HARNESSING THE POWER OF IRTIQAA: AN INITIATIVE INSPIRED BY VISION 2030, KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

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ABSTRACT

Since the beginning of the implementation of Saudi 2030 vision, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has been reaping positive results in all sectors especially education. In this equation of success and growth, the parents were the missing element. Parents were not orchestrating on the same rhythm of their children's growth. Due to the widening gap between parents and children, Iritiqaa came to bridge the gap and create a more cohesive bond that brings all the positive changes. In other words, education, which is a continuous process, starts at the educational organization that is augmented by the parents especially mothers, as they are the pillars of society. Irtiqaa is a proactive program initiated by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as an approach to be well aligned with a bigger picture of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Vision 2030.Irtiqaa is redefining the new role of families in being the partners and collaborators to their children's sustainable future. Involvement, participation and engagement of parents in their children's life particularly in education is very vital and critical junction to recognize. Saudi Arabia has an ambitious plan to achieve 80% of parents to be engaged in school activities and the learning process of their children by 2020. It is a robust and a holistic approach that needs support and synergy of various stakeholders. Irtiqaa program will have performance management in order to monitor its impact investing. Our research primarily focuses on higher education learners with the role of parents (especially mothers). This research will initiate some focus groups in understanding and visualizing the present status with organic, homegrown strategies to be realistic and achievable. The research methodology is based on the secondary data. The objective of this research paper is to amplify the learning and development of learners through adapting the new role of mentorship, coaching and counselling of Saudi mothers.

Keywords: Mentorship, Coaching, Counselling, Engagement, Irtiqaa program.

INTRODUCTION

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) Program called *"Irtiqaa"* which is aligned to Vision 2030 is under active progress. The opening up that came because of the Saudi vision is affecting youth positively through enabling them to gradually be global citizens and future leaders using education. The new vision is working on empowering Saudi youth, which is widening their horizons. 2030 vision has also enabled Saudi youth to better embrace and leverage the digital era. Irtiqaa: A more prominent role for families in the education of their children. The engagement of parents in their children's education is one of the main principles of success. KSA's goal by 2020 is for 80 percent of parents to be engaged in school activities and the learning process of their children.

KSA launch the Irtiqaa program, which will measure how effectively schools are engaging parents in their children's education. KSA will establish parent-led boards in schools, to open discussion forums and further engage with parents. Irtiqaa program will significantly improve the learning development of children, nourish their talent and sculpt their character. It will also recognize parents as mentors, which will improve quality life of families and bring happiness with compassionate environment. Finally, productivity will emerge at all levels. Children will be surrounded with Positivity that springs/stems from the belief in one's capabilities, will create a can-do mindset. That it is to say, a forward thinking that leverages the competencies to be acquired/ transformed challenges into solutions, mistakes into lesson learned etc.

Teachers will receive training to raise their awareness of the importance of communicating with parents and equip them with effective methods to do so successfully.

KSA will also collaborate with private and non-profit sectors to offer innovative educational programs and events that can improve this academic partnership.

A collaborative approach framework is required that will emphasize on how mothers can amplify their children's growth, development, and education enrichment. This can be accomplished in numerous ways, for example through the formal educational channels, private education, mentorship, coaching and counselling.

Parents, Family and Social Environment

Parents and direct (immediate) family members have the strongest influence in the child's upbringing, especially in early youth. Irtiqaa is a proactive program that redefines the role of the families as *"partnership units"* and the role of children as collaborators for sustainable future, as children do have their own voice and unique perception of the world. The actual family unit has a predictive power of how cohesive and potentially how disharmonious the relationship in that family may be.

Children

The role of parents and children is formalized not only in societal expectations but also in the law. Islamic law obliges parents to provide for their children's health, education, safety, and happiness (Al Azhar University in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund, 2005). However, Sharia law also includes responsibilities that children have towards their parents, notably respect and obedience; with some scholars arguing that, these responsibilities are understood to be as important as the rights held by children narrated by Rajabi-Ardeshiri (2009). As per Al Faryan et al. (2019) in general, the traditional and modern approaches are frequently overlapping in terms of their impact on the upbringing of children as well as they have impact on their formal education.

