

The factors promoting parental involvement at a Secondary School in Kwa-Zulu Natal.

By

Kalavani Naicker

This dissertation is submitted in fulfillment of the academic requirements for the Degree of Masters of Education in the school of education, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Edgewood Campus.

Supervisor: Dr Rosemary Chimbala Kalenga

Date of Submission: March 2013

DECLARATION

I declare that “factors promoting parental involvement at a secondary school” is my own work and that all sources that I used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference.

Signed : _____

Supervisor : Dr Kalenga, R.C

Date: _____

Student: Mrs K.Naicker

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Acknowledgement

This thesis was possible because of a number of people in my life. I wish to offer my appreciation and gratitude to the following people whose help and support was important in the accomplishment of my effort.

To my supervisor at Edgewood campus Dr Rosemary Kalenga, who supported me step by step through this dissertation. Her guidance, support, devotion and encouragement at all times were needed to complete this work. Her understanding and knowledge assisted me to improve my work.

To the Principal of the school where the research was conducted, my heartfelt thanks goes out to you. To the teachers, learners and parents who opened their doors to me and allowed me to interview them.

To my family who supported and encouraged me to complete the work. My husband Brain Naicker and daughter Sabrika who gave me the time and space to complete the work successfully. My parents and parent in-laws for the support and encouragement to complete this study.

To my colleague and friend Theo John who was responsible for me enrolling to do my masters and for all the assistance that he provided me during the completion of my work.

Abstract

This study explores the factors that promote parental involvement at a secondary school in Kwa-Zulu Natal. The study was conducted with twelve learners from grades 10 to grade 12, six educators and six parents. The theories on parental involvement that guided the study were the ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner and the role theory. The methodology used to obtain data were interviews with learners, teachers and parents.

The literature review looked at the extent of parental involvement, the barriers experienced by parents and the benefits of parental involvement. The literature also looked at views of how parents can be encouraged to become more active in schools. The qualitative method was utilized to determine the factors promoting parental involvement. The focus group was used with the learners and the semi structured interviews was used with the teachers and parents. Themes were formed using the collected data that was organized and analyzed

The findings of the data showed that there is a need for greater parental involvement. Parents and teachers agreed that there are certain barriers that prevent parents from becoming more involved in the education of their children. There is a need for a concerted effort amongst parents and teachers to communicate and work as a team for effective teaching and learning to take place. Schools need to consider that parents face problems and they need to work with parents to overcome these barriers.

Contents

CHAPTER ONE	7
1.1 Introduction	7
1.2 Background	8
1.3 Purpose/Rationale	9
1.4 Key research questions	11
1.6 Definition of Key concepts:	12
1.7 Method	13
1.7.1 Methods of Data collection	13
1.7.2 Participation Selection	14
1.7.3 Data analysis	15
1.7.4 Ethics	16
1.8 Conclusion	17
1.9 Outline of Chapters.....	17
CHAPTER TWO	18
Literature Review	18
2.1 Introduction	18
2.2 The Nature and Scope	18
2.3 Benefits of Parental Involvement.....	22
2.3.1 Benefits to Learners.....	23
2.3.2 Benefits to educators and schools.....	25
2.3.3 Benefits to Parents	27
2.4. Barriers to parental involvement.....	29
2.4.1 Barriers created from the home	30
2.4.1.1 Time	30
2.4.1.2 Socio Economic Factors	30

2.4.1.3 Negative school experience.....	31
2.4.1.4 Low Education Level and Language of Communication	31
2.4.1.5 Embarrassed Children	31
2.4.1.6 Cultural Habits	32
2.4.2 Barriers created by the school	32
2.4.2.1 Negative climate of school and teacher's attitude	32
2.4.2.2 Poor communication	33
2. 5 Parent-Teacher Collaboration	33
2.6 Encouraging parental involvement.....	36
2.6.1 Ways the School can Encourage Parental Involvement.....	36
2.6.1.1 Communication	37
2.6.1.2 Creating Programs.....	38
2.6.1.3 Getting Parents to volunteer their services.....	39
2.6.1.4 Involving Parents in Decision Making	40
2.7 Personal Parental Involvement	41
2.7.1 Homework.....	42
2.7.2 Home Environment	43
2.7.3 Attitude of Parent	43
2.7.4 Epstein's Theory on Parental Involvement	46
2.8 Types of Parents	48
2.9 Conclusion	50
CHAPTER THREE	52
Theories on Parental Involvement	52
3.1 Introduction	52
3.2 Role Theory	52
3.2.1 Role Theory -Implications for the School.....	55
3.3 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory.....	56
3.3.1 Microsystems layer	57
3.3.2 Mesosystem.....	59

3.3.3 Exosystem	60
3.3.4 Macrosystem.....	61
3.3.5 Chronosystem.....	62
3.3.6 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory's Implications for the school	62
3.4 Conclusion	65
CHAPTER FOUR.....	66
Research Design and methodology.....	66
4.1 Introduction	66
4.2 Aims of the research	66
4.3 Research Design.....	67
4.4 Paradigm.....	68
4.5 Research Strategy	70
4.5.1 Advantages of case study.....	71
4.5.2 Disadvantages of case studies	71
4.6 Sampling.....	72
4.6.1 Sampling of the Research Site	73
4.6.2 Participants for Data Collection	75
4.7 Role of the Researcher.....	76
4.8 Methods for data collection	77
4.8.1 Phase 1: Pilot Study	77
4.8.2 Phase2: Interviews	78
4.8.3 Phase 3: Document Analysis	81
4.9 Limitations that need to be considered:	82
4.10 Data analysis	82
4.11 Ethics in qualitative research	83
4.12 Validity and Reliability.....	85

4.12.1 Validity and Reliability in Data	85
4.12.2 Validity and Reliability in interviews	87
4.13 Conclusion	88
CHAPTER 5.....	89
Data Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion of Findings	89
5.1 Introduction	89
5.2 Personal Documents	89
5.3 Interview with learners	91
5.3.1 Theme 1: Parents visiting the school.....	91
5.3.2 Theme 2: Parents involvement at Home	92
5.3.3 Theme 3- Kinds of involvement	93
5.3.4 Comments on Learner Interviews.....	94
5.4 Parent Interviews	94
Themes	94
5.4.1 Theme 1- Parent Participation in School.....	95
5.4.2 Theme 2 – Parental involvement at home.....	97
5.4.3 Theme 3: Barriers to Involvement.....	99
5.4.5 Theme 4: Benefits to involvement	102
5.4.6 Comments on Parent Interviews.....	105
5.5 Teacher Interviews.....	105
Themes	105
5.5.1 Theme 1: Partnership	106
5.5.2 Theme 2: Role of Parent.....	107
5.5.3 Theme 3: Barriers to involvement.....	110
5.5.4 Theme 4: Encouraging Parents to be involved in School.....	112
5.5.5 Comments on Teacher Interviews	113
5.6 Discussion of findings	113
5.6.1 Finding 1: The Extent of Parent Participation	113
5.6.2 Finding 2: Parent Teacher Relationship	114

5.6.3 Findings 3: Communication between Parent and Teachers.....	114
5.6.4 Finding 4: Benefits to Parental Involvement	115
5.6.5 Finding 5: Barriers to Parent Involvement	116
5.6.6 Finding 6: Encouraging Parental Involvement.....	117
5.7 Conclusion	118
CHAPTER 6.....	119
Recommendations and Conclusion.....	119
6.1 Introduction	119
6.2 Recommendation.....	119
6.2.1 Collaboration, Co-operation and communication	119
6.2.2 Training Programs	120
6.2.3 Creating a resource room	121
6.2.4 Effective Governing Body	121
6.2.5 Responsibility of Schools to Increase Involvement	122
6.2.6 Responsibility of Department of Education to Increase Involvement	122
6.3 Limitations of the Study	122
6.4 Recommendations for further studies	123
6.5 Conclusion	123
References.....	125
Appendix A.....	137
CONSENT FORM FOR LEARNERS.....	137
Appendix B	138
CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS.....	138
Appendix C	139
Letter for Permission to Conduct Research:.....	139
Appendix D	143
Letter To Principal For Permission to Conduct Research:	143

Appendix E	146
Ethical clearance certificate	146
Appendix F	148
Teacher Interview Schedule	148
Appendix G	149
Parent Interview Schedule	149
Appendix H	150
Focus Group Discussion with learners	150
Appendix I	151
One-personal documents - Minutes of meetings	151

Chapter One

1.1 Introduction

As it is the case in most societies with South Africa's history of racial, ethnic, class and gender discrimination, education still remains the sole responsibility of educators and learners, with parents, if at all, playing a ridiculously marginal role. This is the reason that, even after eighteen years of socio-political changes in South Africa, parental involvement in their children's education continues to be a formidable challenge in the country's endeavor to realise the ideals of a democratic society. The purpose of this study was thus to explore the dynamics involved in parental involvement in education and to examine strategies through which such involvement might be enhanced for the benefit of the learners.

It is in this context that the study views parental involvement in education as a key factor in promoting the social, emotional and academic growth of children. The study specifically explores various factors that promote parental involvement in the context of a secondary school in Kwa-Zulu Natal. Given the growing awareness of the fact that the family and school are jointly responsible for the teaching and learning of the child, it is important to investigate the factors that contribute to, and the extent to which, parents are beginning to be involved in education. This trend is particularly evident in communities where parental involvement in education remained marginal.

This chapter provides a brief discussion into the background of the study. It then offers the rationale for the study, its key questions, aims and concepts used to explore the phenomenon under study. The methodology and methods used for data collection, the participant selection, analysis of the data and ethics of the research are also briefly

discussed in this chapter. Later chapters discuss these aspects of the study in more detail.

1.2 Background

The concern about limited and/or lack of parental involvement in children's education is a global phenomenon and not simply confined to South Africa. Different governments, their committees and departments consistently stress the importance of parental participation. Studies throughout the world demonstrate that children have a significant advantage when their parents are directly involved in their education. In the United States of America (USA), for example, parent involvement programmes were strongly recommended by various stakeholders, including the President of the country and his educational advisories (Mestry, 2004). Within the Australian context, Riley (1999) concluded that parental involvement contributed greatly to school effectiveness. South Africa's historical, political, social and economic legacies, however, reveal a completely different picture compared to other countries when it comes to parental involvement in children's education.

Contrary to other countries, after the 1994's peaceful, political transition in South Africa, parents were encouraged by the state in the form of Act 84 of 1999 and the White Paper 6 to involve themselves in the education of their children. Both official documents make parents and community involvement in the education of the child the 'law' of the country. Parental involvement is thus a right for every parent and, by 'law'; no parent should be barred from performing this role. Epstein (2001) stated that if a learner feels he or she is cared for and is encouraged to work harder in the role of learner; they are more likely to do their best academically and to remain at school.

It is against this background that this study is designed to investigate the factors that impact on parental involvement within the South African context. This is timely, for parents have been given new rights and greater responsibility over their children's schooling. These rights and roles are intended to make schools more responsive to parent concerns and to improve the quality of education. The National Curriculum Statement (NCS, 2005) and the currently introduced Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPs, 2011) both emphasise parental and the wider community involvement and identify it as having an important role to play in the curriculum. This is presented as central for the child's academic success. For Epstein (2001), when parents pay more attention to their children's schooling, they will become more motivated and student's achievement levels tend to increase. Literature (Lemmer & Van Wyk (2009); Mestry (2004), furthermore, shows that parents tend to be aware of the benefits of their involvement in their children's education in the early years, but tend to withdraw their participation in the adolescent years. It is therefore the purpose of this study to investigate the effectiveness of parental involvement on academic achievement.

1.3 Purpose/Rationale

Parental support in children's education is vital. This is because parents are in possession of crucial details about their children that schools may not have. Their involvement, however, not only benefit children, but they themselves benefit greatly from being involved with the school. This usually depends on the kinds of expectations they might have concerning the school. Lemmer & Van Wyk (2009) identify some of the common expectations that parents bring with them when they get involved with the school:

- Parents want the best for their children in schooling, as in everything else;
- Parents require regular, reliable and accessible information;
- Parents need information about their children's progress and achievements and;
- Parents wish to be taken seriously, to have a say, to be listened to, to contribute to the life and work of the school.

Lemmer & Van Wyk (2009) state that parental involvement can benefit learners in their academic achievement because they are more successful if their parents participate at school and encourage education at home, regardless of educational background or social class of the parents and improved attitudes to learning. A learner's attitude about themselves and their control over their environment are critical to achievement. When parents show an interest in their children's education and they cherish high expectations for their performance, they encourage positive attitudes that are key to achievement and decreased dropout rates. Furthermore, the likelihood of learners leaving school without completing their studies is greatly reduced. There is also improved behaviour and better school attendance, all of which indicate a positive link between parental involvement and learner's behaviour as well as their school attendance (Epstein, 2001).

Professionally, I have been teaching for 18 years and currently an educator in Pinetown. My observations of parental involvement in children of this area are minimal and this has led me to research the factors that promote parental involvement of learners in Pinetown. Teaching in the area allows the researcher easy access to the parents and learners. As an educator in Pinetown, my interest is to improve the quality of education of children in Pinetown. I also have a fairly good knowledge of the academic, social and economic status of the parents

in the area. The parents trust and are familiar with me and this has allowed me to gather data with relative ease.

1.4 Key research questions

The key questions are as follows:

1. What is the nature and extent to which parents are involved in the schooling of their children?
2. What obstacles can hinder parents in their involvement in the education of their children?
3. How can parental involvement benefit the learner in school?
4. Why is it important for the school to encourage parents to be more active in the education of their children?

1.5 Aims

The aims of the study are to determine:

- The nature and extent to which parents involve themselves in the schooling of their children;
- The obstacles that hinder parental involvement in the education of their children;
- The benefits of parental involvement to the learner in school and;
- The importance for the school to encourage parents to be more active in the education of their children.

This study will be of benefit to the following stake holders:

- The parent should be able to clearly see how their involvement will benefit their children in gaining academic success and making the education process more meaningful;

- The educators will be more approachable to parents and they should be motivated to create a warm and comfortable environment for active parental involvement and support;
- The Department of Education should realise that greater parental involvement is needed in schools and therefore should put programs in place to encourage and educate parents on their roles and responsibilities in schools and;
- The Schools Governing Bodies would also benefit because now they can hold regular meetings to get parents to involve themselves in the education of their children.

1.6 Definition of Key concepts:

Parents: According to the South African Schools Act, 84 (1996), a parent is a natural parent of the learner; a guardian to the learner; a person legally entitled to the learner for the purposes of the learner's education. For this study this definition will be applied for a parent.

Parental involvement: Refers to the amount of participation a parent has when it comes to schooling and his/her child's life (South African Schools Act, 84, 1996).

Educator/Teacher: According to youronlinedictionary, an educator is one trained in teaching; a specialist in the theory and practice of education (South African Schools Act, 84, 1996)

Schools Governing Body (SGB): It is a group of people that are involved in the governance of the school. This includes parents, educators, learners, the principal and other co-opted members with expertise (South African Schools Act, 84, 1996)

1.7 Method

Qualitative research method has been used in this study to explore the factors promoting parental involvement in a secondary school. Data has been collected, recorded and analyzed. Case study design was used to determine the impact of parental involvement. The interpretive paradigm was used as this study seeks an actual reality in a specific situation. The research falls under the interpretive paradigm which advocates that the world should be studied in its natural state rather than in controlled laboratory type experiment and with minimum intervention by the researcher (Cohen et al, 2000). This type of paradigm allows for parents to freely express their views on the questions. Parents were therefore free to express their perceptions and views regarding parental involvement or lack thereof on the education of adolescents.

1.7.1 Methods of Data collection

Interviews were used as one method of data collection. An interview is an interaction between the interviewer and interviewee. It is also referred to as an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest for the production of knowledge (Cohen et al, 2000). Research interview is a two person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining information relevant to the research. Semi structured interviews was carried out to gain a detailed picture of parental involvement. This method is more flexible and allows the research to follow up on new avenues as they emerge in the interview. Parents were the respondents of the semi-structured interviews. The one to one structured interview was used to interview the chairperson of the School Governing Bodies and the chairperson of the School Governing Bodies in KZN.

The focus group discussion was also used as a method to collect data. Focus group is group interview with participants that have certain common characteristics. What the participants in the group say during the discussion constitute essential data in the focus group (Morgan & Krueger, 1998). Focus groups are a powerful means of expressing reality and investigating complex behaviors and motivation (Cohen et al, 2000).

A variety of one-personal documents, such as minutes of meetings, agendas, etc., are written with a view to examine the continual functioning of an organization or establishment of a particular matter. The minutes of meetings of Savemore High, to determine the parent turnout at meetings that involve discussions about the education of their children, was analyzed.

1.7.2 Participation Selection

According to De Vos & Fouche (2002), a sample comprises the elements of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study. It is not possible to cover the entire population of parents in Savemore High so the technique of purposive sampling was used. Purposive sampling is where a particular case is chosen because it illustrates some factors or processes that will be of interest for the study. The participants for the interviews and focus group discussions will be selected by the researcher to permit inquiry and understanding of parental involvement in school.

The sample had been selected with gender and race taken into consideration. Subjective judgment was used to ensure that the sample selected will fully represent the population. The participants of interview were six educators and six parents and the participants of the focus group had been the learners from grades 10 to 12. Four learners from

each grade were involved in the focus group discussion. Parents of learners from grades 10 to 12 were selected for the semi structured interview.

The Research Site – The research site selected must maximize the opportunity to engage in the problem. Savemore High was selected because the researcher is an educator at the school and this saved time and cost. The school was easily accessible since the researcher teaches at the school. A pseudo name has been used for purposes of confidentiality. A good knowledge of the community and learners is important and that is another reason this site was selected by the researcher. Savemore High School is a combined school that is based in the Umlazi District, Kwazulu Natal. It caters for learners from grade R to grade 12. According to the principal of the school; the school has a population of 1420 learners. The school has 725(51%) African learners, 640(45%) Indian learners, 41(3%) Coloured and 14(1%) White. Many of the learners come from the low income homes. There are also many learners that are from foster homes, single parent homes and child headed homes. There are forty educators on staff. The achievement of the learners of the school has been average.

A pilot study was first conducted to ensure that the relevant data was obtained from the respondents. This allowed the researcher to focus on specific areas that may not be too clear in the initial drawing up of the questions. The pilot study also enabled the researcher to test the questions for the structured and semi- structured interviews to ensure that it provided the relevant data required.

1.7.3 Data analysis

Data analysis is a process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass collected relationships among categories of data. Data analysis is a process of sifting, organizing, summarizing and synthesizing the data to arrive at the results and conclusion of the

research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Data is organized according to keywords and themes. This was done during the collection process to ensure that the analysis was done. Data needs to be recorded in a systematic manner that is appropriate and facilitate analysis. The data from the interviews were tape recorded so that no information was lost. The data collected was colour coded according to themes and keywords.

1.7.4 Ethics

When conducting research, there are several ethical issues that must be considered, namely: access and acceptance, informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, misinterpretation and misrepresentation of data. The researcher's initial concern of access and acceptance was taken care of by obtaining permission from the principal and informing all participants of the aims and nature of the research. The participants were interviewed in a safe environment that was convenient to them. Consent was obtained from the respondents and the manager of the site used. The informed consent offered information to the participants about the nature and purpose of the research, the risks and benefits (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The respondents were informed of the purpose of the research and its intention. The participants were not forced to be part of the study. Rather, they were willing participants. The participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the research at any time. As the researcher I informed the participants that the data was only to be used for the stated purpose and thus ensured anonymity.

De Vos & Fouche (2002) propose four alternative constructs that more accurately reflect the assumptions of the qualitative paradigm, namely: credibility; transferability; dependability and conformability. These assumptions will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

1.8 Conclusion

This research study intended to investigate how important parental involvement is to the education of the children. It hoped to ascertain the importance that schools and communities play in fostering active parental involvement. According Mcdermott and Rottenburg (2000), being a parent would involve being interested in what children do in school and other settings. Parents need to work in partnership with the school to bring about academic success.

1.9 Outline of Chapters

Chapter One provides the introduction to the study, the background, the rationale and purpose. It outlines the research design and methodology used. Chapter Two offers the review of the literature on parental involvement leading to academic success. Literature both nationally and internationally will be reviewed. Chapter Three discusses the theoretical framework underpinning the study. This study will be looked at through the role theory and Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory. Chapter Four provides a discussion on the research design and methodology used to explore the relationship of parental involvement and academic success. Chapter Five deals with the representation and analysis of data. The themes will be discussed in this chapter. Chapter Six provides the recommendations and the conclusions reached in the study.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature on parental involvement in education. For the purposes of a balanced and international coverage, the chapter engages with literature from both the national and international contexts. Focus is more on parent-teacher relationship and its impact on academic achievement, the subject crucially urgent in the South African context. This review further explores various definitions and types of parental involvement, discusses possible obstacles with potential to hinder parents from active participation in their children's education, identifies the benefits brought about by parental involvement and suggests ways in which parents can be encouraged to participate in their children's education.

