

**Parental involvement in supporting teaching and learning:
A case study of three primary schools in the Pinetown District**

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my work. It is submitted for the Degree of Master of Education at the University of KwaZulu Natal. It has not been submitted before for any degree or at any other University.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my late parents, Mildred Thokozile (uMaGwala) and Phillip Zagiwana Radebe, you guys made me who I am, thank you! I must also extend my sincere gratitude to my family and friends for supporting me. Thank you for understanding my situation when my study commitments opened up a gap between us.

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ABSTRACT

The study is responding to the outcries of the Department of Education and the South African Schools Act (SASA) Act No. 84 of 1996 and National Curriculum Statement, (2002) about involving parents in teaching and learning. It has been proven that children respond better when parents take initiative in their education.

In the study I am investigating the involvement of parents in the teaching and learning. The family is seen as the backbone in every child's education, this is to say when the parents take initiative in the education of their children, it is likely that the children will perform better at school. The need to investigate the parental involvement arose from the new curriculum, seeing educators struggling to teach in National Curriculum Statement so I needed to know if parents are coping.

The parental involvement I am focussing on is essentially teaching and learning that takes place at home and at school where learners require help from the parents on their school work. Parental involvement is strongly linked to socio economic status which is in it self strongly linked with learners' progress and that is significant to parental involvement.

The schools I am researching will be drawn from three different African social contexts of township, rural and urban schools that used to be known as Model-C schools. I want to see what the nature is and how parental involvement is handled in these schools. Since this is a small study, I will not generalise the findings. This study adopted an interpretivist, qualitative case study research comprising three schools. I chose interpretive research paradigm because it will allow me to interact closely with the participants to gain insights and form clear understandings (Nieuwenhuis, cited in Maree, 2007). Using the findings gathered from the study I will access parents' perspectives regarding their involvement in supporting the learners in teaching and learning in schools. I may not disregard the child-headed families where there is no elder person to concentrate on the children's education.

PRELIMINARIES

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SGBs	School Governing Bodies
HODs	Head of Departments
SASA	South African Schools Act
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
PAM	Personnel Administrative Measures
SMT	School Management Team
OBE	Outcome Based Education
DoE	Department of Education
PMFA	Public Financial Management Act

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CHAPTER ONE

SETTING THE SCENE

The family is a powerful determinant of children's learning and when the school and home have divergent approaches to life and to learning; children are likely to suffer their school learning (Marjoribanks, 1986, p.211).

1.1 Introduction

These words by Marjoribanks (1986) encapsulate the centrality of the home generally and parents in particular, in ensuring that learners receive appropriate education. The underpinning philosophy of the South African Schools Act of 1996 (SASA) is that schools become self-managed and self-reliant (Mathonsi, 2001). For schools to have healthy relationships with homes, the parents need to support learners in their education, (Desgorges et al 2003). Schools have to involve parents in their programmes in order to achieve better education. The South African government through SASA, the National Curriculum Statement and other policy initiatives, has invited parents to be meaningful partners with schools in collaboratively providing quality education. This research project explored the extent to which parents in the three studied primary schools were involved in supporting teaching and learning as it is expected of them. The study also highlights the perspective of parents and how they experience their involvement in teaching and learning.

1.2 Background and purpose of the study

This chapter sets the scene about the problem under scrutiny by providing the background and purpose of the study. The purpose is to investigate the roles played by parents in supporting teaching and learning as is contemplated in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), Education White Paper 2 (1996) and SASA. The NCS clearly states that parents have a responsibility to take part in planning the school curriculum and that, schools need to support their participation in their affairs as partners. The Department of Education came up with many policies as a sign of commitment to improve and maintain the quality of education. Swap (1993) argues that the involvement of all the stakeholders in education resulted better benefits for all involved. Parents have an obligation to support their children's education for them to

succeed and educators require the same support from parents in order to achieve better results.