Education Institutes

Formal education plays a key role not only when it comes to the direct education of the child, but also when it comes to the education of the mother (or parents in general). The scholarship program that enabled young adults to gain education abroad is causing profound changes in Saudi Arabian culture, especially the number of youths who aspire to pursue education abroad, are leading to changes in the way in which the role of family is understood

within the society narrated by Niblock (2015). Furthermore, the changing role of women in Saudi Arabia represents a challenge to familial cohesion (Al Faryan et al., 2019). Many times, it is not only the parent (a single student) that moves abroad, but also their immediate family – including the kids-meaning that they will be directly influenced by foreign cultures and has to learn to integrate with local children abroad.

Stakeholders

When children and youth are at risk of neglect, abuse, or suffer from otherwise dysfunctional family conditions, the community becomes involved and frequently either supports or replaces the role of the immediate family. The social services are currently (and in particular recently) undergoing transition and new policies are being implemented, resulting in some confusion and misunderstanding of the role of social workers. *"Limited power assigned to workers, conflict with cultural norms, and a lack of specialist education in child protection was among the barriers preventing workers from undertaking their roles effectively"* (Al Faryan et al., 2019). It is important to remember that the policies cannot simply be adopted without any kind of cultural and societal consideration, even though they may have previously worked well in other countries.

Purpose of the Study

This study is to gain insight into Saudi parents' involvement in their children's education. In particular, this study explored the perceptions of Saudi parents about their role in their children's education by exploring the following research questions:

1. What are Saudi parents' beliefs about their roles in their children's education?
2. What do Saudi parents understand, in general, about the prevailing education system States, and how it might be navigated?
3. How do Saudi parents perceive and describe the nature of the Saudi family-school relationship?
4. What are the cultural differences in schooling in Saudi Arabia and abroad that might influence Saudi families' contributions to their children's development?

Significance of the Study

Parental involvement plays an important role in children's success in literacy learning Heath (1983) and Sénéchal & LeFevre (2002) and a wealth of research has been conducted worldwide to examine the importance of parental involvement in children's educational success. This study is built on findings from a number of previous studies linking academic achievement to parental involvement. Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997); Jeynes (2003 & 2012), home literacy, Ho & Lau (2018); Purcell-Gates (1996) Many of the existing research studies address parental involvement and children's academic success in general, and those that were conducted with minorities primarily focus on the role of African-American culture on parental involvement (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006; Jeynes, 2005 & 2012).

A study done (Almekhlafi & Abulibdeh 2018) to address the school teacher perception towards technology usage for education purpose in United Arab Emirates (UAE) found it accelerates the learning among the students.

This study helps fill this gap, and it provides a data-supported understanding of Saudi parents' involvement in their children's education, in particular, and gives some insight into Arab

immigrants, in general. This study is crucial because it adds another perspective to the existing literature about parents' involvement in their children's education, and it helps to address the absence of Saudi families' voices regarding issues of multicultural and literacy education for students.

Scope of the Study

The focus of this study is improving and building the relationship between Saudi children enrolled in various schools and role of parents in attainment of having strong family and social ties. Specifically, the study attends to understand Saudi parents' perceptions, knowledge, and practices of involvement as stakeholders in their children's education, particularly in their academics and extra-curricular activities. Concisely navigating a road map with a collaborative approach.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Fleming & Gottfried (1994) Parents involvement spurs child a sense of motivation and a drive to do or just an effort of attempt. Lack of parent involvement impacts negatively. There has been a direct correlation between parents' involvement and children's educational development, self-growth and academic motivation. As per the study has proved that parents who have neglected their child with low engagement have found that the children are low in competencies, under developed in social relationship that supports and values achievement. As per Heckman (2008), Socio economic status (SES) weaves and binds the fabric of congenial environment. Not only has it contributed in motivation but also in elevating the soft skills, traits such as self-esteem, self-regulation, teaming etc.