2.2 The Nature and Scope

There is much research into the importance of, and the success in, parental involvement in the education of children. Parental involvement was measured, across international studies, as participation in parent-teacher conferences and or interactions, participation in school activities or functions, engagement in activities at home, including but not limited to, homework, engagement in learner's extra-curricular activities, assisting in the selection of learner's courses, keeping abreast with learner's academic progress, imparting parental values and the level of parental control and autonomy of support in home environment (Gonzales,2004).Parental involvement is defined as having an awareness of, and an involvement in, school work,

understanding of the interaction between parenting skills and student success in schooling and commitment to consistent communication with educators about learner progress. According to Fan and Chen (2001), parental involvement encompasses a broad range of parenting behaviour ranging from discussions with learners about homework to attendance at parent organisation meeting. Epstein (2001) defined parental involvement as an observable relationship between classroom educators and parents with an aim of improving academic performance.

According to Garbarino and Bedard (2001), many countries are still grappling to cope with the role of parents as active stakeholders in education. Within the South African schooling context at the present moment, most parents do not participate meaningfully in their children's education. Parents' poor attendance at school meetings, limited and/or no involvement in projects designed to raising funds for schools, inability to maintain control of learner support materials, non-compliance with rules of the school, lack of interest in children's progress and homework was noted. The Education WhitePaper6 confirms that non-recognition and non-involvement of parents serve as barriers to quality education (Department of Education, 2001).

It is on the basis of the above discussion that parental involvement needs to be viewed as something far more than just serving on school committees. On the contrary, it is to be viewed as a process where parents work in partnership with educators to improve the learning conditions of learners, the interest being to assist them in realising their educational endeavors. According to Berger (2008), the partnership advocated by educational policy makers includes the expectations that parents should be available both at home and in school to work with their children in support of their education. The desire to strengthen partnerships between parents and professionals is based on the conviction that children learn more when parents take an active role in

their schooling. In a climate of fiscal restraint, parental involvement is attractive to educational reformers and policy makers seeking cost effective ways to enhance learning time as a means of boosting student achievement (Simon in Nojaja, 2002).

According to Whitaker and Fiore (2001), the more parents are involved in children's schooling, the more they understand the struggles and challenges faced by educators on a daily basis. This reinforces further the need for parental involvement in the teaching of children. It is only under these circumstances that, once understood by parents, educators tasks will become much more manageable and easier. There is, furthermore, motivation to work harder and produce better results. Success at school depends on a triangle of interaction of three components, namely: the teacher, the parent and the child. A working partnership between parents and teachers enhances the chances of successfully helping the child to learn and to develop positive behaviour (Kruger & Nel, 2005). It is under these circumstances that the teacher plays a pivotal role in fostering active and meaningful parental involvement in the school. Teachers need to understand that parents can make an important contribution to the child's education. Educators must cultivate a relationship of trust, tactfulness and sensitivity to parent's feelings. Parents must feel comfortable to want to get involved in their children's education. According to Kaap (2001), parents can provide important information concerning the child and can help in applying the same educational procedures at home. This is something pivotal for the child's growth in receiving instruction.

According to the National Parent Teacher Association of USA legislative program Web site (1999), when parents are involved, learners achieve more regardless of the socio economic status, ethnic/racial background or parent's economic level. In some respects therefore, the most accurate predictor of a learner's achievement in

school is not income or social status, but the extent to which the family is able to create a home environment that encourages learning; communicates high expectations for their children's achievements and becomes involved in children's education at school and in the community. In the context of this study, even though Savemore High School is in a low socio economic status area due to the fact that many of the parents live in the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) homes built by the government for unemployed and/or low income earners, there are also many racial groups within the Savemore High School area, and this does not necessarily have to deter parental involvement in their children's education and academic achievement.

Unfortunately, however, in many instances in this area, parental involvement is secondary to a child's education. Parents are too busy with 'their own lives' and the education of the children is left completely in the hands of the school. In some cases the participation of parents in their children's education is treated as an add-on rather than as an aspect crucial to a child's educational development and is the school's teaching and child management philosophy and/or policy. Granted, sometimes it is difficult for parents to be involved in their children's education, especially as they are faced by unavoidable challenges and obstacles. In contexts where parents have a central role in influencing their children's educational progress, research has shown that schools in turn have an important role to play in determining levels of parental involvement (Epstein, 2001).

The National Parent Teacher Association (NPTA) Survey (1992) on parental involvement states that schools can:

- Help families with parenting and child rearing skills;
- Communicate with parents about school's programs and student's progress and needs;

- Work to improve recruitment, training and schedules to improve families as volunteers in school activities;
- Encourage families to be involved in learning activities at home;
- Include parents as participants in important decisions and;
- Co-ordinate with businesses and agencies to provide resources and services for families, students and communities.

Research and practice in the past two decades have shed light on parents roles in their own children's learning and prompted the development of practices and programmes to involve parents more systematically in their children's education (Jackson & Andrews, 2004). Schools that have started promoting parental involvement have found better student achievement. Hornby (2000) viewed the coming together of parents and practitioners as sharing education. A key issue in research continues to be how to involve parents in ways which are inclusive, participative, respectful and meaningful. Much of the literature (Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2009; Epstein, 2001; Bastiani, 2003) on parental involvement stresses the need for open communication between the home and the school and the fostering of a degree of trust between parent and teacher. According to Lemmer & Van Wyk (2009), one of the biggest challenges for schools is to include parents from different ethnic, socio-economic and other groups in the school's decision-making processes.

2.3 Benefits of Parental Involvement

Parent's active involvement in their children's education is very beneficial to the child, parent and educator alike. Learners feel enthusiastic to study, teachers feel supported and parents feel part of the education of their children (Ramirez, 2006).

2.3.1 Benefits to Learners

There is a widespread understanding of both the crucial and continuing role that parents play, similar to the one played by educators in the classroom in the welfare and development of their children (Bastiani, 2003). Henderson supports this view in her statement that children whose parents are involved in their formal education have many advantages. They have better grades, test scores, long term academic achievement, attitudes and behavior than those with disinterested mothers and fathers. Lemmer & Van Wyk (2009) emphasized that children are more successful learners if their parents participate in school and encourage education and learning at home; regardless of the educational background or social class of the parents. According to the Michigan Department of Education (2001), when parents are involved in their children's education, then they are more likely to get:

- Higher grades, test scores;
- Better school attendance;
- Increased motivation, better self-esteem;
- Lower rate of suspension;
- Decreased use of drugs and alcohol and;
- Fewer instances of violent behavior.

This is reinforced by Fan and Chen (2001) in their assertion that parental involvement fosters better student classroom behavior and it improves overall attitudes towards learning in a number of tangible ways. They further support this when they said that high expectations of parents and student perceptions of these views are associated with enhanced achievements. High achievement and self-esteem seems to be closely related to positive parent participation in education. Parents can develop a healthy self-esteem in children, enabling them to collaborate with others, pursue individual activities and persevere despite personal challenges (Bailey, 2006). Parents can help their

children feel safe and loved through their support, encouragement and displays of affection.

According to Nichols and Sutton (2010), the most successful parents offered more of a sense of meaning, purpose and valued cultural goals to their children. Student commitment to school is primarily shaped by parents through the curriculum of the home, but this parental involvement is alterable. This can be influenced by school and teacher practices.

Learner's attitudes improve when parents are actively involved. Lemmer & Van Wyk (2009) argued that learner's attitudes about themselves and their control over their environment are critical to achievement. These attitudes are formed at home and are the products of numerous kinds of interaction between children, parents and the surrounding community (Lightfoot, 2003). When parents show an interest in their children's education and emphasize high expectations, they encourage positive attitudes. Many learners drop out of school when this does not happen. But, when parents are involved in their children's education, there seems to be a drastic reduction in school dropout rates (Lemmer, 2000).

According to Lemmer & Van Wyk (2009), this is because learners are able to face problems at school because they have stronger emotional experience and a more stable environment. This view is supported by Brooks (2004) that the family effect on achievement and the family factors influencing dropping out are mediated through student engagement or commitment to schooling. The impact of conversations in the home must first be upon children's attitudes towards schooling and values about education. According to Hornby (2000), learners tend to have improved behavior when parents are active participants in their education because they tend to be more regular at school. This improved their academic performance. Kriakides (2005) also

acknowledged that learners achieve better academically and have positive attitudes when their parents are involved. In low socio economic areas, having learners who are involved in their children's education is crucial, for it motivates younger children from poor homes into wanting to be in school and to perform better. Under these circumstances, these learners benefit from extra motivation that comes from knowing that their parents can also be interested and involved in their education. It is in this context that school rules and regulations are easily applied and adhered to as learners know that their parents are part of the rules (Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2009).

The evidence is clear that parental encouragement, activities and interest at home and participation in schools and classrooms affect children's achievements, attitudes and aspirations even after student ability and family socio-economic status are taken into account. Students gain in personal and academic development if their families place emphasis in schooling. Teachers also benefit from parent participation in school and this has a positive effect on learner's achievement.

2.3.2 Benefits to educators and schools

The most important factor pertinent in this study is that parental involvement in children's education does not benefit learners only, but teachers benefit a great deal also. According to Nichols and Sutton (2010), teachers who actively encourage parental involvement enjoy an increased sense of professional efficacy. This increased efficacy is a consequence of confidence gained in their ability to demonstrate professional skill and gain the confidence of parents. Lemmer & Van Wyk (2009) assert that teaching is often an isolating experience and when parents care about their children's schooling, this isolation is reduced. One of the benefits that Lemmer & Van Wyk (2009) identified is improved relationships among parents, teachers and schools when

teachers know parents by virtue of their participation in activities. When parents are given the opportunity to contribute to the school's activities and decision-making, they are more inclined to support and less inclined to sabotage educational decisions.

Teachers develop more knowledge about children in the classroom and this assists in their teaching and understanding of learners. This view is supported by Nichols and Sutton (2010) that by involving parents in the classroom, teachers not only learn more about the children they teach and their families, but also provide them with informal opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills of a general sort. According to Lemmer & Van Wyk (2009), all parents can contribute valuable information about their children such as interests, relevant medical details, and possible problems at home and so on. This kind of information can help the teacher to assist the child to succeed. Under these circumstances, teachers have better communication with parents about their children and an improved understanding of the different ethnic and cultural backgrounds that make up the classroom (Epstein, 2001).

Teachers also receive greater respect and understanding from parents when they are part of the school. Epstein and Dauber (1991) share this view when they remark that parents rate educators higher overall when they are involved with the school in any way. Furthermore, teachers receive greater respect from parents that are involved because they realize how difficult the job is. Epstein (2008) found that teachers reported more enthusiasm for their work when there is support and appreciation from parents. This creates more positive feeling amongst educators. A study of parental involvement carried out by Power and Clark (2000) indicated that the school's image improved in the community as programmes of parental involvement evolved and as parents became more involved in academic as well as curricular

activities. Parents who give feedback can help schools develop and tailor programs which are more appropriate according to the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Development (Epstein, 2001).

Lemmer & Van Wyk (2009) found that teacher's workloads are reduced when parents play an active role in education. Epstein (2001) supported this because she found that teachers complained that they needed to be nurse, doctor, social worker and priest over and above teaching when parents did not involve themselves actively in education. Parents can also assist in tasks that they are talented in to lessen the workload of teachers. Lemmer & Van Wyk (2009) also found that teachers get relief from the stresses of supervising thirty or more children at once. If a teacher is less stressed out, then that teacher is more likely to do a better job in the classroom. Educators become more proficient in their activities, devote more time to teaching, experiment more frequently and develop a more learner orientated approach when the parent is more involved (Epstein, 2001).

2.3.3 Benefits to Parents

While different studies (Fan and Chen (2001); Map (2000)) acknowledge the benefits for both learners and educators that come as a result of parental involvement in education, some studies reveal that even parents themselves benefit from getting involved with their children's schooling. Parental involvement can help parents stay informed and provide guidance on children's issues. It is important for parents to be directly involved with their children's teachers because open communication will help parents to know when their children fall behind before it becomes a problem (Dearing et al, 2004). Parents that spend time helping out in the classroom generally feel better about their children's education as they can see what kind of a classroom experience their child is getting.

Lemmer & Van Wyk (2009) encourage parents to actively participate in their children's education as it would increase their self-esteem. This is especially true when they are shown how important their contribution towards their children's education is. They further emphasise that parents develop skills in teaching their children. Parents also tend to develop more positive feelings about their abilities to help their children due to the increased amount of time they spend at school. Lemmer & Van Wyk (2009) also found that parents that are actively involved do not feel isolated from the school process. They, according to Lemmer and Van Wyk (2009), are reassured of the teachers concerns and they recognize the complexity of the task of the teacher in the classroom.

Fan and Chen (2001), in their study found that parents that involve themselves in schools showed an increased understanding and enjoyment of life at school. Henderson and Map (2002) asserted that parents who help their children succeed academically gain a sense of pride in their children and themselves. It is in this context that parents gain understanding of the school setup, a sense of joy and pride in their children's education when they are actively involved.

The benefits of parental involvement affect all stakeholders in education. It is comforting for educators to have parents supporting and appreciating the work that they do. It also releases the stress that educators feel when parents recognize the complexity of their jobs. Learners report more effort, greater concentration and attention in the classroom. Learners are inherently interested in learning and achieve better when parents are involved. Parents gain an understanding of what their children learn and also positive feelings about the school because they are involved in the school. However, sometimes parents do not involve themselves in schooling due to other factors that are arising in their personal lives.

2.4. Barriers to parental involvement

According to Gaynor (2000), countries (Australia, New Zealand) are still grappling to cope with the new role of parents as active stakeholders in education. Presently in South African schools most parents do not participate actively in their children's education. This is evident in the poor attendance of parents meetings, their limited involvement in fund raising projects, low attendance at parent teacher meetings, inability to maintain proper control of learning support material issued to their children, poor matric results and lack of interest in learner's school work and homework (Mestry, 2004).

Many barriers to parents becoming involved in their children's education exist as delineated by Lall, Campell and Gillborn (2004):

- The relationship between schools and parents can be strained especially where schools feel unfairly criticized and or parents feel patronized and unwelcome;
- Parents feel threatened about being involved in school activities when educators adopt an autocratic stand when addressing school issues;
- Unhealthy school climate discourages parents from being involved in school activities;
- Educators feel that their professional rights and freedom are threatened by effective parental involvement;
- Parents who have higher standards of education and have higher socio economic status than educators, make educators feel inferior and as such educators become hesitant to encourage parental involvement and;
- Parents who have a low economic status and less educated than educators feel inferior in the presence of educators.

Bauer and Shea (2003) support this when they argue that most often it is not a lack of interest that prevents parents from becoming involved in their children's education, but rather problems of poverty, single parenthood, non-English literacy, fear of bad news, effects of HIV and AIDs pandemic and cultural and socio-economic isolation. There is also a marked increase in single parent homes (Ferrara and Ferrara, (2005).

2.4.1 Barriers created from the home

2.4.1.1 Time

Many parents are busy with making a living and dealing with the difficult economic climate. Although some parents want to be involved, time constraints just do not allow for this involvement. Epstein (2001) found that often where both parents work and/or in single parent households parents experienced difficulty finding time to communicate with the school or become involved in school activities. These parents emphasized that a weekly commitment to a school, for example, was simply too much for them to manage, thus ruling out activities such as extra-curricular coaching activities or offering classroom help. Single parents and working parents face the difficulty to make child care arrangements should they commit themselves to involvement in activities outside of the school hours (Wherry, 2009). Swart and Pettipher (2006) explained that many parents complained that they found it difficult to attend meetings with other parents during the formal work hours. Taking time off work thus is not an option for many parents, and this just aggravates their stress.

2.4.1.2 Socio Economic Factors

According to Swart and Pasha (2006), socio economic factors and their impact on education is a burning issue in South Africa. These factors have a marked effect on parental influence at school. According to Nojaja (2002), there is a culture of poverty in which working class

families place less value on education than middle class parents, and are hence less disposed to participate in the child's education.

2.4.1.3 Negative school experience

For some parents, schooling was neither a positive nor a character boosting experience. Because of this, they prefer to keep a distance from their children's schooling (Sanders, 2001). Parents who remember their bad experiences in the classroom with a stern or rude educator will avoid going to school (Wherry, 2009).

2.4.1.4 Low Education Level and Language of Communication

Although all families want their children to succeed in school, not all of them have the resources to be involved in their children's education. Some parents neglect going to school because they are not fluent or do not understand the language spoken at school. Kyriakides (2005) found that parents with low education level, material depression and single parents do not generally get involved. A poor or limited personal education might leave the parent lacking in vision, confidence or competence in supporting the child at school. Parents fear being judged or embarrassed by school personnel for their lack of knowledge or inability to speak the language (Catsambis & Beveridge, 2001).

2.4.1.5 Embarrassed Children

Children in secondary schools sometimes feel they do not want their parents involved in their education. They feel embarrassed to see their parents at school and, as a result, prevent them from attending school meetings and engaging in school activities (Catsambis & Beveridge, 2001). They further found that adolescents viewed parental involvement as a private matter that should not be mixed with their peers and teachers. Brooks (2004) supported this view in his findings that pupils saw themselves as autonomous and with a right to some privacy and that school was their domain where parents should not be involved.

2.4.1.6 Cultural Habits

Cultural habits of parents also have a direct effect on parent's involvement in the classroom life of their children. Some cultures teach that the education of the child should be left in the hands of the schools and parents should not be involved in this process.

2.4.2 Barriers created by the school

2.4.2.1 Negative climate of school and teacher's attitude

The school climate is an important context influencing parental involvement. A teacher's behavior and attitude towards parents have also been shown to play a significant role in parents' decisions to become involved (Van Voorhis, 2001). When teachers invite parents to be involved in their children's homework in a manner that is specific, targeted and sensitive, parents' involvement with children's learning at home is more productive (Hoover-Dempsey, 2004). School management and a welcoming principal have all been identified as variables that influence both home and school-based parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey, 2004). Some of the hurdles that parents face are negative communication from schools and insufficient training of teachers on how to reach out to parents (Mestry, 2004).

The attitude that the teacher displays in their communication with parents further affects parental involvement in school. Epstein (2001) found that there is a sense amongst parents that some teachers are too busy for them and would rather parents did not interfere in their children's schooling. Epstein (2001) also asserts that, compared to the secondary school, primary school teachers more strongly believed that parental involvement is important for schools and provide more opportunities and help for parents to be involved in education. Hornby (2000) suggested that certain common attitudes which many teachers hold towards parents contribute towards the stress that parents

experience in communicating with the teacher. These include the fact that parents are often viewed as either problems or adversaries. Parents are sometimes considered to be the cause of their children's problems.

2.4.2.2 Poor communication

Failure to convince parents of what they can do is a problem to parental involvement. Many parents are simply not aware of where their help is required because the school has not advertised the opportunities adequately (Sanders, 2001). There is this assumption by some parents that another section of parents will get involved and do the tasks. Sanders (2001) also points out that parents are not adequately convinced that the skills they utilize in their jobs or daily lives can be transferred or are of relevance in the learning environment. Catsambis et al (2001) also emphasize that schools offer very little opportunity to actively engage parents in school related programs. In the light of the above discussed points, it may be concluded that parents face many obstacles that make parental involvement difficult. Teacher-parent collaboration is therefore vital to overcome some of these obstacles.

2.5 Parent-Teacher Collaboration

Parent involvement may be interpreted as parental commitment to the education of their children and the role they play in school management (Mestry, 2004). In South Africa the introduction of Outcomes Based Education (OBE) created opportunities for greater parental involvement in both primary and secondary schools. This system allowed parents to share in the responsibility of their children's education, ensuring the active culture of learning. Yerger (n.d) highlighted in her study the belief that meaningful collaboration is dependent on open and supportive relationship among parents and teachers who share a common goal. Epstein (2002) draws three conclusions about parent teacher

relationships. She found firstly that parent involvement tends to decline across the grades, unless schools make efforts to involve parents. Secondly, affluent parents tend to be more involved in their children's education in a positive way, whereas economically distressed parents have limited contact with the school. Thirdly, single parents, working parents and parents that live far away from the school are less involved in the school.

The idea of partnerships in the education situation is of particular importance in the interrelationship between family, the community and the school. The South African Council for Educators (S.A.C.E) stipulates that teachers must recognize the role of parents and keep them informed regularly about the well-being and progress of the learners. Nichols and Sutton (2010) describe the classroom setup as having three actors that is the parent, the teacher and the student. These actors' beliefs, attitudes and habits are thoroughly embedded in the mind of the child. The interaction amongst these three actors largely determine the student's willingness and readiness to learn, predicts student satisfaction and commitment to school and schooling and hence largely shapes both the attitude towards school and learning and the level of achievement of the child (Brooks, 2004). The teaching of the student, the effectiveness of the classroom and the collaboration in learning between student and teacher are derived from the interactions of these three actors. Each actor's values and attitudes affect the learning and teaching (Brooks, 2004).

