways. Bouakaz (2007), Osama (2013) and Griph (2015) conducted their studies with a focus on groups of parents of similar cultural

backgrounds while Amini (2011) conducted his study on a group of parents of different cultural backgrounds. In all these studies, cultural background, language, communication, level of education of the parents, and the nature of jobs of the parents were identified as a hindrance to good parental involvement. Bouakaz (2007) and Amini (2011) suggested that creating more activities in school which involves parents could inspire more parental involvement.

### **3.0 Theoretical perspectives**

Theoretical perspective used in this researched work is Bourdieu's theory because it gives us an insight into people's attitude, disposition and practices which are processed in contrast to the individual qualities which should be looked into in complex system of interaction and relations between migrants, their social network and their host community. Another theoretical perspective used in this work is the ecology of human development by Bronfenbrenner because it could be used in the assessment of parental involvement in education in the course of child's development. He is of the opinion that the components of the micro-system is closely connected to the child and the parent is of the micro-system. In the analyses of child's development, the parents are usually considered since they are linked together.

#### **3.1. Bourdieu's theory**

The basis of this work is Bourdieu's theory. He linked his theoretical ideas with empirical research which are based on people daily life. He went further to name his cultural anthropological perspective, theory of practice. Bourdieu's reflected on different kinds of individual who play different roles in a multidimensional social space. Although their characteristics might not be explained by their social class membership but they could be defined by the kind of capital they possess (Broady, 1999). Capital as well-known could be symbolic and very useful assets. Bourdieu (1999) went further to explore the differences between the types of capital such as economic capital, symbolic capital, cultural and social capital. Bourdieu also made use of the concept-habitus.

Economic Capital: This comprises the material resources, the income of individual; material resource and the class to which the individual belongs play great role in the availability of opportunity for the individuals in the society. The life style is usually a function of the economic capital (Broady, 1998).

Cultural Capital: This entails a person way of life; the way a person speaks, thinks and perceive issues, and a person's experiences. This could be found mainly in the knowledge that subsists in the human body. Bourdieu made use of cultural capitals in terms of objective and institutionalized forms. This includes books, educational institutions, technique, newspapers theories and museums. Capital is regarded as the most significant language because it is most sought-after language and it is seen as superior to other languages. Broady (1998) stated that Bourdieu explains language as mechanism of power. Language is a very important tool for our participation in culture and our education in the future. Language gives us identity. It accords us the possibility to learn, think and express ourselves. Our preparedness and knowledge to attend to life situation are got mainly through language. Language also entails gesture, mimes, and even our intonation. Culture is an expression of human behaviour and human life. It also involves a set of rules, symbols, and values shared by a group of people. Culture gives specific identity to a particular language and behavioural pattern. Therefore, culture could be furtherance of the metaphorical mind; just as language. Thus, it could be suggested that there is a close connection between culture and language.

The immigrant families' culture capital could be different from that of the families of the majority group in Sweden. Hence, it necessary to be considered in relation to the question emanating from studies concerning parental involvement and communication between parents with different cultural backgrounds (than Swedish).

Symbolic Capital: This comprises honour, status and prestige. This varies from one social group to another and it influences the extent to which they command authority or influence situation (Tabrizi, 2007).

Social Capital: This comprises family ties, one's acquaintance and friends, schoolmates, membership in organizations that enables close contact. It is somewhat difficult to

evaluate social capital as compared to economic capital. Indulging in social event can affect a person's social capital just as not having a job affects it. A low level of social capital could be an indicator of a person's isolation and it could be caused by immigration into a new country or by moving into a new community (Bourdieu, 1986, cited in Boukaz, 2007).

Habitus: this could be explained in terms of a person's mentality to act in a certain situations. This could be acquired by an individual at earlier stage of socialization and the individual builds on it based on subsequent choice in life. Habitus can as well be looked as one's abilities to think, attend to issue and organize oneself within a social setting. The abilities could be acquired in the course of a person's upbringing. Therefore, parents' experiences could vary based on the country in which they were brought up. Hence, a person's history makes up its habitus. Habitus is close related to the lifestyle space (Bourdieu, 1993 cited in Boukaz 2007).

These concepts are very paramount in my work since it focuses on immigrant parents whose children are in preschool and whose experience are founded on being brought up outside Sweden. Hence their habitus differ from the Swedish parents.

### **3.2 Bronfenbrenner's theory.**

The theory of ecology of human development was first developed by American psychologist Prof. Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). There is a suggestion that socialization, development and learning takes place during the interaction between the environment and the individual. Relations' roles and activities are viewed as the foundations of these interactions. In Bronfenbrenner's system theoretical model, he pointed out four specific levels which are connected to each other.

The first level which he identified as Microsystem level encompasses a series of settings in which the children spent time and interact with other people. The example includes the home, the neighbourhood and even the preschool.

The second level identifies as the Mesosystem level. The mesosystem portrays the link or

the connection between these setting mentioned above (Fredriksson, 1991).

The third identifies as Exosystem level. The factors at this level affect the opportunities to develop positive and the constant link between the various microsystems. These factors are such as nature of job, place of work or school board regulations might limit the chances of parent visiting the preschool.

The fourth identifies as Macro system. At this level the political, economic and cultural factors were identified to affect the decisions which are connected to the expansion of the preschool system, the contents of the school curriculum, labour market regulations and specific encouragement steps to immigrant parents.

This use of this ecology of human development perspective in my study has enabled me to extend the focus of individual families to the general conditions of immigrant families who are new to the Swedish preschool and the Swedish preschool and the Swedish society in general.

#### **4.0 The Study**

The aim of the research is to explore parental understanding of parental involvement in education among Nigerian parents in Sweden. The research questions to be explored are the following:

- How do parents describe their involvement in their children's education?
- What are the parent's expressed perspectives on parental involvement in education in Sweden in general?

#### **4.1 Methodology and method**

The methodology adopted is tailored towards the main objective of the research. Semi structured interview as applied in this qualitative research to explore parental understanding of parental involvement among Nigerian parents in Sweden. One of the goals of qualitative research is eliciting the meaning of realistic phenomenon which could

be applied in a broad setting. (Mason, 1996). Qualitative research elicits “subject” data from the view of people interviewed (De Coster & Lichtenstein 2010, p.232). In simple terms qualitative research is the process of getting the account life experiences of event using diverse means which could include the recording of conversation between people and interviewer (De Coster & Lichtenstein, 2010, p.232). The two underlying principles of qualitative analysis are employing a flexible process and being conscious of the social context. Furthermore, qualitative research compiles a wide range of data concerning the investigative phenomenon. It creates avenue for an approach with a focus on individuals with respect to a special setting and context. This helps the researcher to get direct information from the participant.

The data collected was carried out through a semi structured interviews in which participants are encouraged to express their in-depth knowledge of the topics discussed or question asked. Most qualitative research employs this nature of interview. Hence a qualitative interview could be in form of well-structured discussion in which the interviewer is expected to listen to the participant so as to collect vital information relating to the phenomenon under study.

The interview took cognizance of the steps that could be followed in the course of conducting interview as accounted by Kvale (1996, p.88). These include creating the themes, designing the interview, carrying out the proper interview, transcribing it, analysis, verification and final report. This study is a qualitative study. In the view of Kvale (1996, p. 54), “Qualitative research interview has a unique potential for obtaining the access to the lived world of the subjects, who in their own words describe their activities, experiences and opinions”. In this study, qualitative interviews were conducted and recorded immediately to get undiluted information directly from the immigrant parents interviewed, so as not to lose any vital information.