Duncan & Magnuson (2005) has narrated the parents who are literate have a belief the power of education is a determinant in student motivation and achievement. Abdul Razzak (2016) has done an empirical study to measure parents' involvement in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia. For the question asked *"Parents' feelings towards their children's education"* From the students it was found 18.3% students feel that their parents are not proud of what they study. This shows parents' involvement is skewed towards low side. Al Kahtani (2020) states compassion plays a vital role in bonding families.

Eid et al. (2017) Behavioral skill training (BST) was provided to the parents and it resulted in that BST can be an acceptable training tool and parent's behavioral skills from observing other parents being trained directly. This study was conducted with children having Autism Spectrum Disorder so that the parents implement Natural Language Paradigm (NLP)

As per Alyamani (2016) there need to strengthen the social role of school by connecting with schools especially parent who can be drivers in achieving schools' goals. Fatany (2016) advocates qualified quality teacher is also important which will enhance creative and critical thinking.

In addition to the school council, the school should emphasize on council for parents and teacher for a better understanding of all. According to Epstein et al. (2018) providing opportunities for parents to volunteer in the school yield a congenial partnership between parents and school.

National Parent Teacher Association- PTA (2016), which was founded in the year 1897 as the National Congress for Mothers, is *"dedicated to the academic success of children and*

encouraging family engagement in schools". PTA's mission is *"to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children"*.

Impetus on Parents Teacher Relationship

United Arab Emirates (UAE) cabinet has approved flexible hours for their government employees in order to take the advantage of attending parents' meeting and engaging in school activities. They have launched *"Back to School"* policy as an initiative to the National Program for Happiness and Quality of Life so that parents working in government services are very much connected with the school affairs, which impacts the success of the child performance as well as pours in happiness in the family. Official three hours' permission has been providing to the government employees to attend school related activities such as parents meet, sports event, extra-curricular event, graduation ceremony etc.

UAE government thrust is on promoting and consolidating social and family ties in the community. This initiative is supposed to benefit 94,000 students and 28,000 federal government employees.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is conducted through secondary sources such as journals, books, periodicals, newspaper, websites, etc. Intensive analysis of the secondary data was performed by which both active as well as inactive variables were identified which would contribute in the success of Irtiqaa program.

Best Practices

The UAE Government, through the National Program for Happiness and Wellbeing, is keen to promote and consolidate social and family ties in the community, as per the official website of National Program for Happiness and Wellbeing. The Honorable Minister of State for Happiness and Wellbeing of United Arab Emirates quoted, *"This involves allowing parents to be a part of their children's schools activities in order to achieve our bigger goal of preserving a cohesive society".*

New Shift of Parents Role in Student Engagement in Arab World Context

Expectation

- Happier/more stable families
- Citizens who can contribute to the advancement of nation/society

A Closer Look to What

1-Happy Family means having

- Better and stronger bonds between the family members
- Open communication channels between parents and children
- Lower divorce rates

2- Education outlook

- Innovative educational/vocational educational systems that will better equip children with the needed expertise and help them acquire the needed competencies to be able to contribute effectively and positively to the society.
- Parents who play a vital role in shaping their kids' ideologies.
- Having an academic system that incorporates parents in the equation of education. As education is not confined to knowledge, it is also about building children's character and acquiring the needed soft skills. In that sense, education is a continuous process that starts at the educational organization and the parents augment it.

Obstacles: Parents

- Who are not aware about the power that resides in them and the effective role they can play in shaping their kids' future (nourishing their talents, sculpting their character)
- Don't have the knowhow to counsel, support and nourish their kids

Roadmap to Success

- Will not reinvent the wheel. Research about other countries that were successful in achieving the above-mentioned goals
- Delve into their paradigm to be able to identify the best practices that led to their success/
- Tailor awareness programs and other educational activities that caters to different segments of the Saudi society.