Student practices supporting parental involvement have been justified on the basis of parental contributions to student achievement. Such parental effects on achievement have usually been measured by family education as explained by Nichols and Sutton (2010). Muller (2001) argues that it is not who parents are but what parents do to encourage and facilitate learning that makes a difference to students. Collaboration

and communication have been identified as effective strategies for active parent involvement in schools. Collaboration is a process in which people with diverse expertise work together to generate new solutions to mutually defined problems. Collaboration occurs when power and authority are shared and where people are brought together to achieve common goals that cannot be accomplished by a single organization or individual.

Bauer and Shea (2003) explain that collaboration with parents involve monitoring, informing and participating. In monitoring, they explain, that schools make parents aware of the mission and expected outcomes. When parents are informed they become aware of the school policies, procedures, aims and expectations. Bauer and Shea (2003) describe participation as the active participation on the part of the teacher and parents.

Communication is an essential condition for effective collaboration. Collaboration implies joint decision making amongst all relevant stakeholders. Schools need to cultivate a genuine ethos of collaboration in order to help the school community become actively involved in their children's education (Mestry, 2004). Open communication between parents and schools will help to ensure that issues are resolved and effective teaching takes place for better achievement of the learner. Effective parental involvement could best be described as parent school collaboration, since it is a two way process with both the parent and school sharing responsibility for the educational outcomes of children.

Family-school collaboration is a co-operative process of planning that brings together school staff, parents, children and community members to maximize resources for child achievement and development. Increased parent involvement results in home environments that are conducive to learning and improves communication and consistency between the home and school.

2.6 Encouraging parental involvement

Parental involvement is a two-fold process. The school needs to place certain programs and measures in place for parents to become actively involved. The parent has to also make certain sacrifices and take actions to involve themselves in their children's education to ensure academic success. Parents, schools and communities must have common goals and missions concerning the learning and development of children.

2.6.1 Ways the School can Encourage Parental Involvement

If families are to work with schools as partners in the education of the children, schools must provide them with opportunities and support they need to become involved. There are a number of ways to involve parents in education, but the responsibility rests with the school with regard to the type of level of involvement (Barbour & Barbour, 2001). The Michigan Department of Education (2001) explains that parents require guidance and support so that they can become involved in the education of their children. Schools need to commit that they will encourage parents to be involved to a greater extent, making their task less stressful. Henderson & Mapp (2002) provide some advice on how schools can ensure active parent participation:

- Encourage face to face meetings whenever possible;
- These involvements strengthen parent-teacher communication and increases parent participation in school functions;
- Maintain constant communication via emails and letters;
- Keep parents regularly informed about learner's progress;
- Send learning material home and;
- Develop programs on how they can assist their children with homework, mathematics, reading and other subject.

Other ways that schools can use to encourage parent involvement are further discussed below.

2.6.1.1 Communication

According to Mestry (2004), effective communication skills and processes are important in schools that reflect South Africa's multicultural society. Mestry (2004) further argues that there should be at least one educator in a school who has the knowledge of the home language spoken by the children in the school. Schools should invite parent members who are conversant in more than one language spoken in the school to act as interpreters or translators in the written and verbal communication with the learners and their parents (Hill & Craft, 2003). They also argue that even if there is only one parent with whom communication in English presents a problem, or whether it is 90 percent, interpretation is necessary. School fliers, newsletters and letters to the parents should be translated into the languages understood by the parents. Schools must overcome the language barriers if effective parental involvement is expected.

According to Loughran (2008), communication with parents is of paramount importance. Teachers need to work with a diversity of caregivers from working parents to nannies or relatives. Teachers have not been trained to handle parents. The government should put programmes into place that train teachers to handle different types of parents.

In order to develop a relationship of trust, a teacher's first contact with parents is crucial. Loughran (2008) suggests that teachers should contact parents during the first week of school to let them know how their child is adjusting and what is expected of them. According to Epstein (2008), regular parent teacher conferences arranged by the school for all parents is the best way for creating opportunities for communication. According to Wherry (2009), parents know their

children better than anyone else and in these conferences teachers will gain invaluable insight into the child in the classroom. Epstein (2009) suggests that teachers also engage in home visits to increase the levels of communication between teacher and parent. However, many teachers do not have the time and are afraid of their safety to engage in such an activity.

Schools should alert parents as soon as children begin to have problems. Wherry (2009) in his article suggests that school managers should inform teachers to prioritize keeping parents informed at the first sign of a problem. Learning about a child's problem after it occurred is already too late to do anything, and this can create a resentful relationship between the school and the parent. Written communication is one of the most effective means of communicating with parents (Epstein, 2008).

According to the United States' Safe and Responsive School Project, teachers need to focus on families strengths for collaborative relationships to develop and communicate when children do something positive in the classroom so that parents do not develop a fear of coming to school to only listen to negative comments. Williamson (2001) advocates that a parent friendly approach, which seeks access, voice and ownership, involving children will always result in success. Communication about school programmes and learners progress is necessary and will create effective parent involvement.

2.6.1.2 Creating Programs

The school should assist families establish home environments that support children since parents are unsure about how to support their child during the various stages of development. In South Africa we have diverse problems and support to families is much needed. Schools need to provide information on parenting to all parents in the communities for effective learning and teaching to take place. Teaching

parents child rearing and developmental skills will assist the parent cope with children at each phase. Eptsein (2008) highlighted that when schools provide support to families for their parenting task, parents develop skills, knowledge and confidence about their parenting as the child grows. Lemmer & Van Wyk (2009) advocate that, during these programmes, parents meet with other children's parents of the similar age group and share knowledge. Programmes such as Parents Assuring Student Success (P.A.S.S.) in the US, where parents learn how to supplement schooling by instructing their children at home in academic tasks such as reading and time management, are very successful. Another very successful programme in the US is called Parents as Teachers of Children (P.A.T.C.H). It encourages parents to involve themselves in academic tasks at home. This is a program that provides support contacts for both parents and staff, sponsors regular staff training and supervision meetings during which concerns can be addressed.

It is important to emphasise, however, that effective parent involvement programs are built upon careful consideration of the unique needs of the community. Parental involvement programs should share goals of increasing parent-school collaboration in order to promote healthy child development and safe communities.

2.6.1.3 Getting Parents to volunteer their services

Volunteers provide an extra pair of hands for teaching staff in various areas of school life, namely: the classroom, excursions, activities, discipline and ground duties. Griffith (2000) found that schools that actively seek parent volunteers and train them appropriately build up considerable resources and one that gives far greater benefits than can be measured by the mere number of volunteer hours. Schools and teachers need to inform parents as to what tasks they can involve themselves. According to the National Parent Teacher Association

(N.P.T.A., 2004), teachers should create a list of specific volunteer actions that they would like parents to engage themselves in and distribute this list. In some cases, parents that have specific talents should be approached to volunteer their services. Teachers should attempt to involve and encourage as many parents as they can (Christenson, 2001). Making parents see it as being part of their “job” or role will encourage them to get involved (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 2002). Lemmer & Van Wyk (2009) assert that volunteers should be seen as helpers and not teacher substitutes. Volunteers can be a great help and the experience of most schools according to Lemmer & Van Wyk (2009) is that the greatest problem relating to volunteers is finding enough volunteers. Brennen (2005) emphasized that parents can be encouraged to come to school and participate in projects that are initiated by the school. One project that Brennen (2005) discusses is gardening. Parents and teachers can work together to plough and plant a food garden.

2.6.1.4 Involving Parents in Decision Making

When parents are part of the decisions made by the school they take ownership and feel responsible to ensure that the decision is carried out successfully. Rules and regulations should be made with parents so that they will feel the need to enforce the rules with their children. Schools must ensure that parents have a voice in education. Berger (2008) states that effective parent involvement means that parents are not simply informed of the result of school decision making, but have real opportunities to participate and take ownership in decisions affecting schooling.

According to Henderson and Kaap (2001), schools should encourage active Parent Teacher Associations and Parent Teacher Organizations or any other organization and committees for parent leadership and participation. Lemmer & Van Wyk (2009) advocate that all decisions

must be clearly communicated to all stakeholders. The South African Schools Act (1996) has made it compulsory that every school has an active School Governing Body that is involved in decision making of schools. According to Wherry (2009), parents should be treated as partners and not “clients” if effective decisions are to be taken.

The school’s greatest challenge is to find effective ways to include parents from all ethnic, socio economic and other groups in decision making processes. A diversity of parents from different age and ethnic groups, fathers and mothers, and parents from different socio economic statuses should be represented on committees. According to Lemmer & Van Wyk (2009), through decision making, parents are given input into policies that affect their children’s education. Parents will develop a sense of ownership in the school and begin to share their experiences with other families. This type of sharing will result in better decision making in the interest of the children’s education.

2.7 Personal Parental Involvement

The home is the first and most important school any child will ever have. Practically, any teacher will verify this statement. Teachers have found that the most successful students are from homes where parents provide children with structure, namely: support and guidance. Henderson and Kaap (2000) support this view that students with parents who really care about their education are usually more successful than students who do not. The idea that parents can positively influence their children’s education is seen as common sense by many researchers. Lewis (2004) advocates that children spend more time at home than they do at school and parents have the opportunity of one-on-one situations with their children. Lewis (2004) affirms that the home environment provides for numerous teaching situations for the parent and child.

Research has consistently revealed that high student achievement and self-esteem are closely related to positive parental participation in education. There are a number of ways that parents can involve themselves in their child's schooling. According to Henderson and Kaap (2001), parents should make the effort to be part of their child's education. Mestry (2004) found that there are three key areas in which parents can have enormous control over a child's success in school, student absenteeism, keeping a wide variety of reading material available and controlling the amount of time the television is on. Studies have shown that students whose parents establish a daily routine for doing homework, completing chores and having family meals together are more likely to succeed academically (Brooks & Hancock, 2000). These routines are important in making life predictable and establishing a framework in which the child has security.

These are some of the ways parents can involve themselves in their child's education.

2.7.1 Homework

According to Henderson and Kaap (2001), one very effective way for parents to involve themselves in their children's education is through homework. Teachers assign homework on a regular basis because practice is needed before children fully understand new concepts and develop skills. Homework increases the amount of learning time available and allows students to do more in-depth learning. Mestry (2004) highlights that parents gain insight into what the child is doing at school and can also monitor progress when they are assisting their child with homework. Parents must see doing homework with their child as quality time spent with the child (Mestry, 2004). Grolnick and Slowiazek (2000) found that children of parents who monitor their progress regularly are more likely to succeed. Engelbrecht (2001) emphasized in their findings that when a child is having trouble, the

parent will be able to recognize this in his interaction with the child while doing homework and should take the initial steps in contacting the school. Parents need to monitor their child's homework and out of school activities. Parents need to take an active interest in the happenings of school. Communicating through questioning and conversation will ensure that the parent gains knowledge of school's homework policy and its relevance for the child's educational growth.

2.7.2 Home Environment

Parents need to maintain a warm and supportive home environment. They should encourage reading and writing at home. Henderson and Kaap (2001) provide the following guidance for parents to create a good place for the child to learn:

- Praise and encourage the child;
- Emphasize efforts and achievement;
- Establish rules and routines;
- Monitor television viewing;
- Limit after school jobs and activities and;
- Encourage the child to share information about the school and respond with empathy.

Pianta and Nimetz (2001) stated that one practical way of helping build structure in a child's life is providing him or her with a quiet study place.

2.7.3 Attitude of Parent

The attitude of the parent is also crucial to student achievement. According to Gonzales (2004), when a parent has a positive attitude towards the school and towards learning in general, the child will tend to have the same positive attitude. Negative and apathetic attitudes are the root of a large portion of discipline problems (Gonzales, 2004). Parents who care enough to be involved in children's lives tend to have children who achieve higher levels in education. Parents serve as

managers of family routines and schedules. Research shows (Pianta and Nimetz, 2001) that positive outcomes for children result from warm and sensitive responding, discipline that is not harsh or punitive, teaching that follows the child's lead, a language environment that includes many stimulating conversations, provision of books to encourage learning, monitoring and keeping track of children, and providing consistent routines for family mealtimes, bedtimes, etc. (Brooks et al, 2000).

Bastiani (2003) state that parents can become involved in many areas such as parents being teachers, helpers, supporters and possibly learners

2.7.4.1 Parents as “teachers “

The child's first and foremost teacher is the parent. Parents are the most effective leaders (Griffith, 2000). Berger (2008) concludes that parents as educators can make a significant contribution to children's acquisition of numeracy and literacy skills. Lemmer (2000) indicates that parental involvement can take the form of co-operation and participation which leads to effective partnership between the school and the parent.

2.7.4.2 Parents as Helpers

Children feel a sense of joy when they see their parents within the school premises helping. Lemmer (2000) states that where possible parents have to be given the chance to teach or to help children with other class activities. Berger (2008) maintains that parents can be involved in the planning of curricular and support programmes and the teaching and learning processes.

2.7.4.3 Parents as supporters

The other aspect of school besides teaching and learning is social events. Parents from different social and cultural groups can come together to be part of the school community to raise funds for the school. Atkin (1999) in Pianta and Nimetz (2001) urges listening to parents to uncover and build upon their skills and expertise that they possess. For parents to feel a vital part of the school, they should be given a chance to sometimes organize and decide what activities they can render in school. Parents at school can become active in fund raising and resource development.

2.7.4.4 Parents as learners

Giving parents information about what children are learning is not enough. Parents need to be given insights and understanding about their children so that they can build bridges between home and school (Webster et al, 2001). Teachers can invite parents to their children's classroom for observation. Fine (2000) in Ferrara and Ferrara (2005) also suggests that teachers invite parents into the classroom to discuss ideas to make the classroom attractive and conducive to learning. Although parents are seen to play an important role in the education of their children and are eager to be involved in school life "endorsing the power of the key relationships between families and school" (Bastiani, 2003), lack of training and fear of being criticized by the teachers results in little involvement (Lightfoot, 2003).

2.7.5 Parental Involvement in the Curriculum

Parental involvement in the curriculum is particularly important since it provides a direct input into what children are actually doing at school (Muller, 2001). Berger (2008) proposes that parents' sustained interest in what is happening to the child at school is likely to be a crucial factor in educational success. The research evidence is clear that socio-

economic background of the home is the biggest single factor in predicting children's educational attainment (Brooks, 2004; Catsambis et al, 2001). However, further research also proves that parents can and do make a difference (Dearing et al, 2004). It is therefore necessary to recognize the crucial nature of collaboration with parents. Downey (2006) has stressed that it is essential to build a good relationship with parents if the child is to succeed. The ways of involving parents in the wider curriculum are more a question of routine and ongoing good practice. Teachers need to be alert of the richness of the home environment and the amount of help which parents themselves have to offer. Muller (2001) suggests that when educators are planning atopic they should think about how the parents can contribute. This will allow the parent to become part of the school curriculum and offer more practical guidance. Parents need to be involved in all aspects of the curriculum. Parents can provide resources that can make the curriculum more meaningful and exciting for the learners. Muller (2001) also suggests that schools should hold regular curriculum meetings to ensure that parents are aware of the subject matter or content of the curriculum. Learners can be involved in the curriculum meetings both in creating and in being there to talk to parents. The more the children are involved the higher the percentage of parents who will attend.

2.7.4 Epstein's Theory on Parental Involvement

Epstein (2002) re-emphasises the above in her description of what parents and schools can do to increase involvement:

2.7.4.1 Parenting

Community involvement begins with the parent and the family structure. Schools need to assist families with programs to understand adolescent development. Teachers can assist parents with parenting skills. The creation of a positive home environment needs to be discussed with parents. In such discussions, parents provide schools with necessary

information about learners. Epstein (2002) also states that parenting includes assisting schools in understanding families' backgrounds, cultures and goals (Glanz, 2006).

2.7.4.2 Communicating

Schools need to constantly provide parents with updated information about learner's school progress and school functions. Communication is about opening the channels so that parents can effectively reach and contact the school. Keeping parents informed through notices, memos, report cards and conferences is a critical responsibility of the school.

2.7.4.3 Volunteering

Glanz (2006) emphasizes that it is important for schools to solicit the assistance of volunteer parents for various jobs at school. Parents can assist when teachers are absent or with general maintenance of the school. Parents can also assist in the safety and security of the school.

2.7.4.4 Learning at Home

Workshops on how to assist learners with their homework is important. Teachers who get parents involved in their children's work influence student achievement positively.

2.7.4.5 Decision making

Regular meetings must be held to get the voice of the parents. Glanz (2006) noted that serious commitment to the community involves the school inviting parents in school governance and school leadership and other relevant committees. Parents must play an integral part in decision on policy development and practices.

2.7.4.6 Collaborating with the community

Schools must involve businesses, cultural organizations, non-governmental organizations (N.G.O.s), religious bodies and universities and colleges to be part of the learning process. The school's leadership will be more effective when all relevant stakeholders are involved in the education of the adolescent. Epstein (2002) noted that by implementing the activities for all six types of involvement, teachers can help parents become involved at school and at home in various ways that meet student and parents' needs.

The above discussion provides some practical ways in which parents can become involved in the school and the manner in which the school can assist in this process. The next topic discusses the different personalities of parents that the school can encounter. If the school can identify the personality trait of the parent then they can deal with the parent appropriately by avoiding possible conflict situation that may arise.

2.8 Types of Parents

Smit, Drissen, Sluiter and Slegers (2007) identified the following types of parents that a school can encounter.

2.8.1 The Supporter

This type of parent has sufficient time and is available to assist the school. His or her personality is such that he or she is prepared to help with practical matters (Smit, Drissen, Sluiter and Slegers, 2007). Furthermore, mostly this group of parents is a low to medium income earner. They are very helpful, nice, with a solid grounding in education, and is friendly, creative, sympathetic and supportive. He or she is very willing to serve the school and is well adjusted.

2.8.2 The Absentee

He or she is generally absent from the child's education. This type of parent is a loner, a quitter and not very friendly. This parent experiences problems communicating with the school, has great difficulty in dealing with the cultural gap, does not consider him or her suited to make a contribution may only participate when asked explicitly.

This parent does not have much interest in the education of the child and leaves the choice of school up to chance (Smit, Drissen, Sluiter and Slegers, 2007).

2.8.3 The Politician

The politician is very critical of the educators and the school. This type of parent is precise, optimistic and persuasive. According to Smit (2006) this type of parent has a desire to exert influence and to be part of the decision making process in the school. He is an active participant in the choice of the school and is extroverted. He falls into the low to medium income bracket (Smit, Drissen, Sluiter and Slegers, 2007)

2.8.4 The Career Maker

This parent is a medium to high income earner. He places responsibility for child raising, child care and education on the school. This parent believes that the school is responsible for the education of the child. He or she has a very businesslike attitude. The parent is aloof and does not have the time for school related matters (Smit, Drissen, Sluiter and Slegers, 2007).

2.8.5 The Tormentor

This is one of the more difficult parents to deal with. The parent feels offended and misunderstood as a result of the schools attitude and own educational experiences. The school is constantly criticized by the parent. This parent looks for errors and is only satisfied when the school cringes and takes responsibility for suboptimal functioning. Parent is aggressive and believes that he or she knows it all (Smit, Drissen, Sluiter and Slegers, 2007).

2.8.6 The Super Parent

This is a high income earner that places greater emphasis on the education of the child. Feels responsible for child raising and education This type of parent is very willing to assist the school in fund raising. He or she thinks critically along with the school and contributes good ideas and is prepared to utilize his or her own networks and is satisfied when school does the best for the learner (Smit, Drissen, Sluiter and Slegers, 2007).

2.9 Conclusion

Parental involvement is a process by which parents and educators work and learn together. They function as facilitators in each others efforts to make life more meaningful for children and themselves. When teachers and parents develop a strong link between home and school, children benefit in higher achievement and self esteem. Parents who are made to feel an integral part of their children's education are more likely to support educational efforts in the community. Parents and teachers must trust each other and teachers should encourage parents to be involved. Teachers must have a belief that parents are a crucial component of education and research supports it (Jackson and

Andrews, 2004). Unless teachers share this belief there can be no effective teacher-parent co-operation.

This chapter dealt with the literature on parental involvement, the benefits of parental involvement, and the barriers that prevent parents from becoming involved and how school and parents can increase parental involvement. The next chapter describes the theories of parental involvement. The two theories that will be discussed are Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory and the role theory.

CHAPTER THREE

Theories on Parental Involvement

3.1 Introduction

Parents and families play a critical role in the development of a child's academic and social success. It is therefore imperative that parents and teachers work together to progress towards achieving the ultimate goal of learner development. The learner's social development is critical to his schooling success. For the purposes of this study the researcher has adopted the role theory and ecological theory as the basis for her theoretical framework. Positive links between parental involvement and student achievement as well as students' attributes associated with achievement have been noted by researchers for some time. One of the theories associated with parents' decisions about involvement in their children's education is role theory.