#### **4.2 Selection criteria**

The selection criteria were tailored towards the nature of the research work – parental involvement. The criterion includes Nigerian parents who have children between the age-range of 6-13. Children within this age range attend Swedish Compulsory School. In this

contest, the means of recruitment of these parents was through the Nigerian union meeting. I met those people that I interviewed in a meeting of the Nigerian Union in Sweden. I handed a formal letter containing everything about the research to the chairman of the association.

The chairman read the letter before the audience and I was given also the opportunity to explain more on the research criteria.

Many of the participants of the interview voluntarily agreed to be interviewed. I later collected their names and their mobile numbers. Date and venue were subsequently fixed for the interview. I communicated with them five days before the scheduled date of the interview and also reminded them about it by sending text messages to them a day before the scheduled date and as well calling them on phone. 12 people attended the interview and were agreed to be interviewed. I interviewed those whose children were still within the age range of 6-13 years.

The selection criteria were as well set up such that the interview could help in getting good and direct information from the target group which is the immigrant parents that have children between the age-range of 6-13 who are attending the compulsory education in Sweden.

Table 3: Participants in the study

S/N	Participant	Age of their children(year)	Gender
1	Ogochi	7	female
2	Chidi	6	male
3	Nneka	7	female
4	Tunde	6	male
5	Adebisi	8	female
6	Ola	9	male

7	Uche	7	male
8	Favour	8	female
9	Chinyere	10	female
10	Chika	12	female
11	Omawomi	6	female
12	Ngozi	12	female

### **4.3 Ethical considerations**

With respect to quantitative research, ethical issues were enshrined in the entire research process, the design, the interviews, transcription, evaluation/analysis (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009). In the same vein, all these aspects were considered in this study.

The participants agreed voluntarily to be interviewed. The interviewer explained to the participants that the focus group interview is not an examination where one is expected to fail or pass. This gives them the morale to feel free and participate fully during the interview. In order for participants in this study to append their signatures, a well-defined letter was written in which the aim of this study was stated, how data would be collected, handled, analysed and dispatched. Prior to the outset of the interviews, participants were informed about the aim of this study and hence verify if they would permit audio recording of the interviews. They were also informed that they were free to withdraw their participation in the interviews at any point that they feel uncomfortable with the interviews. It is worthy of note that no one quit the interviews.

To maintain privacy and confidentiality of respondents, all names are pseudonyms to protect the integrity of the participants. I applied thematic analysis in this work where data are divided into main themes. However, I also used a repetition method where the topics that occurred and reoccur were used as the main themes (Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

#### **4.4. Data collection process**

The data collection procedure was through focus group interviews which could be a qualitative technique for data collection. The focus group consists of a group(s) of people with certain characteristics such as immigrant parents of Nigerian origin who reside in Sweden. They are required to discuss a given topic and also to share their opinions, perceptions, beliefs and attitudes toward a given topic (Anderson, 1990). According to Denscombe (2007) focus group is usually made up of small groups of people between 6 and 9 in number who are brought together by trained moderator (researcher) to explore their ideas, perceptions, feelings on a particular topic. Clayton (2005) identified several strength of the focus group's ability to produce a reasonable data in a given topic in a short time.

The reason for choosing focus group interview is because it is suitable to a qualitative research work such as mine and also it will enable me to get some first-hand answers directly from the people that I use as my case study. Focus group interview was used two times and each focus group interview was made up of 6 Nigerian parents. Data was collected through two different focus group interviews which were conducted in a church which was conducive for the parents. The reason for choosing a church was that parents always feel safe and relaxed in the church. The interview was a semi structured one which makes the interview session flexible such as to enable the participants feel free and openly share their experiences, understandings and ask for clarification where it is needed. The interview lasted about 1hr and 30 minutes and was audio recorded and transcribed the same day to ensure accuracy

#### **4.5. Analysis procedure**

I applied thematic analyses in this work where data are divided into themes. However, I also use method where the topics that occurred and re-occurred were used as main themes (Rynad & Bernad, 2003). The themes emerged reflect parental perception on parental involvement in their children's education. The analysis of the data occurred in two stages. The first stage involved reading transcripts for each interviewee several times using the research questions as a basis to identify reoccurring issues from these transcripts. This

was a useful way of acclimatizing myself to the data because it helped me refocus on the questions that framed this study in the first place and reasons for its impetus. This initial phase also involved sifting, sorting, reviewing and reflecting on the raw data to discover some of the salient features in the responses. The second stage of analysis entailed both data reduction and selection or progressive focusing to identify the recurring issues and concerns (Rynad & Bernad, 2003). The following three broad issues crystalized during this phase of the analysis, i.e., (a) parental challenges (b) cultural differences (c) parental relationship with the schools. Table 2 below presents the broad categories and some of the themes and key issues emerging from the second stage of the analysis.

Table 4 Analytic categories and themes from respondents

<i>Main categories</i>	<i>Themes and parental perspectives</i>
Parental challenges	language barrier, nature of job, time constraints, lack of knowledge
Cultural differences	fear of contravening the law, differences in school systems, child-rearing practices, communal support.
Relationship with the school	Communal involvement, supporting homework

## **5.0 Result**

This research work involved 12 Nigerian parents who were interviewed. Themes were derived from the analysis of the data collected, which comprises the following: language barrier, educational level of the parents, nature of job, fear of contravening the law, cultural differences, and communal life.

## 5.1 Application of different mechanisms in carrying out parental involvement

The parents' role in supporting their children in school work is very outstanding. It is possible for parents to enhance the performance of their children in education by helping them in their school work and other activities. Most parents know their wards' individual behaviour and abilities, and how to get the best out of them. There is a need to help the children understand what is expected of them in a particular homework or assignment as noted by one parent.

*I do help my children by explaining in simplest terms what is expected of them in a school work. (Parent 6 group 1).*

The views expressed by these parents resonate with other parents who express similar opinion on different ways they assist their children in school work.

*Some students understand better when their parents explain certain topics to them despite the fact that they were initially finding it difficult to understand it in the school. Some parents can even use their native languages or dialects to make sure their wards understand what they want to explain to them. (Parent 4 group 2).*

Despite these parents' understanding of parental involvement and their different ways of involving in their children's education, the views expressed by these parents resonate with other parents who express similar opinions on different mechanism they use in helping their children's in academic achievement.

*One of the ways that I assist my children in school work is by taking them to educational events like film houses and cinemas where educational films are shown. So, if the things that they have seen demonstrated in a film house or cinema are being taught in school, it would be easier for them to understand. I believe that children learn a lot from practical demonstration of things. I also help them with their homework as little as I can. (Parents 2 group 1).*

The parents in the study have different ways of motivating their children in their studies.

*I normally check what my children are doing every moment they are at home and also tell them that there is time for everything: time to rest, time to play and time to be involved educational activities. (Parent 7 group 2).*

The views expressed by these parents above resonate with other parents who use different supportive strategies to stimulate their children in their education.

*I usually buy some presents for my children whenever they do well in school and shower them with praises when they have done their assignments. (Parent 8 group 2).*

In comparison, both parents in Nigeria and Sweden apply similar mechanisms in inspiring their children to perform certain academic works as expressed by this parent below:

*Some parents both in Nigeria and Sweden provide different learning aids which include electronics device to ensure their children understand certain topics and even do their academic works. While some parents who could not afford academic devices use some incentives such as gift items and encouraging talk to influence their children to do certain academic works. (Parent 3 group).*

Succinctly put, almost all the interviewed parents showed a sense of willingness to participate in their children's education and expressed deep responsibility towards their children's education. The parents are of the opinion that giving different types of encouragements to the children and applying different teaching mechanisms could inspire the children to carry out their school works.

The application of different mechanisms in inspiring the children is founded on the parent's inherent knowledge. This is an aspect of cultural capital expressed by Bourdieu's theory (1999). Cultural capital could be found mainly in the knowledge that subsists in the body.