It is argued in this research that the home, through parents, has to play a significant role in the education of their children. Marjoribanks (1986), Macbeth (1989), Lemmer (1999) and Henry (1996) concur that family behaviours towards education is seen as what moulds the child towards his / her education. Viewed this way, educated parents are likely to like their children educated. Undoubtedly, parents want the best education for their children (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009) and they can play a motivation role in their children wanting to follow in their parent's footsteps. Given that both parents and schools want the same thing when it comes to education, it stands to reason that they need to work together for the benefit of the learners. Education is no longer narrowly seen as a set of managerial and pedagogical skills, but rather as a caring, collaborative profession which works with families and others to achieve pedagogical decisions for the needs of all learners (Henry, 1996). Research done by Mabasa and Themane (2002), Bhengu (2005 & 2007), and Khumalo (2008) demonstrate the value of parent-educator collaboration as an important requirement for effective home-school partnership.

1.3 South African policy framework regarding parental involvement

The South African Government states that for transformation to take place in schools, parents need to be part of their children's education. The White Paper on Education and Training (Department of Education, 1995) highlights that parents have a responsibility to initiate education of their children by stating that:

“The principle of democratic governance is reflected in every level of the system by increasingly involving and consulting with all the stakeholders taking part in the organisation”.

Since 1994 the national Department of Education focused on the vision and direction of the South African education system through policies, initiatives and innovations, (Thurlow, 2003). The change of party politics and power shift in South African society meant these innovations have to be implemented in order to be in line with the vision and direction of the new government (Thurlow, 2003). The establishment of the School Governing Bodies (SGB) was meant to increase democracy and representation of school stakeholders. The

South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996) lay down the law that schools shall establish school governing bodies on which parents shall have the largest numerical representation. The role of parents in educating their children has increased more dramatically in some schools. This is in line with the democratic principles of the new constitution and also with international trend of increasing certain powers at school level (Christie, 1998).

The South African Constitution, Act 108 of 1996 aimed at promoting ideals of democracy and human rights that spoke to schools to work with all the stakeholders, parents included. Arising from this were numerous policy documents, National Curriculum Statement (NCS), Education White 2, (1996) South African Constitution and SASA (1996) that sought to operationalise the goals of freedom of speech and opportunities to participate freely in society. After the first democratic elections in 1994 the need arose for redressing the inequalities and imbalances that existed in South Africa. Political goals determined educational priorities and the provisions of the language clauses of the constitution led to the adoption of partnerships between schools and homes.

The schools are guided by the South African Constitution to do exactly what the NCS states; that is, learners need to be aware of their social, moral, economic and ethical issues that face South Africans. The NCS provides different ways of living and sexuality education and reasons to involve parents in education. Parents need to be part of the formal education set up in order for them to understand the social, moral and ethical issues of the South African society, (Fager & Brewster 1999). The NCS states that the contextual factors such as HIV/ AIDS, unemployment, poverty and teenage pregnancy need to be taught in schools. South Africa has rich array of races, ethnic, language groups, and many religious belief systems which make up this country, this is the reason behind that parents have to play a significant role in their children's education.

The partnership between schools and homes is emphasised by recent legislation, by the South African Schools Act of 1996. This partnership is in line with the mission of parents to educate their children in terms of the education demands on parental involvement in schools. As per NCS requirement, parents participate in the school governance though the role parents play in teaching and learning is not explicit. Their involvement in the school governance proclaims that they need to have an input in teaching and learning.

The angle of this study is on parent's involvement in supporting their children in teaching and learning rather than on school governance as provided for in the SASA. I wanted to find out if parents were aware of their responsibilities in schools. In spite of what has been said about parents not taking initiative in supporting schools. Educators are still keeping away from parents since it looks as if there is a fence between educators and parents (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005; Bhengu, 2007).

As mentioned earlier, the involvement of parents in supporting learners in teaching and learning depends on the leadership style of the principal whether it facilitates or frustrates the participation of different stakeholders in the school (Harsley & Lauder, 1997). The reason why there is a need to pay attention to this research focus, namely, parental involvement in supporting teaching and learning. Schools cannot work in isolation.