3.2 Role Theory

One of the first theorists to emphasise the importance of parental involvement in the education of children was Hunt (1963). He challenged the assumptions of fixed intelligence and predetermined development. Hunt's belief that IQ is not fixed led to a change in the perception concerning the role of parents from one of passive observation to one of facilitation. Hunt's theory is based to a large extent on the work of Jean Piaget (1964). Piaget (1964) emphasised that development involves the interactions of the child with the environment. According to Piaget, it is through the process of interactions with the environment that the child develops intelligence. Piaget sees this as an adaptive process that includes assimilation and

experiences and data into the child's understanding of the world; accommodation to fit the new information into schemes already constructed and equilibrium that results from the adaptive process. This model of cognitive knowledge was important and had an impact on the school's curriculum development because it emphasised the importance of experience to the developing child. This is why the role of the parent is so important to the developing child. This implies that the experiences that a parent provides at home will enhance the developing child's intelligence. Piaget's theories indicate that intellectual development is a process that commences at infancy and continues throughout schooling. Hunt's theory that intelligence is not fixed and is based on experiences, reinforce that intervention and parental involvement has a great impact on children's education.

Biddle (1979) in Stephens (2004) defined role theory as concerned with the study of behaviours that are characteristic of persons within contexts and with various processes that presumably produce, explain, or are affected by those behaviours. Stephens (2004) explains that roles are personalized for individuals since not all parents are subject to identical expectations and they all do not enact the parental role in the same way. Hoover-Dempsey (2004) argues that parental role beliefs and behaviours are influenced by personal ideas and those of important others about the goals of children's education. Hoover-Dempsey (2004) further explains that roles are also characterised by their focus on goals held by the group and its individual members. These goals include socialisation of the child, instilling of appropriate behaviour, learning specific subject matter, development of children's interests. They argue that roles are characterised by goals which include socialisation of the child and the development of a child's talents. Parents play a major role in socialisation of children and they know these roles and play them effectively and efficiently (Hoover-Dempsey, 2004). The role theory emphasises the role functions of parents and educators has being the

key to the education of the learners. Stephens (2004) asserts that children do grow up to be a lot like their parents. She argues that children who live in homes where parents smoke are more likely to become smokers. Parents who abuse drugs or alcohol are more likely to find their children someday do the same. Parents with low self esteem raise children with the same affliction. Stephens (2004) affirms that parents play a vital role in how children turn out. Parents who succeed in education and place education as priority in their lives tend to have children who meet or even surpass their parent's accomplishments. Role modelling is an extremely effective tool in child rearing. Being a positive role model requires forethought and self control.

Role theory describes the process of developing and refining a measure of parental role construction. Theorists, researchers and practitioners have suggested for some time that parent's ideas about their roles in children's education are important to understanding their thinking and decisions about involvement (e.g. Sanders, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, 2002). They identified parent's role ideas as a part of their model of contextual variables influencing parent and teacher practices of involvement. Power and Clark's (2000) classic study of low and high achievement on low income African American adolescents suggested that one key to understanding the high achieving student's success was to be found in their parent's belief that they should assume a strong, personal role in their children's schooling and behaviour.

According Hoover-Dempsey (2004) role theory suggests that parent's ideas about the roles they should assume in their children's education are developed through experience as members of groups relevant to children's development and education (e.g. family, school). It also suggests that parental role beliefs and behaviours are influenced by

personal ideas and those of important others in children's education. This reiterates that if the school adopts a program to involve parents in children's education then parents will construct their roles accordingly. Parent role construction for involvement may be defined as parental beliefs about what one is supposed to do as a parent in relation to the child's education. This theory is important to students' educational success because it defines activities that parents construe as important, necessary and permissible for their own involvement in the child's education.

Theoretical work on roles suggest that they include expectations held by groups for the behavior of member's, individuals beliefs and expectations regarding their own behavior as a group member, and the behaviors that come to characterize various members participation in the group. According to Sheldon (2002) roles include beliefs about ones own and other group member responsibilities, rights and obligations; they also include social expectations and scripts that guide group member's behaviors in various situations.

According to Hoover-Dempsey (2004) parental role construction for the involvement may best be defined as parental beliefs about what one is supposed to do, as a parent, in relation to the child's education and behaviors characteristically enacted in service of these beliefs. She further goes on to say that role construction functions as a motivator of parental involvement because it enables the parent to imagine, anticipate, plan and behave in relation to a host of activities potentially relevant to the child's educational success.

3.2.1 Role Theory -Implications for the School

According to this theory schools need to increase the incidence and effectiveness of parental involvement in student's education. The fact that roles are socially constructed means that all members of the social group (schools, families, school-family interactions) influence the roles

that parents adopt regarding involvement in children's schooling (Hoover-Dempsey, 2004). Parents enter schools with preconceived role constructions, based on their own experiences of schooling and their experiences with their children's schooling, so schools need to be wary of this when dealing with parents. Roles however are subject to constant change (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).As members of the social context schools have the power to influence parent's role construction towards active and positive engagement in children's schooling (Reed, 2001 in Leu, 2008). Thus schools and teachers are major contributors to parent's ideas about what they can and should be doing in relation to their children's schooling (Hoover –Dempsey, 2004).

3.3 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory

Socialization always occurs in a context and any such context is embedded in a web of other and ever changing contexts. To study a child without understanding the context is to not fully understand all of the factors that affect the child (Leu, 2008). In Bronfenbrenner's theory the child is studied in the context of the family which lies in the context of the community. Bronfenbrenner called his theory the ecological model of human development which viewed the child in the center of a set of concentric circles.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bio ecological systems theory viewed development as occurring within a nested series of contextual levels, from the immediate setting of the person's experience, typically parents and children interacting in the family called the microsystem, to the next levels, such as home and school interacting about the child called the mesosystem, and to other systems, such as the parent's work experience called the exosystem, which affects the child indirectly, or the dimensions of time as it relates to a child's environment called the chronosystem, which affects the child as well (Mcdermott and

Rottenberg, 2000). This theory adds more important information to what we know about how to understand and relate to parents. This theory looks at the development of the child within the context of the system of relationships that form his or her environment. Bronfenbrenner's theory defines complex layers of environment each having an effect on a child's development. The ecological theory considers family influences as very powerful in producing change (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) and therefore, provides a way to conceptualise interactions between parents, school and learners and to examine how they relate to academic achievement.

Bronfenbrenner states that learning and development are facilitated when the child participates in more complex patterns of reciprocal activities with someone with whom the child has a strong and enduring emotional relationship (Bauer & Shea, 2003). They further state that parents vary in how they try to socialise with their children, they assume that the primary role of all parents is to influence, teach and control their children. According to Parquette and Ryan (2001) Bronfenbrenner's theory shows that schools and teachers play a secondary role but cannot provide the complexity of interactions that can be provided by the primary adults, that is the parent. It is the best interest of the entire society to lobby for political and economic policies that support the importance of parental roles in their children's development. The five layers of Bronfenbrenner's theory that has an influence on parent involvement will be discussed in detail.

3.3.1 Microsystems layer

This is the smallest of the contexts in which the child relates to. The microsystem is the closest environment for the child. It is made up of the environment in which the child lives and moves. It is made up of the mother-father; parent-child and sibling relationship. The people and institutions the child interacts within that environment make up the

microsystem. The microsystem will include any immediate relationships or organisations the child interacts with, such as the immediate family or caregivers and their school or day care. How these groups or organisations interact with the microsystem is the level of effect on how the child will be able to grow. Furthermore how a child acts or reacts to these people in the microsystem will affect how they treat her in return. Paquette and Ryan (2001) interpret Bronfenbrenner's ideas and maintain that at this level the interactions between persons can happen in two ways from the child and towards the child for example a child's parent has an influence of his/her beliefs and behaviour.

Each child's special genetic and biologically influenced personality traits end up affecting how others treat them. Examples of influence are the immediate family members; childcare, school teachers and peers; neighbourhood play area and religious groups may be part of the system. The younger the child the smaller the number of microsystems. At this level relationships have an impact in both directions. This bi-directional influence between the child and the parent are the strongest and has the greatest impact on the child (Berk, 2000).

In this layer Bronfenbrenner (1979) described the microsystem as development that is facilitated when the child participates in more complex patterns of reciprocal activities with someone that the child has a strong emotional relationship. Seigner (2006) used Bronfenbrenner's above description to address four issues regarding parents education promoting practices, home based involvement, education relevant family involvement, family structure and family size and the physical environment.

Home based involvement: Seigner (2006) stated when parents motivate learning, get involved in school work, encourage and guide accepted school behaviour at home then they perform school like functions and support their children's learning from home. Parents tend to reduce the

amount of time they spend with children as their children move through the phases, as parents judge themselves less able to handle school subjects and involvement becomes limited to just motivation (Seigner, 2006).

Education Relevant Family Involvement: Children with at least one authoritative parent performed far better academically than children from un-authoritative families and parental involvement of the child's needs was positively related to academic achievement (Seigner, 2006). Since Seigner's (2006) review there has been much research to show the importance of the parent's relationship on academic achievement.

- Family Structure and Family Size: Seigner (2006) found that the negative effects of growing up in a single parent home can be prevented by enhancing parental involvement.
- Physical aspects of Home Learning Environment: There is not much research on the effects of the home environment however early analysis shows positive relations between physical home settings and material and academic achievement. Seigner (2006) highlights the relevance of a positive home environment to positive educational outcomes.

Each of the above aspects shows its relevance to education achievement. Applying Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory to this analysis provides us with a net effect of each microsystem aspect on educational outcomes.

3.3.2 Mesosystem

This layer relates to the interactions that people in the microsystem have with each other. The mesosystem comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person for example the relations between the home and the school or the school and the parent's workplace. Berk (2000) describes

this layer has a connection between the structures of the child's microsystems. Paquette and Ryan (2001) describe this layer as a system of mesosystems. The child's development is influenced by the interactions between the child's teacher and his parents or the caregiver and the parent or the neighbours etc. The child is not directly involved in the mesosystem. It is important to see if the influencing factors of socialization have coinciding or opposing directions in other words, do the different microsystems support each other or does the developing person perceive them as clashing pressures for example the relationship between the parents and the school or the relationship between mother and father.

3.3.3 Exosystem

This layer is a connection with the broader community in which the child does not function directly but that still have a large effect on him or her. The exosystem encompasses the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not ordinarily contain the developing person, but in which events occur that influences processes within the immediate settings that contain for example the relation between the child's home and the parent's workplace (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). The parents workplace is an important environment because his or her working hours; the nature of work create the conditions for the child's activities within the microsystem. The structures in this layer impact on the child's development by interacting with some structures in her microsystem (Berk, 2000). Bronfenbrenner (2005) suggests that direct or indirect links to power settings related to allocation of resources and decision making enhance the developmental potential of settings. Parents who are active in parent teacher organisations may enhance the developmental potential of school for their child because of their link to

power setting. Lack of parental involvement will have a negative rather than a neutral effect on the child's development.

The mesosystem is influenced by the ecosystem which consists of social settings that indirectly affect the family for example mass media, the education system and voluntary agencies.

3.3.4 Macrosystem

Berk (2000) describes this layer as comprising of cultural values, customs and laws. The effects of this layer have an influence throughout the interactions of all other layers. The macrosystem is seen as a societal blueprint for a particular culture, subculture or other broader social context. Bronfenbrenner (2005) iterates that the behavioural and conceptual models that are characteristic of the macrosystem are transferred from one generation to another by means of different cultural institutions like family, school, congregation, workplace and administration that intermediate the processes of socialisation.

Berk (2000) affirms that the macrosystem is the outmost layer for the child. It has no distinct framework but it holds inside it the cultural values, traditions and laws. This layer penetrates through all the other layers. Berk (2000) provides the example where in some cultures the job of bringing up children is solely the task of the parent then this culture will not offer much help to the parents in their educational efforts. Paquette and Ryan (2001) see this as having an effect on the parent's educational environment and their chances to cope with the task of education. The parent's inability or ability to carry out that responsibility toward their child within the context of the microsystem is also affected. The impact of the macrosystem will only be noticed when a comparison of children from different societal upbringings are made.

Seigner (2006) defines the macrosystem as sharing in common kinds of characteristics specified. From this perspective, social classes, ethnic or religious groups or persons living in particular regions, communities, neighbourhoods or other types of broader social structures constitute a macrosystem whenever these conditions are met.

3.3.5 Chronosystem

This layer refers to how different events due to time influence the growth of the child for example the death of a parent or the aging of the child. Bronfenbrenner (2005) describes the chronosystem as the evolution, development or stream of development of the external system in time. The chronsystem models can cover a short or long period of time. Bronfenbrenner (2005) emphasised that contextual influence and individuals can be better understood when dynamic relations between the context and individual is taken into consideration.

3.3.6 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory's Implications for the school

The ecological theory clearly indicates that a child grows up with components in his or her life interacting with each other. A child is however not a passive recipient of what goes on in his life, he interacts directly with the people and the effects goes both ways. Another important point that arises from the ecological theory is that when parents contradict on how to raise the child and give the child conflicting lessons, this will hinder the child's growth in different channels (Seigner, 2006).

Bronfenbrenner (2005) sees the instability and unpredictability of family life has been the greatest destructive force in children's development. The ecological theory indicates that when there is a breakdown in the microlayer the child will not be equipped to explore other parts of his environment. When children are not involved in a satisfied parent-child

relationship then they look for other inappropriate ways for affirmations. These deficiencies show themselves especially in adolescents as anti-social behaviour, lack of self discipline and inability to provide self direction. The education system needs to make up for many of the breakdowns that children face in their homes. It has become necessary for schools and educators to provide stable and long term relationships to accommodate for parent's deficiencies, however for the educational community to take on the primary role, will reinforce the denial of the real issue of the caregiver. Teachers fulfil an important secondary role, but cannot provide the complexity of interaction that can be provided by parents. Schools and teachers should work towards supporting the primary role and not taking it over (Leu, 2008). Bronfenbrenner (2005) emphasises that we should foster societal attitudes that value work done on behalf of children at all levels: parents, teachers, extended families, mentors, work supervisors and legislators.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory focuses on aspects of the environment pertaining to process, person, context, time and what directly relates to the child. Seigner (2006) uses Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory to describe four steps that examine the context, interpersonal processes and personal characteristics of children and parents that prompt parental educational involvement and mediate the parental involvement, child outcome link. The first step is the person's variables such as the child's personality characteristics, the parent's expectations for their child, the context such as the atmosphere of the school and the process such as the parent-teacher communication. The second involves the home based involvement such as parent child communication on school related matters and school based activities i.e. the parent's participation in school activities. The third relates to the child person variable such as educational self efficacy, academic inspirational outcome link. The fourth refers to the child's educational outcomes such as academic achievement (Seigner, 2006).

The influences of the parent-family extend to all aspects of the child's development. Teachers need to deal with a variety of the family systems in understanding their students. Bronfenbrenner (2005) defined five propositions that describe how the relationship developed at home and at school work together for positive development.

Proposition 1

The child must be in a long term relationship with a stable adult that values and sees the child as special and the child must know this. This relationship must also occur frequently. This attachment must be one of unconditional love and support (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Proposition 2

Bronfenbrenner (2005) highlights that the strong relationship and support will assist the child relate to features in the mesosystems. This relationship must be steered and sustained for the developing person to progress. The child will develop confidence that will allow him/her to grow from outside activities.

Proposition 3

The child will develop the skills to move onto more complex relationships because of the attachments and connections with other adults. These skills will be used in the primary relationship (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Proposition 4

Children will only develop and progress if there is continuous two way communication with their primary adult. Children and parent need this interchange at home and at school, (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Proposition 5

Parents and teachers must enable time and resources for the importance of the relationship between child and adult to be supported by public attitudes.

These five propositions have important implications for schools. Schools should not underestimate the important role that parents play in supporting and encouraging learners to perform academically. The parent teacher partnership is also paramount to promoting the academic success of learners. Working independently no parent or school can provide the support that can build the relationship it needs to help all children have a bright future (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

3.4 Conclusion

From the point of the role theory and Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory it can be clearly seen that the role of the parent cannot be underestimated. It is the responsibility of parents, teachers and the community to support and encourage learner's educational aspirations. It is therefore necessary for the school and parents to work together in order to reach educational success. A child is influenced by family, the neighborhood and religious organizations in the microsystem. These influences have a direct effect on the child in all the other levels. When the child is positively influenced then the child's development will also be positively functional.

This chapter concludes the theories that were used in the study of parental involvement. The next chapter discusses the research design, methodology and the paradigm.

Chapter Four

Research Design and methodology

4.1 Introduction

The previous three chapters provided a background to this study and served to provide some of the key issues pertaining to the topic. This chapter is an account of the research design and methodology used in this research.

4.2 Aims of the research

The aim of this research is to look into the factors promoting parental involvement of learners at a secondary school.

- The extent and the nature to which parents involve themselves in their children's education.
- The obstacles that hinder parental involvement in education of their children.
- The educational benefits for learners accompanying parental involvement in their children's education and
- The educational value in encouraging parents to be more active in their children's education.

The following questions will be answered

1. What is the extent and nature to which parents involve themselves in children education?
2. What are the factors and/or obstacles that hinder parents in their involvement in the education of their children?
3. How can parental involvement be of educational benefit to a learner? and

4. Why is it important for the school to encourage parents to be more active in the education of their children?

4.3 Research Design

Research methodological choices in any study is generally influenced by the nature of the study and the accompanying objectives. Choices often involve selecting either qualitative, quantitative or combined qualitative and quantitative research methodology (De Vos & Fouche, 2002). For the purposes of this study qualitative research method was selected. It was seen as a relevant methodology to explore the factors promoting parental involvement in their children's education.

According to Flick (2007) qualitative research is intended to approach the world "out there" and to understand, describe and sometimes explain social phenomena from the inside in a number of different ways:

By analyzing experiences of individuals or groups,
By analyzing interactions and communications in the making,
By analyzing documents or similar traces of experiences and interactions.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) describe qualitative research in a similar manner when they point out that it may be defined as a particular situation in social science that basically depends on watching people in their own territory and interacting with them on their own terms. Qualitative research aims to understand the importance that people connect to everyday life. This type of understanding can be described as the effort to attain a sense of meaning that others give to their situations through an interpretive understanding of their language, art and policies. For Mason (2002) qualitative research is exciting and important.

Qualitative research design furthermore, involves the studies use and collection of a variety of empirical materials that include case studies, personal experiences, life stories, interviews, observational methods, historical methods, interactive methods and visual texts that describe routines and problematic moments and meanings of individual lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Qualitative research is a field of inquiry in its own right. It is a multi method in focus, involving an interpretive naturalistic approach.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define qualitative research as a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. For them this methodology consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. It is by these means that qualitative research involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world. As is the case of this study, qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research will therefore be used to explore that factors that promote and/or parental involvement in children's education.

4.4 Paradigm

Paradigms are a conglomeration of assumptions, ideas, perceptions and views about the nature of reality. Given the fact that they have been developed to understand human phenomena as scientific subject matter, they provide guidance and direct thinking and action in relation to perceived reality. Examples include the positivist, interpretive and critical paradigms. Positivist paradigm is the approach that falls under natural sciences. Interpretive paradigm is related to hermeneutics a

theory of meaning that originated in the 19th century and is mainly associated with social sciences.

In his study the interpretive paradigm is selected. It is anti-positivist in nature and highly subjective. It is chosen in this study because epistemology emerging out of this study is highly relativistic and exclusive to the actors directly involved in the social activities. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) the central endeavor of the interpretive paradigm are to understand the subjective world of human experience. Interpretivism is characterized by seeing the social world from a highly subjective viewpoint of the actors in the context.

This paradigm relates well with qualitative research methodology chosen in this study. Because the study is within the social sciences, it is not based on a singular theoretical program, but draws on several theoretical backgrounds. Neuman (2001, p66) describes the social sciences as those sciences that deal with a particular phase or aspect of human society. They involve the study of people, their beliefs, behavior, interaction and institutions. The interpretive paradigm will be used as this study seeks an actual reality in a specific situation. This research falls under the interpretive paradigm which advocates that the world should be studied in its natural state rather than in a controlled laboratory type experiment and with minimum intervention by the researcher (Cohen et al, 2000). This type of paradigm allows for parents to freely express their views on the questions posed.

The interpretive paradigm has limitations in that human bias can never be underestimated as already pointed out, since it is highly subjective. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) argued that qualitative methodologies are criticized for being influenced, biased, insignificant, ungeneralisable and idiosyncratic. According to Maree (2007) the interpretive paradigm stresses the connections of people as individuals, who form a social order among themselves in their everyday life and

create routines. In the next section strategies that were used in the research are discussed.

4.5 Research Strategy

Creswell and Miller (2000) identified the following five strategies that can be used to design qualitative research namely biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study.