## **5.2. Challenges parents encounter in involvement and participation**

Most parents believe the educational background of the parents could hinder parental involvement in education. They agreed that parents who are less educated might not be able to help their children in school work or homework adequately even when they understand Swedish language.

*I am not very much educated though I can speak little English, but I cannot read and write. In this case, I am not able to help my children so much with their homework. (Parent 4, group 1).*

The views expressed by these parents resonate with other parents who express similar opinion that language barrier hinders them from participating fully in their children's

education from the statements of some of the parents. Without the knowledge of host country language, it could be difficult to participate effectively in their children's education. One other parent expressed similar views regarding the different obstacles in engaging with the schools as follows:

*In my view, it is language barrier because without the Swedish language you never be fully committed in your children's education, for instance during the parent's meetings, I find it very difficult to understand what was usually discussed in the meetings. At the end of the meetings, I would go home without achieving anything. You will find out that without the knowledge of Swedish language you will be left behind. (Parent 1, group 1).*

Despite the challenges experienced by the parent above, the school often reaches out to the parents through several strategies as explained by these parents.

*The teacher usually sends letters which I still need a translator for because they are always in Swedish and I don't have a good knowledge of Swedish. (Parent 2 group 1).*

Lack of knowledge of Swedish language can cause extra stress on the parents by looking for a translator to enable them help their children in their school work.

*My son's teacher communicates with me through my older son who can speak both English and Swedish. (Parent 4 group 1).*

The knowledge of Swedish language is vital in parental involvement among immigrant parents in Sweden.

*I am very willing to help my children with their school work but most of the assignments always come in Swedish language which makes it very difficult for me to help them adequately. (Parent 5 group1).*

Some the parents in this study had unpleasant experiences with some of the teachers in the school as noted by some of the parents.

*My son's teacher is always in a hurry to answer some questions and she does not care whether I understand what she explained or not. (Parent 7 group 2).*

Having a good relationship with the parents can motivate them to be fully involved in their children's education.

*My children's teacher sees me as an illiterate and ignores me at times. This does not create room for good relationship. (Parent 12).*

Most parents agreed that the time schedule of their jobs affect them adversely in assisting their children in their school work or home work.

*I normally work in the night and do some extra jobs. When my children are at home I am usually at work and when I am at home I would be sleeping while my children would be in the school. When they are eventually at home, I might still be sleeping or be getting ready for another night job and when I don't do night job, I might be busy with extra job. This has hindered me a lot from assisting my children in their homework. I believe it is more of economic problem that makes me not to assist my children in their homework effectively. (Parent 3 group1).*

The nature of jobs these parents perform was also noted as another hindrance to their involvement in their children's education.

*I personally work a lot because I have to put food on the table and pay my bills at the end of every month. The nature of my job does not allow me to participate very much in my children's education and the language problem is another factor just as the first person has explained. (Parent 1).*

Parents in the study understood the importance of motivating their children for their educational work

*I spend most of my time at work but any day that I did not work I make sure that I check my children's school bags to see whether they have any homework and also to know what they have done in school. I usually buy some presents for my children whenever they do well in school and shower them with praises when they have done their assignments. (Parent 8).*

These parents have juggled work and parental responsibilities as one parent note:

Some of the challenges that the parents encounter are as follows: language barrier, nature of their jobs, educational background. Bourdieu and Bronfenbrenner' theories manifested in the challenges that these parents encounter. Language is cultural capital according to Bourdieu's theory. These parents have limited knowledge of the Swedish language and it

impacts their parental involvement. Furthermore, the level of education of the parents and the nature of their jobs are as well cultural capital according to Bourdieu theory (1999). Bronfenbrenner`s theory (1979) also stated that the nature of job, place of work etc. might limit the parents from visiting the school (Fredriksson, 1991).

### **5.3 Differences in Nigerian and Swedish Education System**

The parents noted the differences in systems of education between Nigeria and Sweden that could have some impacts in their engagement with the schools and their children`s education. Some of the parents noted that in Nigeria the students are introduced to serious academic work at an early stage of their learning unlike in Sweden. As one parent notes:

*In Nigeria a child that is 5 years can read the letters of the English alphabet; A, B, C, D to Z and count the digits; 1, 2, 3 to 400 without any assistance from teachers unlike a 6-year-old child in Sweden. (Parent, 2).*

The parents were in agreements that the use of school uniform in Nigeria schools create a sense of equality among the student.

*In Nigeria, the children wear school uniforms to school. This makes all the students seem equal amongst themselves. This helps to build humility and respect in the students and as well helps them to be humble to learn. In Sweden, the children go to school in any form of clothe that they like. (Parent 8).*

The view expressed by this parent contrasts with the perspectives expressed by the other parents regarding the differences between the Swedish and Nigerian system in how the Swedish school prepares the children get ready for school. According to one of the parents, it takes a long time to get children to begin reading in Swedish schools.

*Even with the assumption that at the age of 7, the children in Sweden start to be committed to school work, many of them are not able to read and write at that age. (Parent group 1).*

The challenges about readiness for schools notwithstanding, the parents concur that the Swedish schools provide opportunities and other provisions that facilitate learning as part of the government responsibility that do not exist in Nigeria.

*Children in Sweden are very lucky when compared to some students in Nigeria because the Swedish government provides most of the facilities needed for learning. (Parent 10, group 2).*

The parents acknowledge the fact that children in Sweden have better opportunities to pursue their dream career because of availability of all the learning facilities in Sweden.

*In Sweden, the government makes more provisions for the students than in Nigeria. The Swedish government takes care of children's food and even health care while in the school but in Nigerian it is the sole responsibility of the parents. (Parent 7 group 2).*

While the differences in educational systems may pose a challenge, the school's internal working methods such as working in groups and the nature of teaching impact directly on how the parents involve in school work. One of the parents described the differences as follows:

*Schooling in Sweden is more practically oriented than in Nigeria, in Nigeria student do more of brain work than practical work because some of the schools don't have the necessary equipment for practical work. It is either they don't have the funds for such equipment or that they don't care to provide the equipment. (Parent 9 group 2).*

Majority of the interviewed parents believe that the children in Nigeria are introduced early to structure educational learning and these differ from the school system in Sweden.

*In Nigeria a child that is 5 years can read the letters of the English alphabet; A, B, C, D to Z and count the digits; 1, 2, 3 to 400 without any assistance from teachers unlike a 6-year-old child in Sweden. (Parent 2).*

In summary, the parents believe that the differences between the educational systems and methods of education in Sweden and Nigeria impact on their engagements with the schools and may hinder full involvement in the children education.

Bourdieu theory (1999) indicated that educational institutions, techniques and theories are aspect of cultural capital. The parents in this study are impacted by differences in educational system between Nigeria and Sweden.

#### **5.4 Communal Life, Cultural Differences and Fear of Contravening the Law**

Communal life and cultural differences play diverse roles in parental involvement as indicated by the expressions of some of the parents. In the same vein, having the knowledge of the basic laws of the host country could play a great role in parents taking appropriate decisions about themselves and their children. This guides the parents on how to avoid infringing on the rights of the children and at the same time not to over-pamper their children to destruction. Some parents are disillusioned by not being able to correct their children as expected as a result of not having adequate knowledge of the basic laws of the host country as expressed by some of the parents below:

*If you as a parent force your children to do their assignments, you can be punished. As it stands now, I don't even know whether I have any parental right towards my children or not. The government should organize a rally to educate parents on their parental right in Sweden. I believe that close to 70 % of immigrant parents don't know their rights as parents in Sweden. Parents' role is more difficult in Sweden than in Nigeria. (Parent 9 group 2).*

The parents do not have adequate knowledge of their rights as a result they are often afraid of contravening the law in the course of carrying out their parental right.