The South African Constitution specifies that people need to be treated equally and that is why schools are obligated to treat parents as equals. It needs to be stated though that anecdotal evidence shows that, at this stage of the South African education development, the involvement of parents in schools' curriculum planning is not well developed and entrenched to be of benefit to everyone. There are still issues of parents shying away from schools and educators not welcoming parents in schools (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005; Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009).

Parental involvement have been researched in different contexts, like parents in governance, parental involvement and learners performance but parental involvement in teaching and learning and what their perspectives in curriculum planning has not received sufficient attention. Schools need parents' support in every aspect (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009). Parental involvement exerts powerful influence on children's values and attitudes in their learning processes at home and at school, though parental involvement can also be a very challenging task for both schools and parents (Epstein, 1987; Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009). Sanders and Simon (1997), Wolfendale (1992) concur that parental involvement serves as a positive force on behalf of the children's success. In South Africa parents' empowerment on a wider scale is on a slow move but there is progress, (Lemmer, 1994; Bhengu, 2007; Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009).

Prior to 1994, educators, learners, parents and communities were largely excluded from decision making on school affairs. Parents did not have a chance to be part of the planning of the school curriculum. They were part of the School Governing Bodies (SGB) and these bodies were organised along racial lines that is Black communities in Black schools and Whites in Whites schools, this segregation saw Black parents not being part of the White School's Governing Bodies. The segregation led to SGBs not being equally represented. However, with the establishment of the South African Schools Act of 1996, all schools had to have SGBs that are democratically elected by members of the schools' communities. According to the Act, the SGB was mandated to make sure that schools run according to the policies, and rules which govern them. The inclusion of parents in the SGB was the first step to have parents taking part in the planning of the school curriculum. The issue of parental involvement in teaching and learning had to take a centre stage that is to play a large part in how the school is run, within a national framework.

1.4 Parental involvement and obstacles

Scholars such as Armstrong (1995), Epstein (1996), Gianzero (1999) and Middlewood (2005), maintain that parental involvement in educational matters entails a string of activities with a common goal of bringing together the success of children at school level. Parental involvement is essentially about communication between parents and schools, parenting i.e. helping with the ways of dealing with children in schools, learning at home, helping with homework and assignments. Parents have a responsibility to assist learners not to feel burdened with their school work. They also need to make decisions about which career path learners need to take, volunteering at school, i.e. taking initiative in the schools to help educators where possible and collaborating with communities. They would know this when they know what are schools offerings in the curriculum. In the light of these issues, it becomes imperative that school principals use leadership that allows parents to take part of curriculum planning since the parents come with the community values as part of the school curriculum (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009). Parents can take initiatives where they feel they are experts because each involvement carries its own uniqueness.

Parents in selected parts of the KwaZulu Natal, mostly in rural areas, are having difficulty in being involved in their children's education, (Mashishi, 1994; Bhengu, 2005; Mncube, 2009). Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009) agree with the position expressed above and further

caution that we should not pretend that involving parents in the school's activities is easy. These researchers highlight such difficulties which could be due to the lack of information or the understanding of potential benefits. Also they maybe due to the fact that the schools around them do not emphasise the value of communities taking initiative in their children's education. Parents need to be aware of their responsibilities in terms of the NCS and SASA, as well as, how to exercise their mandate in terms of supporting learners' schooling.

My experiences as an educator and a member of the school governing body (SGB) indicates that parental involvement in school affairs, especially in African communities, is generally poor. There is an emerging pattern in the literature which supports this view, see (Mashishi, 1994; Calitz, Fuglestad & Lillejord, 2002; Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005; Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009), The non-participant of parents is referred to as a fence keeping parents away from the schools (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). Some of the explanations that have been advanced include the view that some parents do not feel welcome in schools; they want educators to continue with their professional work i.e. teaching learners (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005; Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009). The problem is not that parents do not want to help; in fact they do, but they do not know how. Epstein (1992) discovered that almost all parents, even those from the most economically depressed communities, are committed to their children's education. He concluded that parents say they want their children to succeed; they are willing to help them and need school and educator's help to know what to do with their children's work.