Biography is used to report on and document an individual's life and his experiences as told to the researcher. Phenomenology aims to understand and interpret the meaning that subjects give to their everyday lives. It further describes the meaning to experiences of a phenomenon, topic or concept. Grounded theory is based more on observation than on deduction. According Rubin and Barbie (2001), the researcher in this type of study generates abstract analytical schema of a phenomenon i.e. a theory that explains some action, interaction or process. The researcher does not begin with a theory and then prove it but rather he begins with an area of study and the relevance gradually emerges. Ethnography is the study of an intact social or cultural group based primarily on observations over a prolonged period of time. According to De Vos & Fouche (2005) the final product of this study is a descriptive, interpretive and holistic cultural portrait of the group. Finally, case study can be regarded as an exploration or an in depth analysis of a bounded system or a single or a multiple case, over a period of time Creswell (2000) in De Vos & Fouche, 2005. The case being studied can refer to a process, activity, event, programme or individual or multiple individuals. According to Rubin and Barbie (2001) the researcher enters the field with knowledge of the relevant literature before conducting the field research.

In this study will be conducted using the case study strategy, to explore the factors that promote parental involvement in children's education.

This is, because the case study is a unique way of observing any natural phenomenon which exists in a set of data (Yin, 2003). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) state that, the case study researcher typically observes the characteristics of an individual unit. In this study the researcher will be used only one school instead of a number of schools and based on the above view the case study method will be appropriate. The case study method also has strengths and weaknesses that need to be considered when used.

4.5.1 Advantages of case study

According to Yin (2003) one of the advantages of case study is that it is often conducted within the context of its use, that is, within the situation in which the activity takes place. The researcher must observe the participants within her environment, such as reading in classroom or reading for leisure. This would contrast with experiment, for instance, which deliberately isolates a phenomenon from its context, focusing on a limited number of variables (Lowe, 2007). Yin (2003) goes on to explain that variations in terms of intrinsic, instrumental and collective approaches to case studies allow for both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data. The detailed qualitative accounts often produced in case studies not only help to explore or describe the data in real-life environment, but also help to explain the complexities of real-life situations which may not be captured through experimental or survey research.

4.5.2 Disadvantages of case studies

Yin (2003) describes three types of disadvantages with respect to the use of case studies. First, case studies are often accused of lack of rigor. The researcher has been “sloppy” in the use of the method and there has been biasness attached to the research. Second, case studies provide very little basis for scientific generalization since they use a small number of participants, some conducted with only one

subject. The question commonly raised is “How can you generalize from a single case?” (Yin, 2003). Third, case studies are often labeled as being too long, difficult to conduct and producing a massive amount of documentation. The part that follows is about the sampling that was used to select the participants.

4.6 Sampling

Sampling refers to decisions taken on where to conduct the research and whom to involve (Creswell & Miller, 2000). According to De Vos & Fouche (2002, p 283), a sample comprises the elements of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study. Stofile (2005, p 37), furthermore, describes sampling as the process which is employed in gathering potential participants. It has to be done whenever one can gather data from only a fraction of the population of a group or phenomena which one intends to study. Examples of sampling techniques include purposive, random and non random. Purposive sampling, as the name suggests, is used when the researcher has already identified the context and study participants with potential to yield data amiable to the purpose of the study. While, random sampling techniques give the most reliable representation of the whole population while non random techniques, relying on the judgment of the researcher or an accident, cannot generally be used to make generalizations about the whole population (Wellington, 2000). For the purposes of this research purposive sampling will be used. The researcher “handpicked” the cases to be included in the sample based on judgment of the typicality and on experience of the control phenomenon (Cohen et al, 2007). With purposive sampling the researcher recognizes that there may be inherent variation in the population of interest (Wolcott, 2001). The researcher attempts to control this by using subjective judgment to select the sample that the researcher believes to be a representation of the population. Purposive sampling can lead to very good samples, but

there is no guarantee that it will be successful (Cohen et al, 2007). Its success depends on two assumptions:

- The research can identify in advance the characteristics that collectively capture all variations.
- The chosen sample will correctly reflect the distribution of these characteristics (Wolcott, 2001).

Depending on the type of sampling chosen, Wolcott (2001) points out that it is usually possible at least in principle, to study all of the units that form the population of interest to the study. The reasons why this is rarely done are:

- Cost – There is often a real marginal cost, associated with the inclusion of each unit of the study, the cost of time of the researcher and the cost of the resources. So the budget may constrain the sample size.
- Feasibility – If results are needed by a particular deadline, there may be insufficient time to study all the units.
- Quality – Concentration of effort on sample can increase the quality of the research which may then lead to more accurate results.

4.6.1 Sampling of the Research Site

This study was conducted at a secondary school in the Umlazi district of Kwa-Zulu Natal. The researcher selected this school because it included the grades under study. The researcher is also an educator at the school. She observed the behavior of parents and wanted to explore the factors that promote parental involvement at this school.

4.6.1.1 The Research Site

A detailed description of the research site will follow so that other researchers and readers will understand the findings. The research site selected must maximize the opportunity to engage in the problem. Savemore high was selected because the researcher is an educator at the school and this gives her maximum time at the school. A pseudo name has been used for purposes of confidentiality. A good knowledge of the community and learners is important and that is another reason this site was selected by the researcher. The school is easily accessible since the researcher teaches at the school. Data was collected over a period of two months from May 2012 to June 2012.

Savemore School is a combined school that is based in the Umlazi District, Kwazulu Natal. It caters for learners from grade R to grade 12. According to the principal of the school, the school has a population of 1420 learners. The school has 725(51%) African learners, 640(45%) Indian learners, 41(3%) Coloured and 14(1%) White. Many of the learners come from low income homes. There are also many learners that are from foster homes, single parent homes and child headed homes. There are forty educators on staff. The school management team consists of the Principal, two deputy heads and five heads of department. The schools governing body has been established and has seven serving parent members. The learner body is multilingual but the language of teaching and learning is English. The achievement of the learners at the school is average.

According to De Vos & Fouche (2005) in selecting a research field, the characteristics of the set-up should be studied carefully in order to ascertain the best field. An investigation into the various fields was done before this specific site was selected. The ideal research field according to De Vos (2005) is one that is easily accessible, where cooperation with the respondents can easily be achieved. This is another

reason why Savemore High was selected. The community is well known to the researcher and the researcher is known in the community therefore there will be the element of trust and comfort.

4.6.2.2 Gaining Permission to enter the research site

Permission into the field will be gained from the relevant authorities. Van der Burgh(2001) in De Vos, 2005, mentions that although permission by the relevant authorities is important, it is also important that all the people directly involved in the research should also be consulted in the process of gaining access. The researcher consulted with the principal of the school and the school governing body before commencing with the research. Permission from the parents was obtained since the learners were to be interviewed. Consent forms were given to the various participants.

Permission granted at the beginning of the research does not mean that the researcher is entitled to all information and should therefore gain further permission from time to time (De Vos & Fouche, 2005). Gaining admission to the research site can be a challenging task and it depends on the imagination of the researcher as well as his interpersonal and decision making skills. Silverman (2000) in Sheldon (2002) advises that, the researcher should treat the community with tact and openness to achieve more and to obtain permission readily.

4.6.2 Participants for Data Collection

The parents of learners from grade 10 to 12 were the participants of the semi structured interviews. After giving parents a brief description about the purpose of the research they were willing to participate in the study. The six parents that were interviewed were that of learners from grade 10 to 12. The interview enabled the researcher to gather information about the factors promoting parental involvement of

learners. It was from this information that the researcher was able to identify the extent to which parents involve themselves, the reasons for the lack of parental involvement and the importance that parents place on school activities.

Six educators of learners from grades 10 to 12 were also exposed to the semi structured interviews. Two educators from each grade were selected. The parents and educator were selected randomly from the grades.

The learners from grade 10 to 12 were involved in the focus group discussion. Each grade was represented by four learners made up of two males and two females. The grouping of learners was made to accommodate both genders. This was done to ensure that gender based differences of perceptions, if any, and opinions if any would have been taken care of. Race was also considered when the selection was done. This was based on the demographics of the population of the school as indicated above.

4.7 Role of the Researcher

Le Crompt (2000) explain that one of the key points to a successful research is the identity of the researcher. The researcher must become involved in the participants lives in order to gain an understanding of the participants as expressed by Bogdan and Taylor (2001). Punch explains that the researcher is expected to become involved in order to discern the people's habits and thoughts as well as decipher the social structure that binds them together. The researcher cannot occupy the role of an aloof observer but instead must try and build a relationship to gain confidence and trust (Schurink, 2001). Researcher's biasness is also important in establishing and building intimate relationships with participants that will foster trust and confidence (Wolcott, 2001).

Berg (2007) however argues that although the researcher must enter the world of the participants to gain trust and confidence, he or she must also remain aware of what the participant is saying or doing. The researcher must sustain a certain degree of aloofness from the participants and their views so that the researcher can go beyond this perception to see what the participants do not see.

Bogdan and Taylor (2001) emphasize that the researcher must clarify his or her processes and importance to the participants. The aims and objectives of this study, how it was undertaken and visualized, purpose of results and whom it will benefit was clearly set out by the researcher before the commencement of the research.

In qualitative research the researcher is the instrument himself or herself. The researcher gathers the data and analyzes the data, it is therefore possible that he or she will have an effect on the data gathered affecting the validity (Bogdan and Taylor, 2001). In order to decrease the researcher's effect on the data the researcher should strive to blend in with the setting by not disrupting the normal flow of events, during the data collection process (Schurink, 2001). Berg (2007) advises that in order to avoid the researchers influence on the data more than one method to collect data should be used and some symbolic reality and more valid facts can thus be obtained.

4.8 Methods for data collection

Data collection was conducted in three phases

4.8.1 Phase 1: Pilot Study

A pilot study was first conducted to ensure that the relevant data could be obtained from the respondents. This allowed the researcher to focus on specific areas that may not be too clear in the initial drawing up of the questions. The pilot study enabled the researcher to test the

questions for the structured and semi- structured interviews to ensure that it provided relevant data. The pilot study was to discover possible weaknesses, inadequacies, ambiguities and problems in all aspects of the research so that they could be corrected before the actual data collection took place.

4.8.1.1 Challenges that emanated from the pilot study

Parents were sometimes not available despite prearranged meetings. To avoid this challenge in the main study the researcher allocated more time for the data collected thus giving the parents enough time for those who experienced time constraints.

Questions in the pilot study are different from the some of the participant's mother tongue. This was time consuming for the researcher because questions needed to be translated. The questions to be used were translated in the main study. Some parents were not very comfortable so a detailed explanation of the study and confidentiality of the process was discussed and this alleviated their fears. This was also done in the main study. Questions in the instrument were formulated within the context of the questions of the main study.

4.8.2 Phase2: Interviews

The first method that was used in the information gathering process is interviews. Interviews were used as one method of data collection. An interview is an interaction between the interviewer and interviewee. It is also referred to as an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest for the production of knowledge (Cohen et al, 2000). Research interview is a two person conversation initiated by the interviewer for specific purpose of obtaining information relevant to the research. According to De Vos & Fouche (2005) interviews are conducted because people are interested in other people's stories.

Smith (2004) defines qualitative interviews as attempts to understand the world from the participant's point of view, to unfold the meaning of people's experiences and to cover the world prior to scientific explanations. Challenges that face the researcher when conducting qualitative research interviewing are establishing a rapport in order to gain information from participants, coping with unanticipated problems and rewards of interviewing in the field, and recording and managing large volumes of data generated by even short interviews (Wolcott, 2001).

4.8.2.1 Semi Structured Interviews

The semi-structured interview technique was used as a method where the parents will be the respondents. Some of the reasons for the selection of this method is that semi structured interviews was carried out to gain a detailed picture of the participants perceptions and beliefs about parental involvement in academic achievement. This method was more flexible and allowed the researcher to follow up on new avenues as they emerged in the interview. The researcher was able to follow up on particular interesting avenues that emerged in the interview and the participants were able to give a fuller picture. De Vos & Fouche (2005) states that, although a set of predetermined questions must be set by the researcher, these questions are to guide that interview process rather than dictate the interview. The participants will be able to share more closely in the direction the interview takes and they can introduce an issue which that researcher may not have thought about. The interview schedule is important as it forces the researcher to think explicitly about what she wants the interview to cover. Semi-structured interviews can last for a considerable amount of time and can become involved and intense.

One of the strengths of using semi-structured interviews is that it is a useful way of getting large volumes of data quickly. It is also effective in

obtaining detailed data. A weakness of this technique is that it involves personal interaction and co-operation. Participants sometimes may be unwilling to share information. The researcher may not ask questions to obtain desired results. The responses can be misconstrued.

4.8.2.2 Focus Group Discussion

The next method that was used for data collection is the focus group discussion. This was used for the learners of the school. Focus group is group interviews with participants that have certain characteristics which are common. What the participants in the group say during the discussion constitute essential data in the focus group (Morgan and Krueger, 1998). Focus groups are a powerful means of expressing reality and investigating complex behaviors and motivation.

Some of the reasons for selecting focus group discussions are that it is a self contained method which serves as a principle source of data. The data obtained in the focus group discussion can be used as supplementary data to the interviews. It can be used in multi-method studies that combine two or more methods of gathering data.

a) Strengths of the focus group discussion

It has the ability to produce concentrated amounts of data on precisely the topic. There is a reliance on the interaction in the group to produce the data. Participants make comparisons among each other's experiences and opinions and this provides valuable insight into complex behaviors and motivation. The group provides a stimulating and secure setting for members to express ideas without fear of criticism. There is great potential to uncover important constructs. The focus group allows for a great, deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Yin, 2003).

b) Weaknesses of focus group discussion

The following weaknesses that can be found using the focus group interview (Yin, 2003):

- Biasness may creep in.
- It can be quite costly.

Only certain people in the discussion may participate and their voices and opinions may only be heard. Passive participants may be unduly influenced.

4.8.3 Phase 3: Document Analysis

A variety of one-personal documents such as minutes of meetings, agendas, etc is written with a view to the continual functioning of an organization or establishment of a particular matter (Wolcott, 2001). The minutes of meetings of Savemore High was analyzed to determine the parent turnout at meetings that involve discussions about the education of their children and the extent to which parents participated at these meetings. When documents are studied, it is important that the researcher evaluates authenticity or validity and reliability of the documents. Sometimes there is a time lapse between the occurrence of the event and the writing of the document (Wolcott, 2001).

4.8.3.1 Advantages of Document Analysis

The following are the advantages of using document analysis as a method of data collection (Bogdan and Taylor, 2001, p 54):

- Relatively low in cost
- Non-reactivity –the respondents are not present
- The researcher does not need to make personal contact with the respondents.

4.8.3.2 Disadvantages of Document Analysis

Bogdan and Taylor (2001) provide the following disadvantages of document analysis:

- Incompleteness
- Biasness
- Lack of availability
- Lack of standard format
- Origins of the document

4.9 Limitations that need to be considered:

The following limitations must be considered in the process of data collection (Cohen et al, 2000).

- The parents may not be available
- Time constraints
- Language barriers
- Findings from one school cannot be generalized.
- Everyone knows the researcher and this can make them provide answers that the researcher wants to hear.

Times that suited the parents were considered. The researcher must be flexible when it comes to selecting times(Berg, 2007). In terms of overcoming any language barriers that may occur, a translator was used. The translator was required to sign a confidential letter to ensure that the confidentiality of the data was not compromised.

4.10 Data analysis

Data analysis is a process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass collected relationships among categories of data. McMillian and Schumacher (2006, p 234) states, that data analysis is a systemic

process of selecting, categorizing, comparing, synthesizing and interpreting, to provide explanation of a single phenomenon of interest.

Data needs to be recorded in a systematic manner that is appropriate and will facilitate analysis. According to De Vos & Fouche (2005) planning ahead for colour coded notes to keep track of dates, names, titles, attendance at events, chronologies, descriptions of settings, sociograms and so on, is invaluable for piecing together patterns, defining categories for data analysis, planning further data collection and for writing the final report. Coding is the process by which data are broken down, conceptualized and put together in new ways. It is the central process by which theories are built. Data analysis occurs both at the research site and away from the research site. Neuman (2001) states that, in qualitative research there is a relationship between data collection and data analysis. Data must be organized according to keywords, themes etc during the collection process so that analysis can be done.

In this study data was collected and carefully recorded in a systematic manner. The interviews were tape recorded so that no data is lost. Coding was used to group data together according to keywords and themes.

4.11 Ethics in qualitative research

According to Cantrell (2003, p 134) there are several basic principles that need to be considered for ethically sound research:

- Informed consent means that no one should be involved in the research as a participant without knowing about this and without having the opportunity of refusing to take part in it.
- Deception of research participants should be avoided.

- Participant's privacy should be respected and confidentiality should be guaranteed and maintained.
- Accuracy of the data and the interpretation should be the leading principle, which means no fraud or omission with the collection or analysis of data should occur.
- The participants should be respected.
- The well being of the participants must be considered.

The principle of informed consent arises from the subject's right to freedom and self determination. Gaining consent will protect and respect the right of self determination and places responsibility on the participants should anything go wrong in the research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000).

The participants were interviewed in a safe environment that is convenient for them. Consent was obtained from the respondents and the manager of the site that was used. The respondents were informed of the purpose of the research and its intention. The participants were not forced to be part of the study but were willing participants and they could have withdrawn from participation at any time that they wanted to. Their identity remained anonymous. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) state that the information about participants must be regarded confidential unless otherwise agreed through informed consent.

Macmillian and Schumacher (2006) stress that when any research is conducted approval must be obtained before data can be collected. Data collection was only done after permission to conduct research was sought out from the Department of education (see Appendix A). Permission was granted to interview the teachers, learners and parents. The researcher also asked the principal permission to conduct research at the school. Permission was granted by both (see Appendix B). Each parent of the learners that was interviewed was given a letter, containing details of the topic, purpose and the role that their children

will play in the research, to obtain written consent. The researcher assured parents that names of learners will be kept confidential and that the children's school work will in no way be affected by participating in the research.

Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000) defines deception as a kind of experimental situation where the researcher knowingly conceals the true purpose and conditions of the research or positively misinforms the subjects or exposes them to painful and embarrassing experiences without the knowledge of the participants. In this study the researcher ensured that the participants were always fully aware of the information pertaining to the research so that they were comfortable and had sufficient knowledge of the research project. A tape recorder was used during the interview process and learners were informed that they would be taped and they could decline to answer if they felt uncomfortable.

After the interviews were conducted a debriefing session was held to rectify any misunderstandings that could have arisen as suggested by Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000). The participants were informed of the results of the project as well as the purpose of the results. The participants were also given the opportunity to clarify any other issues and to ask questions on the research project. The participants were also thanked for their assistance and contributions made.

4.12 Validity and Reliability

4.12.1 Validity and Reliability in Data

Devlin (2006) refers to validity as establishing the "truth value" of the study. Internal and external validity must be maintained to ensure validity of the study. Validity is the key to effective research. Invalid research is worthless. In order to avoid invalid data the researcher must

have confidence in the elements of the research plan, data acquisition, data processing analysis, interpretation and judgement (Cohen, Manion & Morisson, 2000). Validity refers to how closely the data represents the actual participative experience of the participants.

De Vos & Fouche (2002) propose four alternative constructs that more accurately reflect the assumptions of the qualitative paradigm: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability.

Credibility – Lincoln and Guba (1994) in De Vos (2002) describe credibility as the goal to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the participants were accurately identified and described. The researcher needs to adequately state the settings, process, social group, and pattern of interaction for the research to be credible. In this research the researcher has selected Savemore High and the respondents were parents and educators from school so the parameters were clear.

Transferability- This is the degree to which the findings can be applied to other contexts. The generalisation of qualitative findings to other settings can be problematic. Designing a research to include multiple cases, multiple informants or gathering data using more than one method can strengthen the study's usefulness. This study however, was not intended to apply its finding to other situations because the sample was too small.

Dependability- All the data collected was recorded. A tape recorder was used in the interviews and the focus group discussions. A pilot study was first conducted to ensure the relevant data will be obtained.

Confirmability – This refers to the degree of objectivity that exists in the research. The researcher interpreted the responses of the respondents properly and the respondents were allowed to critique the report.

All the necessary steps were taken into consideration to ensure that the research is valid and to minimize any forms of invalidity that may creep in.

According to Bogdan and Bilken (2006, p88) reliability in qualitative research is viewed as the fit between what is recorded as data and what has actually occurred in the setting under research. Reliability refers to the consistence and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents. Cohen et al (2000) describe reliability in qualitative methods as the fidelity to real life, context and situation, authenticity, comprehensiveness, detail honesty, depth of response and meaningfulness to the respondents.

4.12.2 Validity and Reliability in interviews

One of the main methods that had been employed to collect data in this research was interviews. It was therefore necessary for the researcher to adhere to the principles of reliability and validity in interviews as suggested by Cohen, Manion and Morrision (2000, p 55). One of the most practical ways of achieving validity is to minimize the amount of bias. Some of the sources of bias that can arise are from the attitudes, opinions, and expectations of the interviewer, the tendency for the interviewer to see the respondents in her/his own image, the tendency to direct the interview to support the researcher's preconceived notions, misinterpretations of what the respondents are saying and misinterpretation on the part of the participants as to what was asked.