*In Nigeria, if a child misbehaves in the school he/she will be disciplined by the teacher before conveying the information to the parents but in Sweden the reverse is the case in the sense that teachers in Sweden have no powers over the students just as the parents. (Parent 9 group 2).*

In contrast, it is believed that children in Sweden make parental involvement more difficult as compared to their Nigerian counterparts as expressed by these parents below:

*Some of the Children in Sweden make homework more difficult, unlike in Nigeria. In Nigeria, children are fully aware that they could be punished if they fail to do their homework. It motivates them to do it themselves or look for someone that would help them with the homework (parent 8 group 2).*

The parents came from autocratic community where punishment is used as a means of discipline. The parents believed that the children having in mind that failure to do their

assignment could attract punishment motivates them to look for somebody that will help them with their assignment

*In Sweden, some children don't get more involved in their homework even when their parents are willing to help them because they know that failure to do the assignment will not attract any punishment. (Parent 11 group 2).*

The parents are of the opinion that children in Sweden are abusing their freedom by dictating to their parents whether they want to do their assignment or not unlike in Nigeria where children obey their parents.

*In Sweden, it is quite difficult because everything depends on the children. The children dictate for their parents. I can only teach them if they want because children dictate when they want to do their assignment. The parents' role in supporting their children in school is very important to children's future if it is enhanced. (parent 4).*

Nigerian culture and communal life witnessed in Nigeria have made it that a child could be seen as everybody's child (communal child) and could be assisted in his/her academic work by neighbors and could be corrected when he/she misbehaves as expressed by some of the parents:

*Neighbors can easily question a child if he/ she does not go to school as at when due. Furthermore, neighbors can assist other people's children in their school work without being paid for that simply because they believe that a child is everybody's child. (parent 8).*

*In Nigeria, if the parents are too busy to help their children with their homework, they can employ an auxiliary teacher or the child can even get help from siblings or friends. In Nigerian culture, children are seen as everybody's responsibility (communal child) irrespective of the child's background. If the child does something wrong, he/she could be corrected by anybody. If it entails giving the child a corporal punishment, it is equally acceptable by both the child's parents and the society because they believe that if the child becomes responsible or great in future both the child's parents and the society will definitely benefit from it. (Parent 8 group 2).*

In resonance with what has been said above as regards the impact of cultural differences on parental involvement in Sweden, these parents' expressions are as follows:

*What is applicable in Sweden is 'spare the rod and spoil the child'. Children are not allowed to be punished when they misbehave and some children will keep doing things as they like until they become out of hand and when this happens, the government will blame you the parents without knowing that they contributed to that. (parent 1)*

Swedish society and Nigeria society have different perspectives on how a child should be raised.

*It is acceptable in Nigeria that a total stranger whom you have nothing in common with could admonish your child if the child does something wrong both in your presence and in your absence but in Sweden the reverse is the case (parent 10 group 2).*

In summary, most parents are of the opinion that the basic Swedish laws have made it difficult for them to adequately correct and inspire their children in their academics and not only that cultural differences has greatly limited the assistance they could get from neighbors in carrying out their parental involvement, it has impacted their ability to carry out good parental involvement.

Lack of communal life and cultural differences are elements of social capital according to Bourdieu theory (1999) while the level of education of the parent is an element of the cultural capital. It is manifested here that lack of social and cultural capital could impact parental involvement.

## **6.0 Discussion**

This chapter presents the main findings of the research in relation to the theoretical and analytical frameworks and the previous researches work used.

All the interviewed parents have a general understanding of parental involvement and its importance. That is why they strive to carry out their parental involvement despite the hindrances they experience. On the other hand, some of them have better perspectives of

what parental involvement entails while some are limited in their knowledge of what is expected of them.

Some parents see parental involvement as just helping their children in their school work while some others see it as something that includes helping the children in their school work, providing educational gadgets and learning materials, attending school functions and meetings, creating avenues where they could see educational films, buying gifts for the children as encouragement for their academic efforts, etc.

Furthermore, some parents carry out their parental involvement by explaining to the children in simple terms what is expected of them in any particular school work, by making sure the children judiciously use their time at home without wasting their time on frivolities, by checking the academic performance of the children and discussing it with the teachers to get optimum results, by directly discussing with their children the challenges that they (the children) encounter in the school, etc. These parents' approaches to parental involvement are in unison with what were identified by Wikelund & Cotton (1989), "that parents involve in their children's education by attending school functions, monitoring of homework, providing adequate study environment and time for their children, directly teaching them certain aspects (both academic and non-academic) of their studies at home, etc". This is also in agreement with Bouakaz (2007), who identified home-focused parental involvement as a key form of parental involvement. Bouakaz (2007) noted that parents play an active role in the upbringing of their children, help them with their school work and ensure that they arrive at the school and take care of their general needs.

Notwithstanding that the parents in this study might have the same or varying understandings of parental involvement and how they carry out parental involvement. Some factors were identified as their hindrances to good parental involvement. They include the following:

### **6.1 The fear of contravening the law**

The extent to which parents influence and discipline their children in order to enhance their educational achievements could be limited by certain governmental laws. However,

when parents are ignorant of their rights in taking responsibilities toward their children's education and their control over their children, they could be scared of taking certain decisions on their children because of the fear of contravening the law. This is in agreement with Bouakaz (2007) who identified that some immigrant parents are afraid of taking certain decisions on their children because they do not have adequate knowledge of their parental rights in Sweden.

As identified in this study, some parents are afraid of giving their children adequate corrective measures toward their education. Many parents are afraid of applying their own style of parenting because of what other parents have passed through in the hands of the social workers as well as the fear of losing their children to social authority.

The government should try as much as they can to sensitize immigrant people more on the rights of the parents toward their children. This would help to eradicate this unfounded fear of being punished by the government for correcting a child.

## **6.2 Nature of job and time constraint**

The nature of the jobs of the immigrant parents could be a barrier to parental involvement. From the interview, I came to the conclusion that there are some certain jobs that allow parents to be with their children when their children are back from school while others don't. It has been noticed that most of the immigrant parents are involved in a lot of menial jobs, jobs that make them spend most of their time outside their homes and extra jobs because of one reason or the other. Economic status could also cause some of the parents to work extra hours and involve in different types of difficult jobs to make both ends meet. This prevents them from participating in their children's education effectively. This can be one of the obstacles to parental involvement. Parents' unavailability owing to the nature of their jobs or their general schedule could be a limiting factor to good parental involvement in children's education. In such situations, it is difficult to get good information about the performance of the children and subsequent corrections when required. These hindrances are in agreement with Amini (2011) who also identified that the nature of the jobs of the parents and lack of informal social

network support are hindrances to good parental involvement. Griph (2015) also noted that the type of occupation of the parents could hinder good parental involvement.

Finders & Lewis (1994) pointed out certain aspects of this problem can somewhat be addressed by fixing flexible meeting times that would suite working parents, those engaged in shift works and those that commute to very far places of work. Creating a platform for home visits to parents can be a way to redressing the imbalance (Molland, 2004).

### **6.3 Language barrier**

Language barrier could be a very determining factor to the extent which parents contribute to the academic work and academic performance of their children. Parents who could not understand Swedish could be incapable of helping their children with their homework which usually comes in Swedish or with Swedish instructions. Most of the participants agreed that language barrier has been one of the major factors that hinder the communication between parents and the school. The communication barrier can be more pronounced when such parents are also faced with the issue of child's behaviour or academic progress. They concluded that some of them might be willing to teach their children or help them to do their homework but they are already incapacitated by language barrier. Some of the parents who have lived in Sweden for long period of time were able to help their children with homework irrespective of the language barrier since they have gone through Swedish language school for immigrants. In this work language barrier which is identified as one of the factors hindering good parental involvement is in tandem with some previous works. Bouakaz (2007) indicated that parents' limitation in Swedish language make them not to have knowledge of the operations of the school system in Sweden. Osama (2013) noted that it was evident that parents in his study were excluded from participating in their children's education due to language hindrances. Furthermore, Amini (2011) indicated that the result from his study showed that parents are willing to improve in their parental involvement in different activities and their relations with the school but their major hindrances include language and communication, etc. Griph (2015) noted that the knowledge of Swedish language could

greatly influence the communication between the parents and the school staff.