There are various reasons for parents not to participate in supporting teaching and learning in school as desired. Relationships that exist between schools and parents appear to be the main contributory factor. Sometimes educators want to involve parents when there are problems in schools. The fact that educators want them involved only when there are problems at school has been cited by Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) as one of the main obstacle which frustrates parental involvement in schools. It is a norm that parents always want what is best for their children and parental involvement in children's education is unquestionably significant that is according to the researchers like, (Bermudez & Owens, 1997; Smith, 1998; Prater, 1999; Mthembu, 1999; Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009). Therefore, the practice of parental involvement should benefit all the parties involved schools and parents. It is advisable for School Management Team (SMT) members to examine procedures that are in place for encouraging of parental involvement, (Whitaker & Douglas

2001). Scholars cited above further suggest that family values, ethnic and cultural resources need to be mobilised by the parents' body in schools to help educators familiarise themselves with the school cultures. Schools need not be seen as institutions existing solely for the purpose of imparting knowledge to learners. The schools in the communities have knowledge and resources that need to be imparted to the same communities.

As a member of the SMT, I felt that parental involvement in terms of parents taking initiative roles in curriculum need attention particularly because many school principals I know were still complaining about parents not taking initiatives in their children's education. In addition, I also believed that parental involvement in supporting teaching and learning lessens the educators' heavy load, and also that it improves the learners' knowledge of the home-school link (Lemmer, 2004). Schools seem not to be doing enough in facilitating this aspect and not surprisingly, parents are still concerned about the status quo. The only issue that seems to be significant in schools is parental involvement in schools governance. It has been the main focus in South African schools. All stakeholders seem to be aware of their duties as outlined in the South African Schools Act and the NCS that parents need to be involved in the curriculum planning of the schools. Notwithstanding this, many schools seem to have been running away from this issue, saying that parents are illiterate, and thus not able to meaningfully participate in supporting curriculum delivery. Such arguments are obsolete now as many parents are able to handle children's homework done in the new curriculum so how is it possible that they can not handle the planning.

The education policies like SASA and NCS really helped parents who really wanted to take part in the children's education. Whitaker and Douglas (2001) suggest that parental involvement is life blood of schools, educators are experts in teaching the learning matter but there is a need for parents, from time to time, to help them understand the learners they are working with. Parents and educators specify this relationship as significant for continued education of learners. To this end, schools have a responsibility in terms of the departmental policy (2002) and SASA (1994) allow parents believe that they are the most important factor to keep education going by playing their roles in teaching and learning. The partnership can also break down the barriers between educators and the parents and to confer the most positive effects on learners' achievement is also the most beneficial with respect to student outcomes.

In examining the question of parental involvement in supporting teaching and learning, the study was driven by the following research questions:

1.5 Key research questions

The research questions guiding the study are:

- What are parents' perspectives and expectations on parental involvement?
- How are educators and parents' interactions on parental involvement in teaching and learning?
- What support do parents receive from SMT's in schools to help the learners' with their work?

1.6 How the chapters are structured:

1.6.1 Chapter one

This chapter outlines the settings and background to the study that focuses on parental involvement in supporting teaching and learning in schools. It also highlights both parents and educators' issues on parental involvement.

1.6.2 Chapter two

Chapter two discusses the literature review, theories that frame the study and current issues debated around parental involvement in teaching and learning in schools.

1.6.3 Chapter three

This chapter is deals with various procedures in investigating the study, like the methodology, the participants, and the design of the study.

1.6.4 Chapter four

This chapter presents stories that emerged as I was interacting with participants in the field of study.

1.6.5 Chapter five

Chapter five culminates with summary, findings, analysis, recommendations and conclusions.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the problems to be examined and the background to the study. It also looks into the key research questions as well as the significance of the study. The next chapter deals with literature review on parental involvement in teaching and learning.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The chapter reviews literature on current debates on parental involvement in supporting teaching and learning in schools. A theoretical framework relevant to understanding some of the key issues surrounding home and school is also presented. The theoretical framework is also used as an analytic tool to make sense of the data generated. The chapter begins by discussing research that has been conducted in the area of parental involvement, other pertinent issues in this area, and concludes by discussing Olivos (2006) alternative school reform theory and Bronfenbrenner (1986) Social Ecological Theory. The chapter begins by discussing the literature review on current issues debated around parental involvement in supporting learners in schools and the theoretical frameworks that focuses on home and school to frame the study. The study will also show how the school and home can work together to develop healthy partnerships and the roles schools and homes play to provide encouragement to learners.