One way of controlling reliability is to have a highly structured interview with the same format and sequence of words and questions for each respondent (Silverman (1993) cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrision, 2000). The questions were clearly explained to the participants so that all understood exactly what was being asked. A pilot study was also carried out to ensure reliability of the data. A tape recorder was also used and the data was transcribed from this.

4.13 Conclusion

The research design and methods used to achieve the aims of the study was discussed in detail in this chapter. The manner in which validity and reliability of data was achieved was also explained. All the ethical issues were considered for the research to be successful. At the end of the research all data collected was handed in for safe keeping. The next chapter deals with data representation, findings and recommendations.

Chapter 5

Data Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion of Findings

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter a presentation and analysis of the data collected will be outlined. The main purpose of the research was to explore the factors promoting parental involvement at a secondary school. Interviews and document study were used to try to answer the questions outlined in chapter one as follows:

1. What is the extent and nature to which parents involve themselves in the schooling of their children?;
2. What are the obstacles that hinder parents in their involvement in education of their children?;
3. How can parental involvement benefit the learner in school? and
4. Why is it important for the school to encourage parents to be more active in the education of their children?

5.2 Personal Documents

The researcher was given the opportunity to examine the minutes of three important meetings that was held at the school. These minutes of meetings were from June 2011 to June 2012. The objective was to determine the turnout at the meetings and the extent of parent participation at the meetings. The minutes of the first meeting was to elect school's governing body. The school's governing body (S.G.B) is ultimately responsible to make important decisions concerning the smooth running of school. The parent component is the largest sector in the S.G.B. Only 120 parents were present at the meeting of a school population of 1420 learners (*c.f.* 1.7.2). Although this was not a quorum

the meeting still continued since this was the third meeting without a quorum. All members had to be legal parents as defined in chapter one of the research report. Nominations were made however three parents declined to serve on the S.G.B. Eventually five members were elected although from the minutes it appears that two of them were not very keen to be part of the S.G.B. The meeting took approximately 90 minutes.

The second meeting was one for the budget where one would expect many parents to attend. The turnout however at this meeting was only 90 parents. This was also a reconvened meeting due to no quorum. The issues that were discussed was the income and expenditure of the school, the maintenance and school fees. The chairperson did try and encourage discussion when it came to the issue on maintenance. He also attempted to get parents to volunteer their services to cut down on costs. The non-payment of school fees was discussed and what action can be taken to recover school fees was discussed. Only three parents participated at the meeting.

The third set of minutes that the researcher analyzed was a meeting that was held to discuss course selection for grade 9 learners. This was an important meeting because it was the opening of the learner's career path. Only 45 parents were present out of 180 grade 9 learners. The meeting was held at 6pm on a Thursday afternoon. There was very little opportunity that was offered to the parents to participate. The course packages were already predetermined by the school. A discussion of each subject was done and thereafter parents were allowed to speak to the subject teachers.

5.3 Interview with learners

The focus group interview was carried out with the learners. There were 12 learners that were selected to participate in the discussion. The following themes emerged from the discussion.

5.3.1 Theme 1

Parents visiting the school

5.3.2 Theme 2

Parent's involvement at home

5.3.3 Theme 3

Kinds of involvement

5.3.1 Theme 1: Parents visiting the school

The learners were very responsive and an active discussion was carried out. The questions assisted to guide the discussion. Learners' discussion showed that 7 out the 12 learners wanted their parents to visit the school regularly.

Sipho stated that

"I would like see my parent talk to teacher about my work so she will know what I am doing at school"

Thembi stated

"My parents never visit the school; I feel that they don't really care about what goes on at school"

Rhoda stated

"I am not happy with my parents visiting the school regularly because it will be embarrassing. I am old enough to take care of myself."

Jackson stated

“Generally when the school calls your parent to school they have bad things to tell your parents so I just don’t give them the note”

Overall the majority of the learners welcomed their parents visiting the school and knowing exactly how the school is run and what they are doing in the classroom. The fear of parents visiting school to listen to the negative comments and the embarrassment that learners feel with the regular visits by their parents were the only negative feelings expressed by the learners, the others all believed that it is vital for their parents to visit the school (c.f. 2.4.1.5).

5.3.2 Theme 2: Parents involvement at Home

Many of the learners indicated that their parents don’t have much time to check on their school work. Parents also believe that once they reach high school level that they are mature and can take care of their own school work.

Precious stated :

“I am the eldest and have two younger siblings. My parents check on my little sister’s work that is in grade 4 and grade 6 but not on my work. They believe that I am old enough to be responsible for my own work. “

Njabulo stated :

“My parents do ask what I did at school but never examine my books”

Jackson stated:

“My mum checks on my school activities. She asks about my day at school daily”

Kevin stated:

“My parents come home late from work. My mum starts cooking and my dad is too busy“

Khloe stated:

“My parents only check my report card at the end of each term; they do not monitor my work throughout the year.”

Many parents seem to be busy with running their lives and leave the responsibility of education to the child and school especially in the senior phases of schooling. Most of the learners stressed the need for greater parental involvement in school activities. They wanted their parents to be interested in what goes on at school.

5.3.3 Theme 3- Kinds of involvement

The learners were asked to express ways that they believe that their parents can involve themselves in the school.

Rhoda stated:

“My dad has his South African colours in volleyball. He can assist the school to coach the volleyball team on a Saturday”

Slindile stated:

“My mum won’t mind too much to assist the school with relief teaching”

Fred stated:

“My dad is a policeman; he can assist with the discipline. He can also talk to the learners about crime, drugs etc.”

Thembi stated:

“My dad works for a company that can donate stationary to our needy learners”

Talents of parents can be utilized to make the school a better place. Learners did not seem against the idea of their parents assisting the school. Parents can also assist with resources for the school. In this short discussion it became evident that parents can be an important asset to the school. (c.f. 2.6.1.3).

5.3.4 Comments on Learner Interviews

Learners were not adverse to parents being involved however they wanted some space at school. I observed that the learners wanted and needed the parents to know what goes on at school. The learners indicated the need for their parents to show support and care for their schooling.

5.4 Parent Interviews

Themes

5.4.1 Theme 1- Parent Participation in School

- a) Visiting the school
- b) Assistance to the school

5.4.2 Theme 2- Parent Involvement at Home

- a) Home work
- b) Conducive environment
- c) Communication with the school

5.4.3 Theme 3- Barriers to involvement

- a) Language
- b) Time /Transport
- d) School environment

5.4.4 Theme 4- Parent teacher Relationship

- a) Partnership

5.4.5 Theme 5- Benefits to Involvement

- a) Academic Performance
- b) Knowledge
- c) Discipline

5.4.1 Theme 1- Parent Participation in School

a) Visiting the school

From the parent interviews it was noted that parents do not visit the school often. Of the 6 parents that were interviewed one of them visited the school once in the term, two of them visited the school when they were requested to attend a meeting and three never visited the school. Parents seem to be interested in visiting but experience barriers that prevent them from visiting the school regularly.

Mr Dlamini indicated:

“I visit the school when they call me to discuss my child’s progress”

Mr Pillay indicated:

“I try to find out from my child what goes on at school, there is therefore no need for me to visit the school.”

Interviews clearly indicated that only a small portion of the parents visit the school regularly. If they do visit it is to determine the performance of their children.

b) Assistance to the school

Siphiwe indicated:

“I donate whenever there is a fund raising activity”

Mrs Zondi

“We don’t know how we can assist therefore we don’t bother”

Mr Dlamini indicated:

“I am not really involved in fund raising at school due to time constraints”

Mrs Dumisa indicated:

“It’s not only fundraising that we can help the school with. I help the school with painting, plumbing and any odd maintenance when time permits”

The parent interviews confirmed that as much as the parents would like to assist they do not know how they can assist and the school needs to provide further information (cf. 2.4.2). Of the four parents interviewed three made an effort to assist the school in some way.

5.4.2 Theme 2 – Parental involvement at home

a) Homework

Parent interviews revealed that parents experience difficulties with learner's homework at secondary school level. The nature of the subject matter was more difficult for them to provide assistance to their children.

Mr Pillay indicated:

"I do not understand the work done so I stay out of my child's homework"

Mrs Dumisa indicated:

"I do help my child when it comes to making a model or drawing something but with his mathematics I can not help."

Mrs Zondi stated:

"I help my grade 4 learner but I believe my child in the secondary school is responsible enough to help herself and the teachers should assist her."

Mr Dlamini stated:

" Every child should be given a homework record book that we check and sign that the work is done even though we may not understand what was done "

Parent's major problem when it came to homework was the lack of knowledge on the subject matter. Parents are also of the belief that their child in the secondary phase can cope for himself or herself and does not require their intervention.

b) Creating a conducive environment

Three parents stated that they try to create a good home environment for learning to take place.

Siphiwe stated:

“I ensure that my child has a desk, chair, sufficient light to get his homework done.”

Mrs Zondi stated:

“Although my child shares the room with his siblings we ensure that he is given quiet time to concentrate on his school work”

It was clear from the parent interviews that most learners were given a conducive environment to get their school work done.

c) Communication with the school

Parents believed that during the homework sessions they are able to communicate with their children and determine what goes on at school.

Mr Dlamini indicated:

“When I do find the time to check on my son’s homework I also ask about the happenings at school“

Mrs Dumisa parent stated:

“I ask my child about school because I feel it is necessary to talk to your child and know what’s going on in his life. School makes up eight hours of his life so it is important”

Four out of six parents communicated with their children formally or informally to determine the events that transpired at school .They

believed that it was necessary to know about the child's day at school since they spend most of their time at school.

5.4.3 Theme 3: Barriers to Involvement

a) Language Barriers

Two parents indicated that they avoid going to school because they do not understand what the teacher is saying and neither does the teacher understand them.

Siphiwe stated:

“When I speak to the teacher, the teacher did not understand me and I was embarrassed”

Parents feel embarrassed when they try to communicate with the teachers and the teacher does not understand their language.

b) Time /transport:

Many parents indicated that they do not have time to attend meetings. Due to demanding work conditions they were unable to attend meetings (c.f. 2.4.1.1)

Mr Pillay stated:

“I take time off to go to school I will lose a portion of my wages and I can not afford to lose my wages”

Mrs Zondi indicated:

“I would love to show my son that I am interested in his school work because I believe it is important but my job is far to demanding and I get back very late.”

Mrs Dumisa stated:

“I am a single parent and I have a two year old child as well. When I get back from work the demands are too much for me to be concerned about my elder child. I also think she is old enough to take care of herself.”

The demands of work and life hinder many parents from becoming more involved in their children’s education.

Transport also seemed be a major setback when it came to parents visiting the school and participating in meetings.

Mr Pillay indicated

“Many meetings are held in the late evening and it is impossible for us to get transport to come to the school.”

Mrs Zondi said

“We have only one car and my husband uses it to work so I can not get to the school meetings or functions “

Interviews revealed that transportation was a barrier to attending meetings and school functions. Schools need to consider making transport arrangements for meetings and school functions.

d) School Environment

Parents interviewed revealed that educators sometimes did not have a welcoming attitude towards them. Parents also expressed that they had to wait for long hours before they were seen by staff at the school.

Mr Dlamini stated:

“I took an hour off from work to go to school to check on my daughter’s progress. I had to wait for three hours before someone addressed me.”

Mrs Zondi indicated:

“When I visited the school my son’s teacher was very unfriendly and dismissed me very quickly”

The attitude of the teacher and the manner in which the school addresses parents has a direct influence on the involvement of parents in the school (c.f. 2.4.2.1)

5.4.4 Theme 4: Parent Teacher relationship

a) Partnership

Parents unanimously agreed that there should be a partnership between the teacher and parent for effective teaching to take place. All six parents felt that when there is collaboration between the teacher and the parent then many problems experienced at school is solved because very often the child is different at home than he is at school.

Mrs Zondi stated:

“I was called to school once because my child was giving the school serious discipline problems. I was surprised because my child is an angel at home”

Mr Pillay stated:

“My child only started behaving at school after I went to school. I keep in constant contact with the teacher about my child’s behavior and progress.”

Mrs Dumisa indicated:

“As a parent you know your child best and assist the educator to understand your child.”

Parent’s participation in their child’s education will assist in problems that the educator experiences in the classroom (c.f. 2.5).

Siphiwe:

“When the teacher understands the parent and the parent understands the teacher then education is improved and more meaningful.”

Parent interviews revealed that a good understanding of the challenges faced by both teachers and parents will improve education goals and lead to more positive results. It also helps the parent to know how the child behaves in school and this can improve discipline problems experienced by educators.

5.4.5 Theme 4: Benefits to involvement

a) Academic Performance

Parent interviews revealed that parents want their children to succeed. Parents have high expectations for their children. It is therefore the role of the parent to inform the school and the teachers of the strengths and weaknesses of their children.

Mrs Dumisa indicated:

“Becoming active in my child’s school activities will improve my child’s performance because he will be aware that I am part of his school”

Mr Dlamini stated:

“I know that if I check up on my child’s progress regularly I will know her weak areas and can sort out the problem before the final exams and this can help my child improve academically”

It was very clear that parents understood the role that their involvement will have on the child’s academic performance (c.f. 2.3.1). Parents also gain a better understanding of what happens at school and they gain joy and pride when their children perform well due to their involvement in their child’s school activities (c.f. 2.3.2).

b) Knowledge

Parents must know and understand the rules, regulations and policies of the school. It is also important for parents to know the learning areas chosen by the child and assessments policies for monitoring to enhance effective teaching and learning to take place.

Siphiwe stated:

“I never checked on my child’s school work because I trusted and believed that she was old enough to handle school by herself. I was wrong when I found out that my child not taught one of her learning areas for a month and she did not inform me”

Parent interviews indicated that it was important for parents to check and find out about school to have a good knowledge of the happenings at school.

Mr Dlamini indicated:

“My child was failing every term and I only realized this at the end of the year because no one informed me”

Parents need to be kept well informed about their children’s progress. Even though report cards go out each term not all parents receive them because children keep them away from their parents especially if they perform poorly. Parent interviews indicated that parents must be knowledgeable about the school policies so they can keep in touch with their child’s school work.

c) Discipline

When a parent is actively involved in his or her child’s education then the child’s discipline also improves drastically.

Mrs Zondi indicated:

“I monitor my child’s behavior at school regularly”

Mrs Dumisa indicated:

“With all the problems associated with available technology today it is our role as parents to monitor our children so discipline problems don’t arise”

Mr Pillay indicated:

“I have a hectic lifestyle and do not have time to check on my child’s discipline. My son was caught with phonographic material on his phone. I now know that I need to constantly monitor him so these discipline problems do not arise.”

Parent interviews indicated that when parents are more involved in their children's schooling discipline problems are alleviated.

5.4.6 Comments on Parent Interviews

Parent interviews indicated that parents want to be involved in the school but time and transport is a factor that prevents them getting more involved. I observed that communication was a key factor in ensuring a good relationship between the school and the home which can be beneficial to the learners academic and social development. The school can also gain a wealth of information from parents that can assist with discipline problems at school.

5.5 Teacher Interviews

Themes

5.5.1 Theme 1: Partnership

- a) Parent teacher
- b) Communication with parents

5.5.2 Theme 2: Role of the Parent

- a) Policy Making
- b) Assessment
- c) Contribution to the school

5.5.3 Theme3: Barriers to involvement

- a) Lack of interest
- b) Lack of knowledge
- c) Socio Economic factors

5.5.4 Theme 4: Improvement of parent involvement

- a) Support programs
- b) Empowering parents

5.5.1 Theme 1: Partnership

a) Parent teacher relationship

All teachers indicated that there should be a relationship that exists between the teacher and the parent. Teachers felt that parents need to visit the school regularly in order to understand their child better.

Mr Nadioo indicated:

“We do not see parents often enough to discuss the child’s progress”

Mrs Duma stated:

“A child sometimes spends five years in school and the parent never attends a single meeting or visits the school”

Mr Govender stated:

“Generally the parents that do visit the school are the parents of the children that do not give the school any problems”

Mrs Chetty indicated:

“I have seen parent’s at most once a year or when a problem arises”

The teacher interviews indicated that teachers do not meet parents as often as they would like to in order to discuss school. It was also

evident that teachers need to meet certain parents more regularly in order to discuss discipline matters and learners performance.

b) Communication with Parents

Interviews clearly revealed that communication between the teacher and the parent will foster effective partnerships that are very important for improvement in education (c.f. 2.6.1.1).

Mrs Chetty indicated:

“Communicating with the parent can build a relationship of trust and parents can be well informed about all aspects of their child’s progress at school”

Mrs Duma stated:

“Parents are important stakeholders in the education process and need to be informed of changes that take place in school and through regular visits and communication with the teachers they can develop a better knowledge.”

Mr Naidoo stated:

“Very often we send letters home to parents but parents never receive these letters. Maybe we need to send messages through the cell phone.”

Teachers felt that communicating with the parent will assist in building relationship with the parent and thus improving the child’s overall development in the school.

5.5.2 Theme 2: Role of Parent

According to the teacher interviews, the parent’s role in the school is extremely important. Of the six teachers interviewed 5 felt that the role of the parent should not be underestimated but valued. The one teacher

felt that parents should not have a say in all aspects of schooling as they would manipulate certain situations.

Mr Govender indicated:

“Sometimes parents do not understand their role and step in the role of the teacher and this can create conflict.”

Mrs Pather indicated:

“Considering that the parent component is the largest in the school governing body we need to respect and discuss issues with parents so conflict situations do not arise.”

Children will benefit from a parent’s involvement greatly as long as there is no conflict between parents and teachers. Some important factors that emerged from the interview that could prevent this kind of conflict are policies, assessment and parent contribution in the classroom.

a) Policy Making

Teachers believed that parents need to be more actively involved in the policy making at school. Teachers agreed that when parents are part of the policy then there is lesser conflict when the policy is implemented.

Mr Naidoo indicated:

“When parents are part of a policy then they teach their child to adhere to the policy and understand the measures taken when the policy is not adhered to.”

Mrs Duma stated:

“Parents viewpoints must be considered when policies are drawn if the school wants to work in partnership with the parent”

It was clear that teachers believed that parents are important stakeholders and all policies should be drawn with parents.

b) Assessments

Teachers indicated that if parents are given a program of assessments then they become part of their child's testing program. Parents can monitor and record their child's achievement .

Mrs Ndelu indicated:

“A program of assessment indicating all learning areas must be given to the parents at the beginning of the school year so that parents can also schedule themselves according to the child's school work.”

Mr Naidoo stated:

“The parent will feel part of the assessment if he assists his or her child and will want his or her child to perform at the best.”

The teacher interviews indicated that parents will feel proud of themselves when their child performs well because they have been part of the assessment (*c.f.* 2.6.1.4).

c) Contribution to school

Teachers indicated that parents can make important contributions to the classroom.

Mr Naidoo stated:

“Relief teaching can be done by a parent”

Mr Govender indicated:

“Parents have certain talents and skills that can assist the teacher during a lesson and parents can participate in the lesson and make it more interesting”

Teacher interviews also indicated that certain parents can offer the school services e.g. testing of eyes of learners; advice on pregnancy. Learners, educators and parents can benefit from parent’s contribution in the classroom.

5.5.3 Theme 3: Barriers to involvement

a) Lack of interest

Teachers indicated that many parents do not contribute to the school because they just don’t care.

Mrs Chetty stated:

“Parent’s do not take responsibility for their children’s education and display an attitude of apathy.”

Interviews with the teachers revealed that parents just did not care about their children’s work. Some parents do not even bother to sign the term end report that indicates the child’s progress for that term. It was also discovered from the teacher interviews that some parents in this school did not even know the grade of the child. Teachers also indicated that parents did not know that their child was repeating the grade. Teachers did emphasize that parents lacked sufficient time to involve themselves in regular meetings at school. This is especially the case in this community due to demanding working conditions and single parent households.

b) Lack of Knowledge

Teacher interviews revealed that many parents could not read or write. Mrs Pather stated:

“I believe that parents stay away from school because they are intimidated by the teacher”

Mr Naidoo stated:

“Parents lack knowledge of the curriculum and this makes it difficult for them to assist their child in homework”

Mrs Duma stated:

“Lack of knowledge cannot be equated with lack of interest”

Teachers did indicate that although parents may lack knowledge they can provide their children with support and care. The poor literacy level is a major barrier to parent involvement in this area (c.f. 2.4.1.4)

c) Socio Economic Factors

The area that was investigated faces a major crisis of poverty. Teachers indicated that the socio economic background of the parents also contributes to them not visiting the school regularly.

Mrs Ndelu indicated:

“Parents are so caught up with their circumstances that education is the least of their worries”

Teacher interviews revealed that many children come from very poor homes and their parents are more concerned with ensuring that there is meal on the table at the end of the day and as a result school becomes the least of their problems.

5.5.4 Theme 4: Encouraging Parents to be involved in School

a) Support programs

Teacher interviews indicated that parents sometimes do not know how they can assist their children with school work and what they can do to become more involved in the school.

Mr Govender stated:

“Parents need to be taught how they can assist their children in homework and also become more involved in their child’s school life.”