#### **6.4 Cultural differences and communal life**

Parental involvement in children's educational development is not limited to only school activities but it also includes activities outside the school premises as advocated in some previous studies (Wikelund & Cotton, 1989). The participants in this study explained how the culture of their country has made it that they were constantly surrounded by relatives and friends. They are the people that the parents turn to when they are in need of help and support. Here in Sweden, some of the parents have the feeling of loneliness and insecurity in a new country with a different education system, language, cultural values, codes and means of expression. They feel lonely and insecure in the state of new social contacts.

Furthermore, in Nigeria children are fully aware that they could be punished if they did not do their homework, but it is not the same here in Sweden where children have different orientation about discipline. This makes the parenting work more demanding on the Nigerian immigrant parents in Sweden as compared to the parents in Nigeria. In Nigeria, it is usually the children who would ask for help in their homework because they are aware that they could be punished if they don't carry out their homework. This compels them to be focused on their studies. The case is somewhat different in Sweden.

Poor parental involvement witnessed among immigrant parents could be attributed to cultural differences. The immigrant parents' poor parental involvement is not as a result of their unwillingness to participate in their children's education but could be as a result of their limited knowledge on how parental involvement is done in Sweden. Sometimes, teachers give information to parents without considering how this information is received. The differences in culture between individuals could determine how various individuals encode messages, what medium they choose for transmitting them and the ways messages are interpreted. The school officials may think that the way parents involve in their children's education in Sweden is probably the same in different parts of the world. The hindrances to parental involvement arising from cultural differences, which were identified in this study are in agreement with Osman (2013, Griph, 2015).

## **6.5 Parents' relationship with the school staff**

A good relationship and mutual respect between the parents and the school staff could create an enabling environment for good parental involvement. When parents see themselves as being disrespected by the school staff or made to feel irrelevant in their children's education, they feel alienated from the school and participation in the school functions/co-ordination with the school could become more difficult. In this study, it was identified that some parents had unpleasant experiences with the school staff; it is either that the school staff does not respect them or made them to seem irrelevant and incapable of adequately participating in their children's education. This is in line with Nieto's (2004) view that parents are often seen by school authorities/officials as people that are not capable of what is expected of them. This hindrance is in agreement with Henderson (2007) who noted that "The willingness of the parents to become fully involved premise on the respect accorded them by the schools and whether they feel welcome in the school". It was also indicated in Nieto (2004) & McCarthey (2000) that "Parents can be discouraged, disappointed and feel frustrated when they notice that teachers view them as having a negative effect or deficiency that can hinder a progressive workable relationship". This is also in agreement with Griph (2015).

## **7.0 RECOMENDATIONS**

Time constraint: This can be one of the obstacles to parental involvement. Parents' unavailability owing to the nature of their jobs or their general schedule could be a limiting factor to good parental involvement. In such situations, it is difficult to get good information of the performance of their children and subsequent correction when required. Finders and Lewis (1994) pointed out that this hindrance can somewhat be addressed by fixing flexible meeting times that would suite working parents, those engaged in shift works and those that commute to very far places of work. Creating a platform for home visits to parents can be a way to redressing the imbalance (Molland, 2004).

The government should employ all avenues to make immigrant parents know their

parental rights over their children in Sweden. This will help the immigrant parents know the extent to which they can correct their children especially when the children are not serious with their studies. The fear that parents could lose their children to the Social Authorities for correcting their children's misdemeanor could be a big hindrance for adequate admonishment of the unserious children by their parents. Many immigrant parents are afraid to admonish their children when they are not serious with their studies.

The government/school authorities should promptly provide the parents with information regarding the school rules and regulations, school grading systems. This would enable the parents to know which grade is required of the children to study any course of their in the nearest future.

Educational level of the parents: According to the findings from the interview, educational level of the parents can also be a limiting factor to quality of parental involvement. Illiteracy can exclude some parents from participating in their children's education and this goes a long way to influencing the educational performance of their children. It is agreed that parents of greater educational qualifications tend to be more active in their children's education than parents of lesser educational qualifications (Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Children, 2000). Furthermore, despite the fact that parents of the lesser educational qualifications might be interested in participating in their children's education, it is likely that there might still be hindrances owing to their lack of experience on educational process (Seginer, 1986).

Furthermore, the school authorities should try and educate the immigrant parents on how the school system works to save them from all this stress.

The school being in a leadership position should put into consideration the cultural differences amongst immigrant parents. They officials should take their time to understand how the immigrant parents think and how they bring up their children. More efforts should be put towards multicultural approach as well as teacher's interaction with the parents. There is a need for the recognition of other people's cultures because there is evidence that shows that without the recognition of other people's cultures mutual interaction can be hampered.

All these could be achieved through education; by educating the immigrant parent on how the school system works and also on better ways to involve in their children's

education as well as educating the school officers on intercultural competence. For instance, if a Nigerian parent still has the mentality of how the school system works in Nigeria as well as how parents get involved in their children's education in Nigeria without adequate information on how the Swedish system works, they might still have the same perception of parental involvement.

According to the parents, the government should include the topic "parental involvement in children's education" in the topics taught in the language school (SFI). This requires adequate patience from both the teachers and the immigrant parents for the desired aim of teaching the topic to be achieved. This particular effort prepares the immigrant parents for what is expected of them in Sweden.

The government should as well encourage the immigrant parents to attend the language school (SFI) by giving them more incentives. In the long run, the problem of language barrier as a one of the hindrances to good parental involvement could be reduced.

It was as well suggested that the government should create avenues that would make it easier for the immigrant parents to be employed within the various fields that they studied in their native countries. This would enable them to be financially stable to be involved in their children's education.

The government/school authorities should make provision for the information sent from schools to the parents to be passed in several languages to enable the parents not miss any vital information passed across.

### **7.1. Further suggestions**

Lack of parental participation in an intercultural setting can be seen as an intercultural problem; barriers that arise in an intercultural setting. This could be worse if the teachers, school authority and the government sectors have no idea of the impact of cultural differences and the extent these cultural differences can hinder effective teaching and learning in a school. However, the schools might be complaining that immigrant parents are not fully involved in their children's education, but it could be a joint effort to achieve the desired expectation. My questions are: Why are the parents not participating in their

children's education? What are the schools and the government doing to boost the interest of the parents in areas of parental involvement in children's education? Have the schools taken out time to know the perception of immigrant parents as regards parental involvement in education and how they bring up their children? These questions and others need to be explored in other studies.

My suggestion is that adequate efforts should be put in multicultural approach and interaction between parents and teachers as well as the school system. However, there should be a multicultural dimension to information dissemination to immigrant parents in school. In order to achieve this, there is a need for school authorities, teachers and immigrant parents to have a mutual understanding of other people's cultural values. This is evident in the intercultural theory because there are instances that show that without the respect of other people's cultures, interaction and mutual understanding could be hampered. The school leadership, the teachers and the parents have a role to play towards achieving these goals. Parents need to accept the Swedish cultural influence in the school system and the school authorities need to be knowledgeable enough on intercultural competence. Also they have to take into consideration the cultural differences as regards parental involvement before apportioning blames to only the parents in the event of poor parental involvement.