Value of Irtiqaa during Covid-19

As we continue to deal with the unprecedented impact of COVID-19, the role of parents is not limited to just being the protectors but corroborators of both emotional and mental well-being. Present online setting demands for making empathetic decisions with highest levels of health and safety degrees. The continuing lockdown is making the children to feel being marred by anxiety, stress, and nervous. UNICEF (2020) stipulates children to adhere to the revised structure and scheduled now considered being the new normal. Henceforth, the parents are supposed to closely monitor children's progress and performance in the present pandemic circumstances when they are deprived of outdoor activities and extend the best possible help and support in order to offset. They are further responsible to assure their children are not impacted by misinformation and fake new that could interfere with their emotional and psychological well-being. Incessant intense engagement with the children is highly imperative while the children tend to cue from candid discussions connected with how they feel and think. Conversely, the lockdown has offered a once in a lifetime opportunity to break away from once busy times allowing the families to stay more connected and spend quality times. This strengthens parents-children bonding. Irtiqaa propels parents to involve, engage, communicate, and connect with their children allowing remedial solutions to address physical, emotional, and psychological issues.

Alternatively, mindfulness builds relationship which can be cultivated by formal as well as informal way. Formal way can be through the following approaches

- Practicing meditation
- Practicing Islamic values rites and rituals

Informal approach

- Focusing and concentrating on an activity

- Being positive and caring
- Being lively and headstrong
- Being forgiving and demonstrating gratitude

FINDING & DISCUSSION

3P's Model of Irtiqaa: An Innovative Framework

Parent, pupil and preceptor partnership (3 P's Model) model is designed to ensure that it is wired and connected well for a congenial development of the learner in this world of digital transformation (Figure 1).
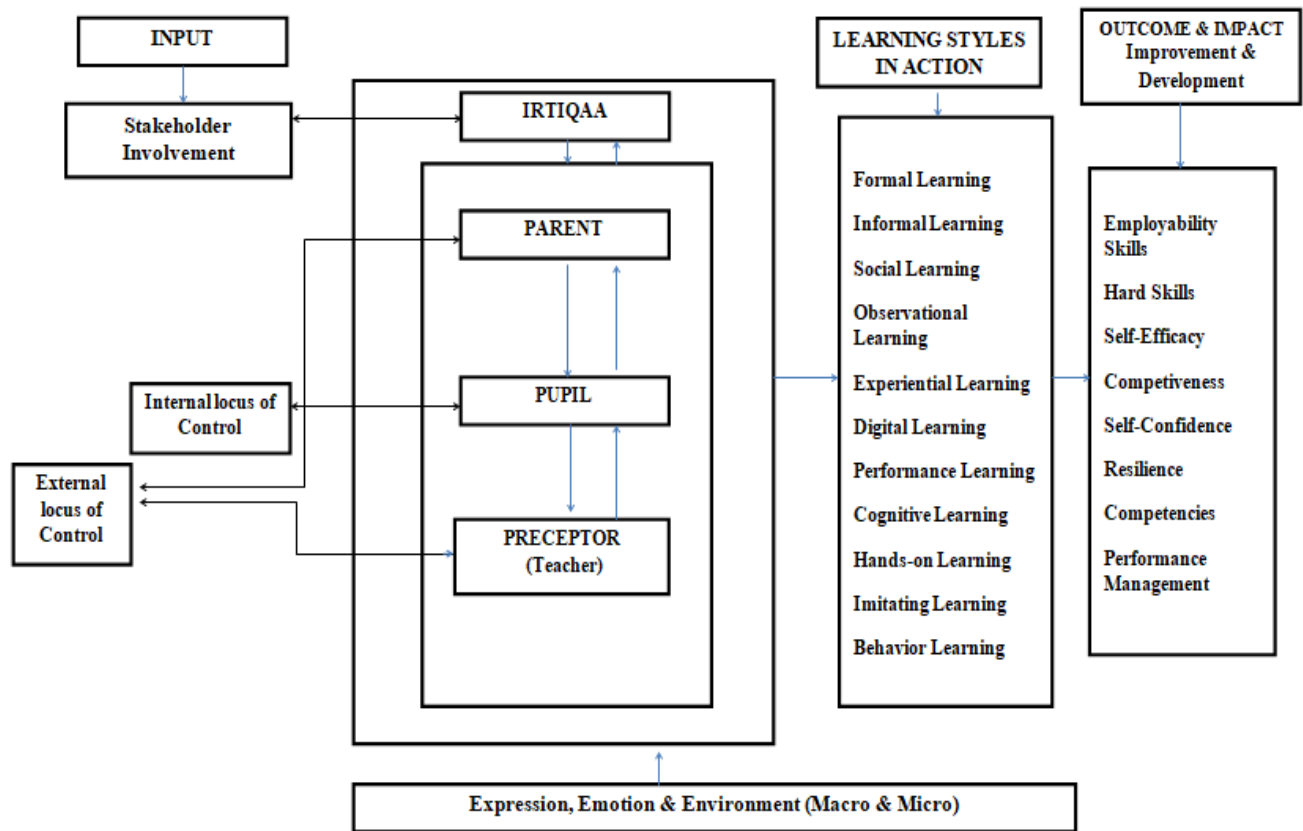
Source: Author