Mrs Ndelu stated:

“That some of the parents have had their children very young and they were very immature at that stage so they do not understand the needs of their children. Programs need to be put into place so that parents can be trained to play their role as parents in a responsible manner.”

Mr Naidoo indicated:

“Parents can also be offered support to manage their times more adequately.”

All the teachers indicated that it was important to run workshops on parenting. They believed that parents need the training in how they can become more involved in their children’s schooling.

b) Empowering Parents

Interviews with teachers confirmed the need to empower parents with curriculum matters, assessment programs and fund raising.

Mrs Chetty indicated:

“Empowering parents will allow for two way respect and this will ensure the holistic development of the child”

Teachers stated that when parents are empowered to make decision they will make more informed decisions that suit the needs of the learners.

5.5.5 Comments on Teacher Interviews

The teachers' interviews indicated that although one of the teachers was a little bit skeptic about the role of the parent in the school, the other teachers had a positive attitude towards parental involvement. They also believed that involving parents in the school would benefit the learner, educator and parent. The teachers also made it clear that involving the parents will assist in curbing discipline problems. Parents can provide valuable information to teachers that they can use in providing a holistic development for the child.

5.6 Discussion of findings

The following broad themes were discovered from the findings, the extent of parent participation, parent teacher relationship, communication, benefits to parents being involved, barriers to parent involvement and encouraging parental involvement.

5.6.1 Finding 1: The Extent of Parent Participation

Learner, parent and teacher interviews indicated that there was not sufficient parent involvement at this school. Learners did indicate that their parents felt that they were old enough to take care of their schoolwork by themselves and did not need them. Learners however felt that they needed their parents to know what is going on at school. They wanted their parents to visit the school more often and find out about their progress. Learners also felt that their younger siblings got

more attention than they did. Teacher interviews also revealed that there was a need for parents to check on learner's homework. Parents were sometimes unaware of meetings that were scheduled at school.

Parents indicated that they do assist the school in fundraising and school functions. However their level of assistance is minimal due to time constraints and demanding working conditions. Parent interviews indicated that parents are aware that they need to become more involved to prevent discipline problems and improve academic performance (*c.f. 2.4.1*).

5.6.2 Finding 2: Parent Teacher Relationship

It was noted that all respondents felt that it was vital for a good relationship to exist between parents and teachers for parent involvement to be positive. When there is a good relationship between the teacher and the parent then common goals can be set and positively achieved. Parents and teachers confirmed that this parent teacher partnership is important for teachers to gain important information about learners and to understand the learner better (*c.f. 2.5*). The fact that the parent is the primary teacher to the learner and this affects the rest of the child's developments need to be considered at all times (*c.f.4.2.1*). Data revealed that a good parent teacher relationship will ensure that the holistic development of the learner can be achieved. Teacher interviews verified that there was a need for shared power and authority in order to achieve the desired academic achievement of learners. Parents also showed a positive attitude towards this kind of collaboration to maximize resources for the child development.

5.6.3 Findings 3: Communication between Parent and Teachers

Parent, teacher and learner interviews indicated that there was a need for effective communication for improving parental involvement in

school. Parent interviews indicated that schools should communicate with them by means of cell phones considering that the majority of parents own phones. Sending letters home was not effective at all times. Parent interviews also indicated that the school should communicate in both isiZulu and English since it suits the majority of parents in the area. Meetings should also be translated into isiZulu so that a greater number of parents can participate in the meetings. Teacher interviews revealed that open communication between parents and the school will help to ensure that problems can be resolved and effective teaching takes place (*c.f.* 2.6.1.1). Parent interviews also displayed that there was a need for communication of the various rules, code of conduct and policies of the school at the beginning of the year so that parents can also instill these policies in their children. Parents were unaware of what they could do to become more involved in the school. Parents were of the belief that the school needs to indicate to them what they can do to become more involved (*c.f.* 2.4.2.2).

5.6.4 Finding 4: Benefits to Parental Involvement

Learners stressed that they will benefit greatly if their parents were involved in their school work. They will be able to get more resources, and feel supported by their parents. Learners also indicated that their parents will know and understand the requirements of the school and they will get help from their parents. Learner interviews indicated that they wanted someone to talk to at home about school and this will release some of the pressure that they encounter at school (*c.f.* 2.3.1).

Parents also indicated that they are aware that they can benefit from becoming more involved in their children's schooling. Parent interviews indicated that they wanted to feel proud they were partly responsible for their child's success. Parent interviews indicated that knowing what is going on at the school and the amount of stress and pressure that their children undergo will also help them prevent the high level of suicide

that is prevalent amongst teenagers. Parents seem to be aware that they will benefit from being more involved in their children's schooling.

Teacher interviews revealed that they would greatly benefit from parents being positively involved in the child's schooling. Teachers indicated that they would understand learners better and this will allow for effective teaching to take place. It was also noted by the teachers that learners will benefit greatly when parents have a positive attitude towards the school since parents are their role models. Teachers also stated that parents will assist in ensuring homework is completed and lessons can progress effectively. Teacher interviews indicated that when parents are involved then they get greater support for enforcing the rule of the school (*c.f.* 2.3.2)

5.6.5 Finding 5: Barriers to Parent Involvement

Parents indicated that time constraints were one of the major problems that they faced in spending more time with their children's school work. Socio economic factors, poverty, single parents and demanding work conditions were all contributing factors to lack of or little parent involvement. Meetings that were held late in the afternoon were not well attended by parents due to problems with transport. Many parents traveled by public transport and were unable to attend these meetings. The environment of the school and attitude of the teachers towards parents also contributed to parents not becoming involved in the schooling of children.

Today's changing curriculum that even teachers are unable to keep abreast with discourages parents from getting more involved with the school. It was also noted from the parent and teacher interviews that illiteracy and language barriers prevented parents from visiting the school due to embarrassment. Parents also do not feel confident enough to offer their assistance and very often just sit back and wait to be prompted into assisting the school. Parents also clearly stated that in

order to meet the economic strain of society both parents were forced to work and as a result they did not find the time for the schooling needs of the child.

The belief that learners in a secondary phase was old enough to manage their own school work and do not need assistance from parents was noted in the parent interviews. From the interviews it was revealed that there are barriers that prevent parents from involving themselves in the schooling of their children however schools need to assist to overcome some of these barriers.

5.6.6 Finding 6: Encouraging Parental Involvement

Parental involvement needs to be encouraged from the school for it to be effective. Parents felt that the school did not provide them with sufficient information to allow them to get more involved in schooling of children. Parents felt that there should be more meetings at suitable hours to communicate learner's performance. Parent interviews also indicated that when meetings are called up at school then there should be a starting and closing time.

Interviews emphasized the need to have support programs, workshops and talks to empower parents. Teacher interviews confirmed that if parents are empowered they will be able to make informed decision that will suit all and provide for better education for the children. A resource centre was suggested by the parents to ensure that there is sufficient material that can assist parents with parenting, curriculum and assessment policies. Parents wanted more knowledge and skills that can assist them with being involved in the school (*c.f.* 2.6.).

5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I presented the data collected from the interviews and dealt with the analysis of the data. A discussion of the findings from the interviews was provided. The next chapter deals with the recommendations, limitations and conclusion of the study.

Chapter 6

Recommendations and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the recommendations for effective parental involvement, the limitations that was experienced with this study and the conclusion. Schools and parents are inevitably linked when children are at school. It is therefore important for schools not to consider themselves solely responsible for children's education. At the same time parents need to see the school as part of their extended family. Educators and school management need to make a concerted effort to actively involve parents in the education of their children. They need to involve parents in all spheres of the child's education. Parents need to play their role and become responsible for educating their children with support and care. Parental involvement in school activities is based on the natural right of parents to educate their children. When parents are involved they discover their strengths, potentials and talents and use them to benefit themselves, the school and the learner.

6.2 Recommendation

The following are recommendations for effective parental involvement.

6.2.1 Collaboration, Co-operation and communication

Effective and quality education can be achieved if there is co-operation between educators and parents. Parents and teachers need to work together as a team in order to achieve their common goal of successful and quality education. Collaboration between the various role players will ensure effective education. There must be a relationship of trust between the parent and the school for a balanced development of the

child. Parents must be able to trust teachers to such an extent that they will feel attracted to the school. Collaboration with parents involves monitoring, informing and participating. One of the measures that schools can use for effective cooperation is to maintain a two way communication (*c.f.* 2.5).

Only when parents and teachers get to know each other well will their aspiration for the child be met. Regular communication will assist parents to know the problems and difficulties that their children experience at school and deal with them immediately. Teachers need to communicate to parents the policies, procedures, aims and expectations of the school so that they can equip themselves to be actively involved. It is therefore important for schools to draw up their year plan and programme of assessment early in year and distribute these to the parents so that they can also draw up their own family calendars. Schools need to send out monthly newsletters to parents, in the languages spoken by the community, to inform them of changes in the curriculum, changes in staffing, learner achievements and any other important news that may come up during the month. Good communication must be clear and unambiguous (*cf.* 2.6.1.1)

Parents need to provide the school with important information about background factors such as living conditions, socio economic status and health issues that the teachers can use to ensure effective teaching in the classroom. Parents also need to understand that they are role models to their children and their attitude towards the school and education will be emulated by the child. Parents therefore must adopt a positive attitude towards the school (*cf.* 2.7.3).

6.2.2 Training Programs

Training programs are beneficial to educators, parents and learners. Parents should be trained on parenting so that they can develop the necessary skills to deal with teenagers effectively. Workshops, lectures

and talks on discipline, school subjects, careers and other issues pertaining to the school needs to be offered to the parents. Parents need to also be provided with lists of duties that the school requires parents to involve themselves in. Technology has created many problems in schools; parents need to be trained on how to cope with teenagers and technology. Parents need to obtain skills on monitoring learners at home.

Teachers must be trained on how to handle parents. Teacher training programmes must include a module on training teachers to include dealing with parents in the school setup.

6.2.3 Creating a resource room

A room should be created in the school for parents. The room should be equipped with comfortable chairs and desks that parents can use to conduct small group discussions. It should contain information brochures, career information and books that are relevant for parenting. A suggestion box can be placed in the room to collect parent's recommendations for improving school activities. Parents should be able meet in this room at leisure to share and discuss ideas. Informal discussions can benefit the school immensely. Parents with similar challenges can meet and support each other (*c.f. 2.6.1*).

6.2.4 Effective Governing Body

It is essential that the school has an effective governing body. A governing body that supports the needs of the learners, teachers and parents is one that can ensure effective and quality education. The members of the governing body should not be there for status. The parent representative should call up regular meetings with the parents to inform them of new developments at the school. Parents should be involved in all decisions that are taken at the school then they would feel like they belong to the school (*c.f. 2.7.5*).

6.2.5 Responsibility of Schools to Increase Involvement

Schools must ensure that parent engagement is priority. It must be part of the schools policies on teaching and learning. Schools must be clear on the aims of all communication with parents. Schools must support parents that are already involved in the learning of their children as well as reach out to the parents that are less involved. New technologies should be used to increase communication with parents. Schools must be flexible in dealing with parents in terms of times for meeting and location of meeting.

6.2.6 Responsibility of Department of Education to Increase Involvement

The department of education must offer clear guidance about parental involvement in schools. It is their duty to provide direction to schools about the relationship between forms and purposes for parent involvement. The policy makers must provide policies that clarify the range of ways in which parents can be productively engaged in schools. They must ensure that purposes for parental involvement are explicit in the relevant policies.

6.3 Limitations of the Study

Learners are not used to being interviewed in this manner. They sometimes looked at their friends for answers. They did not realize that there are no right and wrong answers. They are used to the idea that answers are either right or wrong. The learners needed to be constantly reminded of this. Another problem was the time factor, where one could not get a complete picture within an hour. Another drawback was that the research was conducted in a single school. Parents also experienced problems in terms of transport and time so special arrangements were made to accommodate them.

6.4 Recommendations for further studies

The research for this study was limited to a single school, it would be beneficial to conduct the research in other schools to determine the factors that influence parental involvement in those schools.

6.5 Conclusion

Parental involvement is the key to educational success; all stakeholders involved in education therefore must place more importance on this issue. Increased parental involvement has shown to result in increased learner success, lower drop out rates, better attendance, increased parent and teacher satisfaction and improved school climate. Schools and educators must make a concerted effort to encourage parental involvement.

This study used qualitative methodology to look at the factors that promote parental involvement at a secondary school. The study looked at the barriers that parents experience that prevent them from becoming more involved in the education of their children. It also examined the extent to which parents involve themselves and the benefits that can be derived from parents becoming more involved. Teachers and parents in the sample agreed that there was a need for more effective parent involvement for quality and effective education. All respondents in the study indicated that parental involvement was important and that certain processes must be in place for effective parental involvement.

This study is important for all stakeholders in education but more especially to educators, school managers, parents, learners and education officials. Education officials need to consider implementing training programs for educators and parents. Educators must be trained to deal with parents more effectively and parents must be trained to become responsibly involved in children's education. Effective parent

training programs must be built upon the unique needs of the community. All programs should share the common goal of increasing parent teacher collaboration in order to promote healthy development and quality education.

The research established that parents want to be involved. They care about the education of their children but due to circumstances they experience problems. It is therefore necessary for schools to understand and accommodate parents so that greater involvement is possible. Communication, partnership and collaboration are necessary to maintain effective parent involvement.

References

1. Bailey, L. (2006). Interactive homework: a tool for fostering parent child interactions and improving learning outcomes for the young. *Early Childhood Journal*, 155-167.
2. Barbour, C., & Barbour N.H. (2001). Leadership and inclusion: A special school perspective. *British journal of Special Education*, 30(1), 28-33.
3. Bastiani, J. (2003). *Parents and Teachers: From policy to Practice*. England: Nter- Nelson.
4. Bauer, A.M., & Shea, T.M. (2003). *Parents and Schools: creating a successful partnership for students with special needs*. Upper Saddle River: Merrill Prentice Hall.
5. Bell, J (2005). *Doing research project: a guide for first time researchers in education and social sciences*. (4th Ed). New York: Open University Press.
6. Berg, B.L. (2007). *Qualitative research methods for social sciences*. New York: Pearson. Allyn & Bacon.
7. Berger, E. H. (2008). *Parents as partners in education: families and schools working together*. (7th ed.): Van Schaik Publishers.
8. Berk, L.E. (2000). *Child Development* (5th Edition). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
9. Bogdan, R.C., & Bilken, S.K. (2006). *Qualitative research methods for social sciences*. New York: Pearson. Allyn & Bacons
10. Bogdan, R., & Taylor, S. J. (2001). *The social construction of humanness: relationships with people with severe retardation. In research methods: a phenomenological approach to social sciences*. New York. John Wiley.
11. Brennen, H.B., (2005). Homework strategies for parents. Retrieved 12 July 2012, from <http://www.soencouragement.org/homework>

12. Bronfenbrenner, U. (2005). *Making human beings human: a biological perspective on human development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
13. Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The effect of family literacy on children's acquisition of reading*. Louisville, KY: National Centre for family Literacy.
14. Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Ecology of the family as a context of human development: Research perspective. *Developmental Psychology*, 22, 723-742.
15. Brooks, J.E. (2004). Family involvement in early childhood education: a description study of family involvement approaches and strategies in early childhood classrooms, *Dissertation abstract international*, 65(8), 289-291.
16. Brooks, A.M., & Hancock, R. (2000). What are parents-school organizations for? Some views from an inner London LEA. *Educational Review*, 52(3), 259-267.
17. Cantrell, D. (2003). *Alternative paradigms in environmental education research: the interpretive perspective*. In R Mrazek (Ed.). *Alternative paradigms in environmental education research*. Pp. 82-104. Lethbridge: NAAEE.
18. Catsambis, S., & Beveridge, A.A. (2001). Does neighbourhood matter? Family, neighbourhood and school influences on eighth grade mathematics achievement. *Sociological Focus*, 34, 435-457.
19. Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education*. (5thEd). London: Routledge.
20. Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2000). *Research methods in education*. (6thEd). London: Routledge.
21. Cohen, M.C., & Garrett, K.J. (1999). Breaking the rules: a group work perspective on focus group research. *British Journal of social workers*, 9(1), 83-110.

22. Cook-Cottone, D.P. (2004). *Using Piaget's theory of cognitive development to understand the construction of healing narratives*. *Journal of college counselling*, 18(7), 42-87.
23. Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice*, 39(3), 125-132.
24. Christenson, S.L., (2001). Families and school: What is the role of the school psychologist? *School Psychology Quarterly*, 10(2), 118-132.
25. Dearing, E., McCartney, K., Weiss, H., & Simpkins, S. (2004). The promotive effects of educational involvement for low income children's literacy. *Journal of school Psychology*, 47(6), 445-460.
26. Department of Education, (2010). Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). Pretoria: Government Printer.
27. Department of Education, (2005). National Curriculum Statement (NCS). Pretoria: Government Printer.
28. Department of Education, (2003). Conceptual and operational guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education: special needs as resource centres. Pretoria: Government Printers.
29. Department of Education, (2001). *White Paper 6: building an inclusive education training system*. Pretoria: Government Printers.
30. Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
31. Devlin, A.S. (2006). *Research Methods: Planning, Conducting and presenting information*. Thomson Wadsworth. USA
32. De Vos, A.S. & Fouche (2005). *Research at Grass Roots*. Van Schaik Publishers
33. De Vos A.S., & Fouche, C. (2002). General introduction to research design, data collection methods & data analysis, in De Vos A.S (Eds). *Research at grass roots: a primer for the caring profession*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

34. Downey, B.D. (2006). Parental and Family involvement in Education. Retrieved 21 April 2012, from [Html, file//c: users/.](#)
35. Engelbrecht, P (2001). *Changing roles for education support professionals: promoting learner development*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
36. Epstein, J.L. (2008). *School, Family and community partnerships: Your handbook for action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
37. Epstein, J.L. (2002). *Schools, family and community partnership: your handbook for action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
38. Epstein, J.L. (2001). *Schools, family and community partnership: your handbook for action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
39. Epstein, J.L. (1995). *Schools, Family and community partnerships: caring for Children we share*. Phi Delta Kappan.
40. Epstein J.L., & Salinas, K.C (2004). Partnering with families and communities. *Educational Leadership*, 61(8), 12-18.
41. Epstein J.L., & Dauber, S.L (1991). School programs and teacher practices parent involvement in inner city elementary and middle schools. *Elementary School Journal*, 91,289-305.
42. Fan, X., & Chen, M. (2001). Parent involvement and student achievement: a meta analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 13(1), (5-20).
43. Ferrara, M, M., and Ferrara, P.J. (2005). Parents as Partners; raising awareness as a teacher preparation program. *The Clearing House*, 79(2)., 77-81.
44. Flick, U. (2007). *Designing qualitative research*. Thosand Oaks: Sage.
45. Garbarino, J., Bedard, C. (2001). *Parents under siege*. New York: Free Press.
46. Gascoign, E. (1995). *Working with Parents as Partners*. Great Britain: DavidFulton Publishers.

47. Gaynor, C. (2000). *Direction in Development: Decentralization of Education- Teacher Management*. Washington: World Bank.
48. Glanz, J. (2006). *School community leadership: what every principal should know about*. Thousand Oak. California: Corwin Press.
49. Glasserfield, E. Von (2005). *Construction*. In W.E Craigiehead & C.B Nemeroff, the concise Corsini Encyclopedia of Psychology and Behaviourial Science, Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons.
50. Gonzales-Dehass, J., Willems, S & Holbein, T. (2005). Collaboration endeavours with diverse families. *International Journal of Education*, 174(4), 133-141
51. Gonzalez, M (2004). *Do educational programs increase parenting practices at home? Factors influencing Latino parent involvement*. Paper presented at Annual meeting of American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA.
52. Griffith, J. (2000). Principal leadership of parental involvement. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 39(2), 162- 186.
53. Grolnick, W.S., & Slowiaczek, M.L. (2000). Parents Involvement in children's conceptualization and motivational Model. *Child Development*. 65, 237-252.
54. Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y.S. (2005). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions and emerging influence in N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds). *The sage handbook of qualitative research (3rd ed)*, Thousand Oaks, C.A: Sage.
55. Henderson, A.T., & Mapp, K.L. (2002). *A New wave of evidence; the impact of school, family and community connections on student achievement*. Washington, DC: Centre for Law and Education.
56. Hill, N.E., Craft, S.A., (2003). *Parent- school involvement and school performance: Mediated pathways among socioeconomically comparable African American and Euro- American families*. *J. Educ. Psychology*, 95: 75-83.