Which avenues could be used to redress this situation? One of the ways of achieving this could be through culture sensitization activities in school; where parents and teachers have activities that could be culturally based. Another way could be through informal meetings at the schools. This could make the parents develop more interest in participating in school activities. The teachers are able to go for courses or trainings on intercultural competence but the parents don't have that kind of opportunity. So, there should be a common ground that could be profitable to the teachers as well as the parents.

Furthermore, parents and teachers as well as the school authorities can organize programs, activities or forum where parents are meant to understand the Swedish system; how it functions and why it functions the way it functions.

In conclusion, from this study it could be seen that some of the interviewed parents do

not effectively participate in their children's education owing to language barrier, socio-cultural, social, cultural, or educational barrier. The parents were totally in agreement that the government and the school officials along with the parents themselves need to put in more efforts in order to achieve an adequate participation of the parents in their children's education.

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## Appendix 1

Linda Chukwu  
Albyvägen 10 9tr  
14559 Norsborg  
09 11 2018

Dear Parents,

My name is Linda Chukwu. I am a master student in education - intercultural specialization at Södertörns Högskola.

Today, there is growing number of students with a Nigerian background in Sweden and I am interested in their school situation and academic achievements. You are invited to take part in an interview that will be conducted by me with the aim of finding out how parents support their children of age range 6 to 13 with respect to their school work. I am also interested in getting answers to what could help parents support their children and what prevents them from supporting their children effectively. It is a free and voluntary participation. The interview will be carried out in small groups comprising 4 to 5 participants. It will last about 50 minutes to 1 hour and will be audio recorded. The interview will be confidential, so no individuals will be identified in the master thesis.

Thanks for your future co-operation.

Note: if you need more information you are free to contact me through this email [okolochychy@yahoo.com](mailto:okolochychy@yahoo.com)

Yours faithfully,

Linda Chukwu

## **Appendix 2**

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Are there differences between the Swedish systems of education and the Nigerian system of education, as you see it?
2. Are there any similarities in the Swedish system of education and the Nigerian system of education?
3. How do you see the parent's role in supporting their children in their school work in Sweden as compared to the parent's role in Nigeria?
4. What do you do in order to assist your children in their school work?
5. What hinders you from assisting your children in their school work?
6. What kind of support do you need as a parent to be able to help your children in their school work?
7. How do you communicate with the teachers to know your children's efforts in school?
8. Do you have a good relationship with the teachers?

## **Appendix 3**

INTERVIEW:

GROUP A

ARE THERE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NIGERIAN SYSTEM OF EDUCATION AND SWEDISH SYSTEM OF EDUCATION?

In Nigerian system of education, there is early introduction /learning of basics for the pupils, for example the reciting of letters of the alphabet and counting of some digits. As a result, the pupils in the nursery and primary schools are able to read and write and can do some basic mathematics at an early stage of their learning.

This has been instrumental to the good performance of Nigerian children in foreign countries that have English as one of their teaching/instructional languages. In Nigeria, they are introduced early to the challenges in school than in Sweden. It is believed that children in Sweden start doing serious academic work in school at the age of 7. Even with the assumption that at the age of 7 that the children in Sweden start to be committed to school work, many of them are not able to read and write at that age (Parent 1).

In Nigeria a child that is 5 years can read the letters of the English alphabet; A, B, C, D to Z and count the digits; 1, 2, 3 to 400 without any assistance from teachers unlike a 6 year old child in Sweden (parent 2).

Children in Sweden have so much time to play than children in Nigeria. I am of the opinion that the school system in Sweden is not so effective in the earlier part of the children's education because it is not good to inculcate the habit of very much playing in a growing child that needs education as a foundation. For instance, how can they map out only 2 or 3 hours to study for the whole day while the rest of the day is used as leisure time? In Nigeria the pupils have only one hour to play and the rest of the hours is dedicated to their studies. This attitude of devoting very much time to playing by Swedish school children affects them also in their assignments/home work (Parent 4).

There is more discipline in the Nigerian schools than in Swedish schools.

Children in Nigerian schools are aware that they must behave properly. If they misbehave they are likely to be punished. It could be the reason they behave better than the children in the Swedish schools (parent 5).

In Nigeria, after each school term, the schools normally give awards and prizes to the best behaved and best performed students starting from the first position to the third position thereby encouraging the other students especially those that did very badly to put more efforts in their studies. The Swedish system of education does not have this type of positional grading after examination. This makes the students to feel less concerned about their studies, though those children are not aware that they still need a certain number of points to be able to choose particular course in the university. This is why we have a lot of school drop outs in Sweden today because they lack the basic foundation they needed as little child. For instance my daughter told me that she would like to be a medical doctors but I don't know whether that dream can be achieved because she does not even know her position in the class, meaning that she does not know whether to put in more efforts or not. I suggest that the Swedish system of education should start applying positional grading system to enable those children with special ambition to be more serious with their studies in order to achieve their goals (parent 6).

#### HOW DO YOU COMMUNICATE WITH THE TEACHERS TO KNOW YOUR CHILDREN'S EFFORTS IN SCHOOL?

My son's teacher has my telephone number. Basically, we communicate through phone and I understand a little bit of Swedish (parent 1).

The teachers usually send letters which I still need a translator for because they are usually in Swedish and I don't have a good knowledge of Swedish (parent 2).

The teacher has my email address through which she sends messages but the messages are usually in Swedish. It is sometimes difficult to understand fully the message that is passed through the mail (parent 3).

My son's teacher communicates with me through my older son who can speak both English and Swedish (parent 4).

They send letters but there are usually very much information in them. This makes it more difficult to understand the message being passed (parent 5).

#### DO YOU HAVE A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH THE TEACHERS?

Yes, I do. This is because I can speak a little Swedish but I can say that some of the teachers are friendly while some are not (parent 1).

Some teachers are pure racists while some are not. I am sorry to use the word 'racist' but that is how I feel. My son has complained to me times without number about how his class teacher has been maltreating him but first I thought he was lying until he came home one day looking very sad. He told me that his class teacher accuse him of something he did not do. My disappointment with the teacher was that I tried to explain to her what my son told me but she still insisted that son was guilty. My son stopped attending school for over a week. Finally, I summoned courage to meet with the principal of the school. I was very surprised when another boy confirmed that my son was innocent of that accusation. The teacher later begged for forgiveness but it was really a very bad experience (parent 2).

ARE THERE ANY SIMILARITIES BETWEEN SWEDISH SYSTEM OF EDUCATION AND NIGERIAN SYSTEM OF EDUCATION---

The Nigerian and Swedish academic grading systems are similar in the terms that both apply to A, B, C, D, E, F (alphabetic) grading system (parent 1).

You are right; the both countries have the same grading system (parent 2).

There are differences in the Nigerian and Swedish system of education. Nigerian system of education is 6-3-3-4 education System; primary: 6years, junior secondary: 3years, senior secondary: 3years, University: 4years while in the Swedish system, pre-school is provided by municipalities for children between 1 to 5years, compulsory schooling consists of three stages: lågstadiet (1 to 3years), followed by mellanstadiet (4 to 6years) and then högstadiet (7 to 9years), Gymnasium (upper secondary school or high school, (10 to 12years). In Sweden, there is an 18-year regular national program of 3 years to choose from, 6 of which are preparatory for higher education such as university and twelve of which are vocational (parent 3).

HOW DO YOU SEE THE PARENTS' ROLE IN SUPPORTING THEIR CHILDREN IN SCHOOL WORK IN SWEDEN AS COMPARED TO THE PARENTS' ROLE IN NIGERIA?