2.2 Research done on parental involvement

In South African schools the underlying principle of teaching and learning is to ensure that educators, parents, learners are actively involved in making sure that schools function properly and are providing better school environment, (Mabasa & Themane, 2002). Middlewood (2005) concurs with this assertion by saying that parents are the most important stakeholder in the schools that is why they need to play a significant role. Despite this, findings from these studies suggest that collaboration between schools and parents is weak. Lemmer (2007) for instance, argues parental involvement in children's schooling is very weak in South Africa. This may be due to the lack of funds to capacitate parents and this has been said to frustrate educators because learners are ill disciplined, (Badenhorst, Calitz, van Schalkwyk & Kruger, 1987; David, 1993; Abram & Gibbs 2002).

Researchers such as Mashishi (1994), Mthembu (1999), Mbatha (2005) and Bhengu, (2007) have found that schools with the most successful parental involvement programmes are also successful in terms of learner achievement. Research findings show that there are still

problems in parental involvement even after decades in the democratic South Africa. These studies affirm that parents' inputs are crucial in the development of curriculum in schools. Without active parental involvement, learners are less likely to succeed in their efforts to improve their education. The teaching profession does not mean that curriculum can only be accessed only from a qualified educator (Kathleen & Wikelund, 1999). There can be activities in the curriculum where parents can know more, such as life-skills and other acquired knowledge.

The Department of Education (through SASA and other policies) gave parents a mandate to take part in school affairs which includes curriculum planning; supporting learners in teaching and learning. However, this can happen only if parents know curriculum related issues. That involves taking part in curriculum development and attending school and parents' meetings. Parents have to be fully committed and participate in all school activities. SASA No.84 of (1996), National Curriculum Statement (2002) mandates that parents participate in schooling activities, and the Department of Education (2002) clearly spell out conditions which promote schools and parents partnership. This was done in order help shape a brighter future for learners.

There is argument that schools and parents are inextricably connected and need each other if learners have to grow up in a balanced environment. For instance, Docking (1990) and Commer (1991) emphasise that neither the parent nor the educator can fulfill the education task completely without the help of the other. The relationship of these two should be like the one for the bee and the flower, where both depend on the other for survival, in this case it will be the education of the learners. Educators rely on the parents to have children in school in time and the parent rely on the educator for pedagogy and guidance.

2.3 The importance of parental involvement

Smith (2002) and Shun-Wing (2000) both argue that involving parents in the life of the learners in schools have positive influence on children. The home-school partnership is identified as a critical factor in the academic success of school children. For this to happen, all parties concerned need to play their part in ensuring that parents get involved in the school activities. The head of schools need to provide parents with information that is enlightening for them to have interest in school functions. It is the responsibility of parents to see to it that there is progress in their children's education. Questions and answers on children's progress

are common to both the educator and parent to see to it that their children are coping with their school work and concerns are addressed appropriately by both. For the educators it is in their best interest to see to it that parents take an initiative in the schooling of their children. The SMT in the schools can also play a significant role during schools function because they are able to involve all the stakeholders.

Parents reported in (Berger, 1981; Bridgemohan, 2001; Biesta, 2002) that as a result of their participation in the school curriculum programmes, they had learnt new parental and educational support skills that have improved their communication with their children and schools. Parents' challenges in teaching and learning are part of the issues to be discussed. Schools do not seem to have created an environment whereby parents feel welcome to take part in supporting teaching and learning, Mashishi (1994) and Bhengu (2007). Although they do not feel that they have the capacity to do so, nor do they feel that they are welcome in schools to participate (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005).