57. Hoover-Dempsey, K.V. (2004). *Why do parents become involved in children's education?* Retrieved 10 February, 2012, from [http:// rer.sagepub.com](http://rer.sagepub.com).
58. Hoover-Dempsey, K.V., Walker, J.M.T., Reed, R.P. (2001). Parental involvement in homework. *Educational Psychologist*, 36(3), 195-209.
59. Hoover-Dempsey, K.V., Walker, J.M.T., Sandler, H.M. (2002). Why do parents become involved? Research findings and implications. *Elementary School Journal*, 67(1), 3-42.
60. Horn, K.L.F. (2003). *Parent and Teacher perceptions of the relationship between home and school collaboration and student success in the classroom, a research paper submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for master of education degree*. University of Misconsin, Stout.
61. Hornby, G. (2000). *Improving parental involvement*. New York: Cassell Education.
62. Jackson, A.W. & Andrews, P.G. (2004). *Making the most of middle school: a field guide for parents and others*. New York: Teachers College Press.
63. Kaap, J.A. (2001). *Children with Problems: An orthopedagogical perspective*. Pretoria: Serva Publishers.
64. Kruger, D. & Nel, N. (2005). *Addressing the Barriers to Learning: A South African Perspective*. Pretoria: VanShaik Publishers.
65. Kyriakides, L. (2005). Evaluating school policy on parents working with children in the class. *Journal of Education Research*, 98(5), 281-298.
66. Lall, J., Campell, M.V., Gillborn, D. (2004). Raising educational achievement in disadvantaged areas. Retrieved 15 January, 2012, <http://extra.shu.ac.uk>.
67. LeCrompt, M.D. (2000). Analysing qualitative data. *Theory into Practice*, 39(3), 146-155.

68. Lemmer E.M. (2000). Families and schools: Parents experiences of homes –school relationships. *Tydscrif vir Christ like Wetenskap*, 38(3-4), 17-30.
69. Lemmer E., & Van Wyk, J.N (2009). *Organising parent involvement in SA schools*. Cape Town: Juta and Company.
70. Lemmer E., & Van Wyk, J.N., (1998). Caring for children we share. : *Parent Teacher newsletter*, 4(1), 1-4.
71. Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
72. LeCrompte, M.D. (2000). Analysing qualitative data. *Theory into Practice*, 39(3), 146-155.
73. Leu, J.C.Y.(2008). Early childhood music education in Taiwan & an ecological systems perspective. *Arts Educational Policy Review*. 109(3), 17-26.
74. Lewis, A. (2004). Measuring social identity in the professional context of provision for pupils with special needs. *School psychology International*, 25(), 404-421.
75. Lightfoot, S. (2003). *The essential conversation: what parents and teachers can learn from each other?* New York: Random House.
76. Lombard, B. J.J. (2007). Reasons why educator-parents based at township schools transfer their own children from township schools to former model C schools. *Education as change*, 11(1), 43-57.
77. Loughran , B.S. (2008). The importance of teacher-parent partnership: preparing pre-service teachers. *Journal of college Teaching and Learning*, 5(8), 35-38.
78. Lowe, M. 2007. *Beginning research: a guide for the foundation degree students*. USA: Routledge.
79. Maree, K. (2007). *First steps in research*. (3rd ed.). Cape Town: Juta Education Inc.
80. Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative researching*. London: Thousand Oaks.

81. Mcdermott, P., and Rottenberg, J. (2000). Why urban parents resist involvement in their children's elementary education. *The qualitative reporter*, 5, 3-10.
82. McMillan, J.H., & Schumacher, S. (2006). *Research in Education: evidence based inquiry*. (6th Ed). New York: Pearson Education Inc.
83. Mertens, D.M. (2005). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: integration diversity with quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks. Sage Publications.
84. Mestry, K. (2004). *The assessment of Parental Involvement as an aspect of Whole school evaluation* (unpublished dissertation. Johannesburg: Rand Afrikaans University).
85. Michigan Department of Ed.(2001). The importance of parental involvement. Retrieved 10th November, 2011, from <http://www./ed.gov>.
86. Morgan, D.L. & Krueger, R.A. (1998). *The focus group Kit.Vol 1-6*.Thosand oaks: Sage.
87. Muller, C. (2001). The role of caring in the teacher student relationship for at risks students. *Journal of Sociological inquiry*, 71(2)., 241- 255.
88. National PTA survey. (1992).Retrieved 8 August 2011,online.www.ncpie.org.
89. Neuman, W.L. (2001). *Social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches*, 4th ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
90. Nichols, J.B. & Sutton, C. (2010). Improving academic performance through enhancement of teacher student relationships: the relationship teaching model. *Journal of International Christian Community for Teacher Education*, 5(2).
91. Nind, M., Sheeny, K. Simmon, K. (2003). *Inclusive Education: learners and learning contexts*. London: David Fulton Publishers.

92. Nojaja, J.M., (2002). *Reasons for lack of parent's involvement in secondary schools in the North West Province*. Unpublished dissertation. Vanderbijlpark: Potchefstroom University.
93. Paquette, D. and Ryan, J. (2001). *Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory*. Retrieved on the 15 Decemeber 2011. <http://pt3.nl.edu/paquetteryanwebquest.pdf>.
94. Pianta R.C., Nimetz S.L. (2001). *Implications of a developmental model for preventing and treating behavioural disturbances in children and adolescents*. Oxford University Press; New York.
95. Pines, M. (2000). The civilising of Genie. Retrieved on the 21 March 2011. <http://www.parenthood.library.wisc.edc.html>.
96. Power, S., & Clark, A, (2000). The right to know: parents, schools report and parents evening. *Research Papers in Education*, 15(I), 25- 48.
97. PTA. (2002). *The importance of parental involvement in school*. Retrieved 8 August 2011, www.livestrong.com.k
98. Professional Data Analysis. (2004). *Benefits of Parental Involvement*. Retrieved 15 June 2011, www.Research centre.org.
99. Ramirez, L. (2006). Parent Teacher: the benefits of creating a supportive parent teacher relationship. Retrieved 10 January 2012 from <http://www.parenting-child-development.com/parent-teacher.html>.
100. Riley, F. (1999), *Parent Mania*. Retrieved 10 January, 2012, <http://www.parentmania.co.za>.
101. Rubin A., & Barbie, E. (2001). *Research methods for social work*. Pacific Groove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
102. Sanders, M. G. (2009). *Principals matter: a guide to school family and community partnership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

103. Sanders, M.G. (2001). The Role of Community in Comprehensive School, Family: *Elementary School Journal*, 102, 19-34.
104. Schurink, E.M. (2001). The methodology of semi- structured, face to face interviewing in De Vos A.S. (ed.) *Research at grass roots: a premier for caring profession*. Pretoria. Van Schaik..
105. Seidman, I. (1998). *Interviewing as qualitative research, 2nd Ed.* New York: Teachers College press.
106. Seigner, R. (2006). Parent's educational involvement; a developmental ecology perspective. *Parenting: Science and Practice*, 6(1), 1-48.Senechal, M. (2006). *The effect of family literacy on children's acquisition of reading*. Louisville, KY: National Centre for Family Literacy.
107. Sheldon, S. (2002). Parental involvement in education- Research on parental roles. Retrieved 17 April, 2012, <http://education.stateuniversity.com>.
108. Simange, H. R. (2006). *The management of parent volunteers at secondary schools in the Limpopo Province*, a dissertation submitted for the degree of master in education. University of South Africa.
109. Smith, F., Drissen, G., Sluiter, R., and Slegers, P. (2007).Examining parental involvement. Retrieved 15 January, 2012, <http://see.educoop.net>.
110. Smith, J.C. (2006). Parental involvement in education among low income families: a case study. *School community Journal*,16(1), (43-56).
111. Smith, M. (2004). Writing up Qualitative Research. *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 18(2), 255-265.
112. Stephens, W. (2004). Role Theory-Accumulating and Changing Roles-Symbolic. Retrieved 17 April, 2012, <http://family.jrank.org>.

113. Stofile, A.M. (2005). Participative management in a high school in the Gala district. Unpublished master's thesis, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.
114. Swart, E. Pasha, T. (2006). Family and community partnership. *Addressing barriers to learning: a South African Perspective*. Pretoria; Van Shaik.
115. Swart, E. Pettipher, R. (2006). A framework for understanding inclusion. *Addressing barriers to learning: a South African Perspective*. Pretoria; Van Shaik.
116. Tucker, C., Bachaman, L., Klahr, J., Meza, N., & Wlters, M. (2008). Home School communication in rural South African Village: implication for teaching and teacher education. *International Education*, 37(2), 63-74.
117. Turnbull, A., & Turnbull, R. (2006). Self determination: is a rose by any other name still a rose? *Research and Practice for persons with severe disabilities*, 31, 1-6.
118. U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). *Especially for parents*. Retrieved on the 22nd March, 2011, from <http://www.mgforum.org/about/vision.Asp>.
119. Van Voorhis, F.L., (2001). Interactive homework in middle school: Effects on Family involvement and science achievement. *The Journal of Education Research*, 96, 323-338.
120. Vygotsky, L.S. (1991). *Genesis of higher mental functions*. In Light, P. Sheldon, S. & Woodhead, H. Learning to Think: Child Development in social context 2. London: Routledge.
121. Webster-Stratton, C., Reid, M.J., Hammond, M. (2001). Preventing conduct problems, promoting social competence. A parent and teacher training in headstart. *Journal of clinical child psychology*. 3, 283-302.

122. Weiss, H. B. (2003). Making it work: Low income working mothers involvement in their children's education. *American Educational Research Journal*, 40(0), 879-901.
123. Wellington, J. (2000). Educational research: contemporary issues and practical approaches. New York: Continuum.
124. Wherry, J. (2009). Getting Parents involved. *Education Digest*, 57(8), 49-50.
125. Whitaker, T. & Fiorer, D.J. (2001). *Dealing with Difficult Parents and parents in difficult situations*. New York: Eye on Education.
126. Williamson, L. (2001) Parents as Teachers of Children Program (PATCH). *Professional School counselling*, 1,2,7-13.
127. Wolcott, H.F. (2001). *Writing up qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
128. Yerger, C. (ND). How can elementary teachers collaborate more effectively with parents to support student literacy learning? *The delta Kappa Bulletin*. St George, pp. 32-38.
129. Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: design and methods*. Thousands Oaks: Sage.

Appendix A

CONSENT FORM FOR LEARNERS

Dear Parent/ Guardian

My Name is Kalay Naicker. I am a M.ED (Psychology) student at the University of Kwazulu Natal (Edgewood Campus). I am conducting research on the factors promoting parental involvement at a Secondary School.

I would greatly appreciate your child/ward's voluntary participation in this research. Participation will be in the form of interviews (focus group discussions) and observation. If you agree for your child/ward to be part of the research please have the consent form below completed and returned.

Please feel assured that all information will be treated as confidential. No names will be recorded to ensure anonymity. Your child can withdraw from the research project at any time. If there are any queries you may contact me on 0842277705.

Thanking you for your cooperation.

Mrs K.Naicker

Consent Form

I (Full NAME
PRINTED) parent/guardian of
_____ (name of child/ward)
consent to his/her participation in the research project.

Signature

Date

Appendix B

CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS

Dear Parent/ Guardian

My Name is Kalay Naicker. I am a M.ED (Psychology) student at the University of Kwazulu Natal (Edgewood Campus). I am conducting research on the factors promoting parental involvement at a Secondary School.

I would greatly appreciate your voluntary participation in this research. Participation will be in the form of interviews and observation. If you agree to be part of the research please have the consent form below completed and return. The times for the interviews will be set in consultation with you.

Please feel assured that all information will be treated as confidential. No names will be recorded to ensure anonymity. You may withdraw your participation at any time. You contact me on 0842277705 if you have any queries.

Thanking you for your cooperation.

Mrs K.Naicker

Consent Form

I (Full NAME PRINTED)) Consent to participate in the research project.

Signature

Date

Appendix C

Letter for Permission to Conduct Research:

Department of Education

33 Blue Jill Crescent

Moorton

Chatsworth

4030

Mr SIBUSISO ALWAR

Research Department

228 Pietermaritz Street

Pietermaritzburg

3200

Sir

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I hereby wish to request to conduct research towards the completion of my Masters in Education degree at the University of Kwazulu Natal (Edgewood Campus). The topic for research is the factors promoting parental involvement at a secondary school in the Umalzi District Kwazulu Natal. The purpose of this study is to determine

- The extent and the nature of parental involvement in teaching and learning of learners.
- The factors that influence parental involvement in children's education.
- To ascertain the benefits of parental involvement for academic success.
- The role that the school can play to encourage parental involvement.

The research will involve interviews, observation and a look at the attendance registers of school meetings. Parents will be given consent forms to be signed allowing students to participate in the study. Only students whose forms are signed will be allowed to participate in the research. Parents will be made aware that this is a voluntary participation. Interviews will be conducted with parents, students, teachers and the SGB chairperson. The interviews with the parents will be conducted after school hours at prearranged times that is convenient for the parents. The interviews for the teachers will be conducted at 2:30pm at school. The focus group discussion for the learners will be conducted during the lunch break, between 12:45pm and 1:10pm. I do assure no parent, teacher or learner will be identifiable in any way from the research results.

Awaiting your approval in anticipation.

Thanking You

.....

Mrs K.Naicker
P.O Box 903
Umkomaas
4170

Department:

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

Tel: 033 341 8610

Ref.:2/4/8/178

Mrs. Kalavani Naicker

P.O Box 903

Umkomaas

4170

Dear Mrs. Naicker

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **Factors Promoting Parental Involvement at a Secondary School, Umlazi District, and KwaZulu Natal**. In the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The Period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 January 2012 to 28 February 2014.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mr. Alwar at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full

report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department.
Please address it to The Director-Resources Planning, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg,
3200.

10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to the following School:

10.1 Secondary School- Umlazi district

NMbsinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD Head of Department: Education

...dedicated to service
and performance
beyond the call of
duty.

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL Private Bay X9137. Pietermaritzburg. 3200. KwaZulu-Natal. Republic of South
Africa

PHYSICAL. Office G 25. 188 Pietermaritz Street. Metropolitan Building. Pietermaritzburg
3201

TEL Tel +27 33 341 8610¹ Fax +27 33 3341 8612 ¹ E-mail
sibusiso.alwar@kzndoe.gov.za

Appendix D

Letter To Principal For Permission to Conduct Research:

Secondary School

P.O Box 903

Umkomaas

4170

The Principal

Secondary School- Umlazi District

Chatsworth

4092

Sir

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I hereby wish to request to conduct research towards the completion of my Masters in Education degree at the University of Kwazulu Natal (Edgewood Campus). The topic for research is the factors promoting parental involvement at a secondary school in the Umlazi District Kwazulu Natal. The purpose of this study is to determine

- The extent and the nature of parental involvement in teaching and learning of learners.
- The factors that influence parental involvement in children's education.

- To ascertain the benefits of parental involvement for academic success.
- The role that the school can play to encourage parental involvement.

The research will involve interviews, observation and a look at the attendance registers of school meetings. Parents will be given consent forms to be signed allowing students to participate in the study. Only students whose forms are signed will be allowed to participate in the research. Parents will be made aware that this is a voluntary participation. Interviews will be conducted with parents, students, teachers and the SGB chairperson. The interviews with the parents will be conducted after school hours at prearranged times that is convenient for the parents. The interviews for the teachers will be conducted at 2:30pm at school. The focus group discussion for the learners will be conducted during the lunch break, between 12:45pm and 1:10pm. Observation in the classroom between teacher and learner will take place during a lesson. I do assure no parent, teacher or learner will be identifiable in any way from the research results. No institution will be identifiable by name. A report on the findings and recommendations will be forwarded to your school.

I trust that my request will be favourably considered.

Yours in education

Mrs K.Naicker

SECONDARY SCHOOL

P.O. BOX 56516, CHATSWORTH 4030

TEL'FAX : (031) 404 9199

Physical Address : Chatsworth, 4092

Mrs K.Naicker

P.O Box 903

Umkomaas

4170

23 May 2012

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Your letter i.r.o has reference.

Permission is hereby granted to you to conduct research at my school.

Please ensue the following :

1. Consent forms are duly completed
2. Confidentially of learners and parents must be maintained at all times
3. Learners are treated in accordance with their rights.
4. NO LEARNERS IS FORCED TO PARTICIPATE
5. Instruction time is not used for the purpose of your research.
6. A report of the findings and recommendation must forwarded to the school
7. A copy of the thesis is submitted to the school for filing.

We wish you all the best in your efforts.

The Principal

Appendix E

Ethical clearance certificate

**UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL**

**INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

21 June 2012
Dear Mrs Naicker

Protocol reference number: HSS/0282/012M
Project title: Factors promoting parental involvement at a secondary school in the Umlazi district, KZN

In response to your application dated 05 June 2012, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has **been granted FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study. Yours faithfully

**Professor
Humanities &
Social Science
Research
Ethics
Committee/ms**

Steven Collings (Chair)

ccSupervisors: Dr Rosemary Kalenga
cc Academic Leader : Dr MN Davids
cc School Admin: Mr N Memela / Mrs S Naicker

Professor S Collings (Chair)
Humanities & Social SC Research Ethics Committee
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa
Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 3587/8350 **Facsimile:** +27 (0)31 260 4609 **Email:** ximbap@ukzn.ac.za /
snymanm@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix F

Teacher Interview Schedule

1. How often do parents visit the school?
2. When do you meet with parents? Why?
3. Do parents monitor learner's school work and provide feedback?
4. What activities do you think the parent should be involved in?
5. What reasons will you give for parents not visiting the school?
6. What are some of the factors that prevent parents from checking on children's homework?
7. Why is it important for parents to involve themselves?
8. Should education be left solely in the hands of the school?
9. Why is it important for parents and teachers to have a relationship?
10. What can the school do to encourage parents to become more involved?

Appendix G

Parent Interview Schedule

1. How often do you visit the school?
2. When are parents called to the school? Why?
3. Do you monitor your child's school work and provide feedback?
4. What school activities do you involve yourself in? Should there be greater activities that parents can involve them in?
5. What are some of the reasons for you not visiting the school?
6. What problems do you experience when assisting with your child's homework?
7. Why is important for you to be involved in your child's school work?
8. Should your child's education be left solely in the hands of the school?
9. Why do you think there is a need for you to form a relationship with your child's teachers?
10. What can the school do to encourage parents to become more involved?

Appendix H

Focus Group Discussion with learners

1. How often do your parents visit your school?
2. When are your parents called to school? Why?
3. Do your parents monitor your school work and provide feedback?
4. What are some of the activities that your parents are involved in at school?
5. What are some of the reasons that prevent your parents from visiting the school?
6. What problems do your parents experience when they check on homework?
7. Do you believe there is a need for your parents to be involved in your school? Why?
8. Should education be left in the hands of the school without parent's involvement?
9. Why do you think there is a need for there to be a relationship between your teacher and parents?
10. What can the school do to encourage your parents to become more involved in your education?

Appendix I

One-personal documents - Minutes of meetings

The minutes of the meetings will be analyzed for the following:

1. What was the attendance at the meeting?
2. What was discussed?
3. How effective was parent participation at the meeting?

The factors promoting parental involvement at a Secondary School in Kwa-Zulu Natal.

By

Kalavani Naicker

This dissertation is submitted in fulfillment of the academic requirements for the Degree of Masters of Education in the school of education, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Edgewood Campus.

Supervisor: Dr Rosemary Chimbala Kalenga

Date of Submission: March 2013

DECLARATION

I declare that “factors promoting parental involvement at a secondary school” is my own work and that all sources that I used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference.

Signed : _____

Supervisor : Dr Kalenga, R.C

Date: _____

Student: Mrs K.Naicker

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Acknowledgement

This thesis was possible because of a number of people in my life. I wish to offer my appreciation and gratitude to the following people whose help and support was important in the accomplishment of my effort.

To my supervisor at Edgewood campus Dr Rosemary Kalenga, who supported me step by step through this dissertation. Her guidance, support, devotion and encouragement at all times were needed to complete this work. Her understanding and knowledge assisted me to improve my work.

To the Principal of the school where the research was conducted, my heartfelt thanks goes out to you. To the teachers, learners and parents who opened their doors to me and allowed me to interview them.

To my family who supported and encouraged me to complete the work. My husband Brain Naicker and daughter Sabrika who gave me the time and space to complete the work successfully. My parents and parent in-laws for the support and encouragement to complete this study.

To my colleague and friend Theo John who was responsible for me enrolling to do my masters and for all the assistance that he provided me during the completion of my work.

Abstract

This study explores the factors that promote parental involvement at a secondary school in Kwa-Zulu Natal. The study was conducted with twelve learners from grades 10 to grade 12, six educators and six parents. The theories on parental involvement that guided the study were the ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner and the role theory. The methodology used to obtain data were interviews with learners, teachers and parents.

The literature review looked at the extent of parental involvement, the barriers experienced by parents and the benefits of parental involvement. The literature also looked at views of how parents can be encouraged to become more active in schools. The qualitative method was utilized to determine the factors promoting parental involvement. The focus group was used with the learners and the semi structured interviews was used with the teachers and parents. Themes were formed using the collected data that was organized and analyzed

The findings of the data showed that there is a need for greater parental involvement. Parents and teachers agreed that there are certain barriers that prevent parents from becoming more involved in the education of their children. There is a need for a concerted effort amongst parents and teachers to communicate and work as a team for effective teaching and learning to take place. Schools need to consider that parents face problems and they need to work with parents to overcome these barriers.