In Nigeria, parents' role in supporting their children is very much easier when you compare it to Sweden. In Nigeria parents have full control over their children, children respect their parents and obey their parents and are even helpful in the little way they can. For example, parents that are not educated can easily tell their older sons or daughters to

help their younger ones with their assignments and they will willingly help them without any problem. If I were in Nigeria, I can easily compel my children to do their assignments because I want the best for them and by the time I do that a few times they will get used to doing their homework. There are some certain decisions that required parental authority when it comes to children's future because children don't know the consequences of some of their actions in future but you as a parent know. If parents should be allowed to train their children in their own way, I believe that there will be more responsible youth and less school dropouts. In Sweden it is a lot more difficult to do. What is applicable in Sweden is 'spare the rod and spoil the child'. Children are not allowed to be punished when they misbehave and some children will keep doing things as they like until they become out of hand and when this happens, the government will blame you the parents without knowing that they contributed to that. If the parents force your children to do their assignments, the parents can be punished. As it stands now, I don't even know whether I have any parental right towards my children. The government should organize a rally to educate parents on their parental rights in Sweden. I believe that 98 percent of immigrant parents don't know their rights as parents in Sweden. Parental role is more difficult in Sweden.

The parents' role in supporting their children in school work is very paramount. It is possible for parents to enhance the performance of their children in education by helping them in their school work. Most parents know their wards' individual behaviour and abilities, and how to get the best out of them. Some students understand better when their parents explains certain topics to them despite the fact that they were initially finding it difficult to understand it in the school. Some parents can even use their native languages or dialects to make sure their wards understand what they want to explain to them. In Sweden, it is quite difficult because everything depends on the children. The children dictate for their parents. I can only teach them if they want because children dictate when they want to do their assignment. The parents' role in supporting their children in school is very important to children's future if it is enhanced (parent 4).

Without mincing words, there is a great need for parents to help their children in their school work. The teachers cannot do everything alone. They still need the parents to assist them. Some parents can apply different mechanisms to ensure that their children carry out their school work. Some parents both in Nigeria and Sweden provide different learning aids which include electronics devices to ensure their children understand certain topics and even do their academic works. While some parents who could not afford academic devices use some incentives such as gift items and encouragement talks to influence their children to do certain academic works. These complementary efforts are not usually provided by the school but provided by the parents in Nigeria (parent 3).

Sincerely speaking, children in Sweden make home work more difficult unlike in Nigeria. Nigerian children are fully aware that they would be punished if they fail to do their homework. It motivates them to look for someone that could help them with their homework but in Sweden, children don't get more involve in their homework even when

their parents are willing to help them, because they know that failure to do the homework will not attract any punishment (parent 5).

#### WHAT DO YOU DO IN ORDER TO ASSIST YOUR CHILDREN IN THEIR SCHOOL WORK?

There are many things parents do in order to assist their children in their school work. It could be in terms of learning aids or some other assistance. Sometimes, children find it difficult to understand what is expected of them in a particular school work/academic work. There is a need to help the children understand what is expected of them in a particular homework or assignment. I do help my children by explaining in simplest terms what is expected of them in a school work but if a parent does not understand the language of study, then the parent becomes handicapped (parent 6).

Yes, I agree with you but the problem is not only the language; there are some illiterate parents that cannot read and right. In addition to helping the children understand their homework or assignments, parents can also provide learning aids for their children if they can afford it. These include electronic gadgets, computer, maps, mathematical sets, etc. (parent 1).

One of the best ways that I assist my children in school work is by taking them to educational events like film houses and cinemas where educational films are shown. So, if the things that they have seen demonstrated in a film house or cinema are being taught in school, it would be easier for them to understand. I believe that children learn a lot from practical demonstration of things. I also help them with their homework the little I can (parents 2).

I am very willing to help my children with their school work but most of the assignments always come in Swedish language which makes it very difficult for me to help them adequately (parent 5).

It is sad to learn that you cannot adequately help your children when they needed your help. It could be quite frustrating (parent 2).

#### WHAT HINDERS YOU FROM ASSISTING YOUR CHILD IN SCHOOL?

In my view, it is language barrier because without the Swedish language you can never be fully committed in your children's education. For instance during the parents meetings, I find it very difficult to understand what was usually discussed. At the end of

the meetings, I would go home without achieving anything. You will find out that without the knowledge of Swedish language you will be left behind though I believe that some parents who have lived here for a long time will not find it very difficult with the language. Another problem is the nature of the jobs of some of us here in Sweden. I personally work a lot because I have to put food on the table and pay my bills at the end of every month. The nature of my job does not allow me to participate very much in my children's education and also the language problem is another factor just as the first person has explained (parent 1).

In my view, there are many things that made me not to help my children very much with their school work but the most serious hindrance is the nature of my work. I normally work in the night and do some extra jobs. when my children are at home I am usually at work and when I am at home I would be sleeping while my children would be in the school. When they are eventually at home, I might still be sleeping or getting ready for another night job and when I don't do night job, I might be busy with extra job. This has hindered me a lot from assisting my children in their homework. I believe it is more of economic problem that makes me not to assist my children in their homework effectively. I must meet up with my bills (parent 3).

Educational level of parents: I am not very much educated though I can speak little English but I cannot read and write. In this case, I am not able to help my children so much with their homework. Another problem that I am facing is the fear of violating government rules and regulations. I was told by my husband that parents don't have so much rights to their children here in Sweden and if you try to force them you be prosecuted or the social workers will take your children away from you. So, there is a limit to which I enforce things on my children (parent 4).

On one occasion, my wife and I had an argument with our 10 year old son concerning his education because he had refused to go to school. We tried our best to convince him but he refused to change his mind. After two months we got a letter from the social workers stating that they will be having meeting with all of us. When they came we were so disappointed when they supported our son instead of us that are encouraging him to go to school. They told our son that education is not the only way to make it in life. At that age, children cannot effectively make a choice about their future, so it was very disappointing if some other person tells your child that education is not the only way to make it in life considering the scenario at which the child is being told that. Our disappointment was so much that we felt that our parental rights have been withdrawn from us. Since that incident my son's attitude to school affairs became worse. He neither goes to school regularly nor does his homework effectively. I believe that the government spoils these children if they are made to have this notion about education. Even if a person wants to be a football player, the person still needs education in case the football career fails tomorrow. Even going into any other career in life, a person still needs a level of

education. With education you will always have something to fall on as the last resort if a particular career does not work out as planned.

Some of us feel that we have lost our parental rights because of this type of approach to affairs concerning children because it seems that parents don't have authority over their children in Sweden (parent 5).

#### WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT DO YOU, AS A PARENT, NEED TO BE ABLE TO HELP YOUR CHILDREN IN THEIR SCHOOL WORK?

The government should employ all avenues to make immigrant parents know their parental rights over their children in Sweden. This will help the immigrant parents know the extent to which they can correct their children especially when the children are not serious with their studies. The knowledge of/ the fear that some parents have lost their children to the Social Authority and more parents could still lose theirs has become a problem for some parents. Many immigrant parents are afraid to admonish their children when they are not serious with their studies (Parent 3).

Since immigrants are required to attend the language school (SFI), it will be good if "The parental involvement" is included in its curriculum as a topic in SFI. This would go a long way to making parents to be acquainted with the operations of the Swedish educational system as well as what is expected in parental involvement in Sweden. Parental involvement in the native countries of the immigrant parents could be different from what it is in Sweden (Parent 2).

As regards the suggestion by the second parent that spoke, making parental involvement a topic in SFI does not fully solve the problem. High level of patience is expected of teachers in SFI for the immigrant parents to learn what they are expected of (Parent 1).

I suggest that the government should make provisions for the employment of immigrant parents within the fields/disciplines that they studied in their home country. This would provide the financial capacity needed in good parental involvement (Parent 5).