2.4 Benefits of parental involvement

Schools that undertake to support a strong comprehensive parent involvement effort are more likely to produce students who perform better than identical schools that do not involve parents in the schools' activities, (Macleod, 1989). Schools that have strong linkages with and respond to the needs of the community they serve will have learners that perform much better, (Mashishi, 1994). Parental involvement is said to be contributing more insights and knowledge that contribute to the skills and professional knowledge for strength and professional backgrounds for learners (Jaksec, 2003). The active parent participation seems to create an interest in the child's education life (Macbeth, 1989). Parents can only know about their children's behaviour at school only if they themselves are actively involved in the schools activities and programmes. This is more likely to decrease the dropout rates, absenteeism and sometimes even teenage pregnancy. Parental involvement brings positive advantages for educators with respect to both the quantity and quality of their work (Mertens, 1996). Parental involvement serves as an important part of early childhood programs. When parents are involved in children activities during early childhood, it can provide a strong foundation for home-school relations. The involvement of parents can be a protective factor in counteracting risk conditions that may lead to school underachievement in children.

Narrain (2005), for instance conducted research in South Africa which established a positive link between parental involvement and learner academic performance. Mbatha (2005), focussed on the nature of parental involvement in schools and Mthembu (1999), did the study on the involvement of parents in academic and non-academic activities. Mashishi (1994), researched on learner education in Soweto where her study established the significance of parental involvement in learners in townships schools. These studies focussed more on learners' perspectives and tended to ignore the parents' views on the curriculum issues, but there were a lot of benefits on parental involvement that came out of these studies.

The issue of parental involvement has to be dealt with by the School Management Team (SMT). It is significant that the school sees the need for parents to be involved because that does not only affect the learners' school work but also educators as they are the ones who work with the learners (Badenhorst, 1987). Research has shown that neither the educators nor the parents can educate learners on their own; they need the partnership to work together for the education of learners, (Badenhorst 1987 and David, 1993). As partners they need to collaborate in a closest way as possible. Researchers, like Lemmer, 1994; Mashishi, 1994; Mbatha, 2005 and Bhengu, 2005) support the policy of increased parent involvement very few agree about what constitutes effective parental involvement. A major source of this confusion is the lack of education in some instances and rigour in the research informing practice and policy.

2.5 Parental involvement in teaching and learning

My focus area, that is, parental involvement being investigated in this study, includes parental involvement in school curriculum, homework assistance, attending school meetings and, parents serving as classroom volunteers. Schools may view the parents as external to the learning environment, resulting in resistance to parent involvement by some educators. Some schools struggle to create a welcoming environment for parents and fail to accommodate the schedules of working parents. This may be a challenge for schools to work harder to overcome the particular challenges associated with engaging parents. Dodd and Konzal (2002) states that parents as first educators of their children, have power over what children want to do for their future. The knowledge and skills acquired from home is

what makes up the children in the community. This ideal recognises that parents have important roles to play in building morals and values for development of their children.

The primary schools are trying to instil the issue of parental involvement to the parents of young learners. They take their work home so that they can be helped by parents. It is not only the learners that benefit from parental involvement but also the parents benefit when they help the learners with their work. The schools in the urban areas subscribe to parenting and learning at home, the other schools in the township and rural areas are struggling to do this because of the contextual factors in the areas. These factors include high rates of HIV/AIDS, unemployment and poverty. Parents in these areas specify that they really cannot do much because of these challenges. Schools have an obligation to work with parents from Department of Education.

Kruger (1987) states that the parents are the primary educators in the child's life, the parents are responsible for the development and care of the child. When the learner goes to school that is where the parents take the educators on board so that they both work together as partners to develop the learner. Both parents and educators need to get into the driver's seat in terms of planning the curriculum and the educators leading the way as professional to work as partners in the formation of the curriculum as specified by the National Curriculum Statement (2002) and the SASA. Parents should not feel as strangers in the schools where their children are learning, the walls that keep parents away can now be removed.