FIGURE 1
3P'S MODEL OF IRTIQAA: AN INNOVATIVE FRAMEWORK

Collaborative approach is required in order to enhance in building the capacity. 3 P's model emphasizes the inter twining of various entities who may be directly or indirectly supportive in building a learning nation. Engagement programs at various levels. With rapid technology changes happening a right balance between digital lives and harmonizing the human is the need of the hour. This innovative model interfaces with the stakeholders directly and indirectly, for example role of community in promoting parenting, deep values which reflects on the parent's child relationship, government initiative in encouraging engagement between

schools and communities. Learners learn from different approaches and each style has certain learning outcomes. Multi learning styles will impact the learner in learning and development by way of hard skills and soft skills which ultimately improves the employability skills. The nucleus of the framework is the close integration of learner with the parent and institution. Agility of addressing issues, challenges, problems with solving plan and strategy would prepare the learner to move forward with progressive attitude. Once the problem is solved, it needs continuous care and cooperation both in form of tangible like monetary rewards intangible like moral support, guidance, counselling services etc. Irtqaa should be adopted as a culture with a purpose but not just mere ritual or formality. Irtiqaa can be effective if holistically, all entities are integrated with working in a team spirit. Working for the namesake without the passion and compassion will be confined to be just like the picture frames on the wall. Overall, individual emotions, expressions, behavior complimented by the environment (micro and macro) will emit the flavor of authenticity and genuineness. To sum up this innovative framework needs to be organic in nature in order to address local realities and challenges.

Primary Recommendation

1. Encourage schools to devise various strategies, which demonstrate a close net collaborative between parents and child.
2. Promoting opportunities for mutual teaching and learning and vis-à-vis between parents and child
3. Promoting in building of capacities through invitation to stakeholders in understanding the expectation and laying the pathway of involvement with a purpose. Which can be structured within school self-evaluation
4. Enhancing the performance management of school, student and parents. Also, aligning properly so that goals and objectives are achieved
5. Create awareness of *"Irtiqaa"* initiative at a grass root level with continuous improvement processes so that it leverages in accelerating performance outcome as well as reinforces the bond of relationship between learner with the parents and learner with the school.
6. Adapting technology driven connections to increase the engagement between parents and children. Technology to be used as an enabler and facilitator to track and review progress of the child as well as know the status of child needs and requirements

Secondary Recommendation

It will strengthen the growth and development of the child through alignment and integration. Continuous needs analysis of stakeholders with Irtiqaa program as a channel master, working together with the purpose of solution based approach at the site, regularly revising the reforms and policies, probing with a holistic approach, collaborating with various non-government organizations, learning communities, timely doing the impact analysis etc. would make a profound impact in the Irtiqaa initiative

CONCLUSION

This is imperative that students starting from elementary level up to post doctorate need support, guidance and encouragement, especially from the parents. Engagement is very essential which elements authentic and organic growth and development of the child. This impacts the society to be rich culturally, socially and economically. Character building, tracking progress of child especially digital natives is need of the hour. This initiative will raise the standard of quality of education, improve school delivery and build a strong nation. Irtiqaa will act like as a

transformative change maker than the transaction change maker. Researchers are encouraged to undertake empirical work in order to do a gap analysis.

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