#### GROUP B

#### WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NIGERIAN SYSTEM OF EDUCATION AND SWEDISH SYSTEM OF EDUCATION?

In Sweden, the government makes more provisions for the students than in Nigeria. The Swedish government takes care of children's food and even health care while in the school but in Nigerian it is the sole responsibility of the parents (Parent 7).

In Nigeria, the children wear school uniforms to school. This makes all the students seem equal amongst themselves. This helps to build humility and respect in the students and as well helps them to be humble to learn. In Sweden, the children go to school in any form of clothe that they like (Parent 8).

Schooling in Sweden is more practically oriented than in Nigeria, in Nigeria students do more of brain work than practical work because some of the schools don't have the necessary equipment for practical work. It is either they don't have the funds for such equipment or they don't care about providing the equipment. A friend of mine studied computer engineering in a rural area many years ago yet she was not able to use computer 5 times throughout her study because her parents could not afford a computer and the government is not willing to provide that (parent 9).

Students in Sweden are very lucky when compared to some students in Nigeria because the Swedish government provides most of the facilities needed for learning. It is still another task to stimulate the students in Sweden to learn because many of them are not willing to learn (parent 10).

#### WHAT ARE THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN SWEDISH SYSTEM OF EDUCATION AND TO NIGERIAN SYSTEM OF EDUCATION?

All schools both in Sweden and Nigeria have rules and regulations that govern the schools but the mode of enforcement of the rules and regulations seems to differ (parent 6).

Both in Sweden and in Nigeria, the teachers do not just teach whatever thing they want. They are usually provided with educational curriculum and scheme of work to follow (Parent 7).

The two countries have the same alphabetic grading system such as A B C D E F (Parent 8).

#### HOW DO YOU SEE THE PARENTS' ROLE IN SUPPORTING THEIR CHILDREN IN THEIR SCHOOL WORK IN SWEDEN COMPARED TO THE PARENT'S ROLE IN NIGERIA?

Parents' role in Nigeria is easier when compared to parents' role in supporting their

children in school work in Sweden. I am of the same opinion because if you are in Nigeria, you can easily ask your neighbour to assist your children with their homework if your neighbour is learned but you are not learned enough to assist them yourself. This is not applicable in Sweden (Parent 7).

In Nigeria, if the parents are too busy to help their children with their homework, they can employ an auxiliary teacher or the child can even get help from siblings or friends. In Nigerian culture, children are seen as everybody's responsibility (communal child) irrespective of the child's background. If the child does wrong he/she could be corrected by anybody. If it entails giving the child a corporal punishment, it is equally acceptable by both the child's parents and the society because they believe that if the child becomes responsible or great in future both the child's parents and the society will definitely benefit from it (Parent 8).

It is also acceptable in Nigeria that a total stranger whom you have nothing in common with can admonish your child if the child does something wrong both in your presence and in your absence but not in Sweden the reverse is the case.

Here in Sweden, you are expected to do things exactly the same way things are done in Sweden without knowing that you may not be aware of how that particular thing is done in Sweden. It is very possible that you have a different idea of how that particular thing is done in your home country. I had a very bad experience when I came to Sweden newly. On that faithful day, I was coming back from a friend's house and my children started misbehaving in the train, jumping up and down. I tried as much as I could to stop them but to no avail, then I spanked one of them a little bit and also threaten to beat them if they don't stop that. Unfortunately, I was sitting beside a Swedish who rendered no help than to call the police and I was arrested and interrogated for correcting my own children. My children were later taken to social welfare where they spent some months. It was very difficult for me to get back my children. I later understood that what I did was against Swedish law unlike in Nigeria where corporal punishment could be given to a child by anybody (Parent 10).

In Nigeria, if a child misbehaves in the school he/she will be disciplined by the teacher before conveying the information across to the parents but in Sweden the reverse is the case in the sense that teachers in Sweden have no powers over the student just as the parents (Parent 9).

Children in Sweden make homework more difficult, unlike in Nigeria. In Nigeria, children are fully aware that they could be punished if they fail to do their homework. It motivates them to do it themselves or look for someone that could help them with the homework. In Sweden children don't get more involved in their homework even when

their parents are willing to help them because they know that failure to do the assignment will not attract any punishment (Parent 11).

#### WHAT DO YOU DO IN ORDER TO ASSIST YOUR CHILDREN IN THEIR SCHOOL WORK?

I normally check what my children are doing every moment they are at home and also tell them that there is time for everything: time to rest, time to play and time to be involved educational activities (Parent 7).

I spend most of my time at work but any day that I did not work, I make sure that I check my children's school bags to see whether they have any homework and also to know what they have done in school. I usually buy some presents for my children whenever they do well in school and shower them with praises when they have done their assignments (Parent 8).

My work is usually at night, so I don't have so much time to help them but my wife does the little that she can because she can understand a little Swedish (Parent 9).

I don't help them because I don't understand Swedish since the home work is always in Swedish (Parent 11).

#### WHAT HINDERS YOU FROM ASSISTING YOUR CHILDREN IN THEIR SCHOOL WORK?

What hinders me is mostly my job. I am usually on night shift. My children come back from school around 4.30 pm and I normally start my night work by 8pm. So I have only a few hours with them when they are at home. I am of the opinion that most parents in Sweden especially the immigrant parents spend a lot of hours at their places of work than at home (Parent 7).

The Swedish language is my main problem. I don't understand Swedish but I hope to learn it someday (parent 9).

Our culture and Swedish culture are not the same at all. There are some things that are

applicable in Sweden but not in Nigeria (Parent 8).

I am not educated and it is a problem to me and my children. If parents or family members who live with a student are not educated to a certain level, they will not be able to help their children with their school work. I am not educated and it hinders me from helping my children with their school work (Parent10).

Swedish school system is confusing. I don't even know which one is primary or secondary (Parent 12).

#### HOW DO YOU COMMUNICATE WITH THE TEACHERS TO KNOW YOUR CHILDREN'S EFFORTS IN SCHOOL?

We communicate through parent/teacher meetings but sometimes I don't understand everything that is discussed in the meeting (Parent 7).

One of the ways of our communication is through letters. The teacher writes a letter and puts it in my son's bag. I usually check my son's bag to see if there is any letter from his teacher. We also communicate through e-mails (Parent 8).

#### DO YOU HAVE A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH THE TEACHERS?

Some of the teachers are trying while some are not. My son's teacher communicates always with me while my daughter's teacher does not communicate at all (Parent 8).

My son's teacher is always in a hurry to answer some questions she does not care whether I understand what she explains or not. She makes me feel that everything is ok. I believe my son's teacher is not telling me the truth. I know that my son is not doing well in school yet the teacher always tells me that everything is ok. Probably she is just trying to impress me or to do something else (Parent 7).

I think that the teachers may be friendly but the language barrier hinders them from having a good relationship with the parents. What I mean is that some of them cannot speak good English or maybe they don't want to communicate with us in English (Parent 10).

I am impressed with my children's teacher. I still have problems with the Swedish

language but the teacher makes efforts to explain things to me in English (Parent 11).

My children's teacher sees me as an illiterate and ignores me at times. This does not create room for good relationship (Parent 12).

#### WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT DO YOU NEED AS A PARENT TO BE ABLE TO HELP YOUR CHILDREN IN THEIR SCHOOL WORK?

The government and the school authorities should make provisions for sending information to parents in different languages so that parents can easily understand every message passed across (parent7).

The government and the school authorities should provide the information to parents regarding the school rules and regulations, and the grading system. Parents should be able to know which grades are expected of their children to go into any discipline in their further education (Parent 9).

The government should encourage the immigrant parents more to attend the language school (SFI). This will reduce the language barrier experienced by some parents and would eventually help them to adapt to the Swedish system (Parent 11).