Researchers like, Mashishi (1994) and Bhengu (2007) have highlighted the issues of parental involvement where parents were illiterate and have fears about coming to school. As I have mention before parental involvement in children's education is not a new issue most researchers concur that parents contribute significantly to pupils' performance (Rosenblatt & Peled, 2002). This being the reason to push the matter so that it can not only be the leadership style of the principal that will make people see why parents need to be involved in the children's education. Small (2003) states that educators who love to involve parents in children's school work promote learning and bring about growth in the learners. This is to say that when the school involves parents in the education children's performance will develop, both in academic work and character, which otherwise may not be achieved by the

school alone. On the other hand Whittaker (2003) suggests that poor attitudes and behaviours of teachers towards minority parents sometimes can negatively affect teachers' efforts to involve these parents thereby further contributing to the marginalisation of minority parents. For example, when educators demand more from parents that sometimes its difficult for parents to do, since not all parents are educated.

2.6 The theories that frame the study

2.6.1 The alternative schools reform model

Olivos' (2006) alternative school reform model challenges parents to be more responsive, inclusive and equitable. The model also provides the family and the community with powers to change the schools to be more responsive to the children. Also the theory specifies that parents have to play different roles in the schools, i.e. visibility assurance in learners' education. The model gives parents and communities powers to challenge the SMT to be more accountable with the work they are doing in schools. I found these two models (Olivos alternative schools reform model and Bronfenbrenner social ecological theories) relevant for the study of this nature which examines the schools and parents possibilities for collaboration in supporting the learners' pedagogical growth.

2.6.2 Social Ecological Theory

Bronfenbrenner (1986) ecological theory offers insights into the phenomenon of parental involvement and family-school relationships. From an ecological perspective, the most logical model of a family is a system. The school and family have a relationship to work with learners and try to instil parental values and morals to the learners. The centrality of social ecological theory is that learners' development is influenced by the ongoing qualities of the social settings in which the learners live in or part thereof. I used this theoretical framework because it regards family's influences as powerful in producing change in learners. Therefore ecological theory provides ways of conceptualising the interactions between learners and their parents on one hand and between educators (school) and parents (home) on the other. This theory also assumes that an exchange of skills, abilities and interests between parents, learners and educators encourages collaboration and communication. The other assumptions in the study is the knowledge construction where the parents are regarded as part of the development in the school and as such, are expected to ascertain as much knowledge as they can get.

Olivos (2006) agrees with Bronfenbrenner (1986) that the depth and quality of a family's social network is a predictor of a healthy family functioning. It brings out strong linkages between families and community organisations such as schools, open channels that allow vital information and resources to flow in both directions. Children in the societies depend on the families for proper guidance. These theories work well with the study because children look up to the society for guidance and education (McBride & Schostak, 1995).

I decided to use both Olivos, (2006) and Bronfenbrenner (1986) ecological theories because both speak to the family as being the solid foundation for children's education. Olivos refers to parents as having power over the schools where their children are learning and Bronfenbrenner refers to family as having great influence on children's education. During children's development process, they are required to meet specific demands and expectations from home, school, and community. The attitudes, values, skills, and competences that are expected at home, school and community shape children's development. Any differences in these expectations between home and school may contribute to low academic achievement of children, (Bowman & Stott, 1994). The ecological theory provides a sound theoretical explanation on the importance of the collaborative relationship between school and homes. The theory specifies that what is important at home should also be significant at schools.

Schools and homes need to preach the same gospel. That is where there will be communication between the parents and schools. Parental involvement helps learners deal with their school matters, i.e. learning at home, to ease the burden of school work, making decisions about which career path learners need to take, volunteering, i.e. taking initiative in the schools to help educators, where possible, and collaborating with communities, this is where the school makes it a point that the parents are part of curriculum planning because the parents come with the community values as part of the school curriculum. The ecological theory accounts for both processes and outcomes of development in the individual's environment. It also affirms that in the theory individuals are able to exchange skills, abilities and interests between the parents and children. It will be imperative for the children to assert what the parents like, in the case of this research it will be education.

Children cannot be understood outside the context of their families. Therefore, for schools to understand learners, they need to understand the community values. In this theory there

is an emphasis that there needs to be consistency in expectations for the learners between the school and their homes. This is to say what is stressed at school also needs to be stressed at home. Schools and homes should have similar expectations for the development of the learners. Between the schools and homes there needs to be some form of collaboration that encourages learners to do their best. Parents will take initiative and be part of the curriculum planning in the schools to be accountable for their work.

The ecological theory emphasises the significance of working collaboratively. An ecological perspective views human development from a person-in-environment context, emphasising the principle that all growth and development take place within the context of relationships. Children must be studied in the context of the family environment and the family must be understood within the context of its community and the larger society. In terms of child development, the goodness of it refers to the match between the developmental needs.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed what South African researchers and abroad have written about parental involvement in teaching and learning. Most research shows that when parents take initiative early in their children education, results are good. The next chapter is about research design and methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the description of the research design and methodology that was used to gather data from parents, principals, HODs and post level-one educators. The chapter also outlines the methods used to select participants; methods used to elicit data from the selected participants; methods used to analyse data, also to ensure trustworthiness of the findings, as well as limitations and ethical issues that were dealt with in the research process.

3.2 The research objectives

The study investigates parents' support in teaching and learning of their children in schools. Schools seem to have created an environment whereby parents do not feel welcomed to support teaching and learning, (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005; Bhengu 2007). Parents, on the other hand, are for the idea of supporting teaching and learning, however, they do not feel that they have the expertise and capacity to do so, (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). In order to obtain parents' perceptions about their involvement in school activities, an in-depth social research inquiry was conducted among three primary schools in the Pinetown District.

3.3 Research design and methodology

The study adopted a case study design which is located within the qualitative research approaches. This case study design consisted of three primary schools that were located in three different contexts, namely, urban, rural and township. The case study design was relevant for this research study because case studies are the most preferred approach within qualitative researches (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). Furthermore, case studies provide researchers with an opportunity to examine and present the descriptions of each phenomenon in detail within its context. The aim of the study is to understand what is real in its own uniqueness (Yin, 2003 & Patton, 1999). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) assert that an intrinsic case study is where the researcher wants to understand a certain case better. I decided to use a qualitative methodology as this study is located within the interpretative research paradigm. Qualitative methodology is a multi-perspective

approach utilising different qualitative techniques and data collection methods aimed at describing, making sense of, interpreting in interaction in terms of the meaning that the subject is attached to it, Devos (1994, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Interpretivist approaches work as a systematic analysis of social meaningful action through direct and detailed observation of people in a natural setting (Neuman, 1994). According to Denzin and Lincoln (1992) qualitative research can be defined as a multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter.

In order to obtain a balanced view about each case study, I generated data by interviewing different participants in each research site, and these were one principal, one HOD, one post-level educator and two parents who were randomly selected in the SGB meeting from each school. There were fifteen participants in total; five from each school. Parents that were not members of the School Governing Body were selected because they may not know the mandates of the policy in the White Paper 2 which regards parents as role players in education. The inclusion of school principals in the study was based on the fact that they were the heads of their respective institutions. Furthermore, their leadership styles were assumed to be crucial in facilitating or frustrating the participation of different stakeholders in the schools. One could reasonably argue that all evidence-gathering techniques fall into one of the following three categories, listening to informants, observing behaviour (Hasley & Lauder, 1997).

3.3.1 Methodology

Methodology refers to a theory and analysis of how research should be, (Harding, 1987). The methodology provides reasons for using techniques or methods in relation to the kind of knowledge or understanding that the researcher is seeking. In this research I wanted to gain insight into the extent of parental involvement in teaching and learning activities. If they do not participate but shy away instead, the study sought to find out why they do what they do.

I have mentioned in the previous sections that the study is located in the qualitative research methodology. Qualitative methodology is relevant for this study because it recognises and affirms that the researcher is part of the reality she or he is inquiring about. Therefore, it allows the researcher to interact with and understand subjective lived-world naturalistically, without having to control, manipulate and disturb it (Kvale,

1983). Qualitative research methodology was also preferred because it allows for the use of several research tools such as interviews, observations and records (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). Interpretivist perspective of a case study method strives towards a holistic understanding of how participants relate and interact with each other (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Bell, 1987; Cohen & Manion, 1994; Key, 1997). The case study methods are strong as they have the ability to study a situation within its context and become means to an end for qualitative research. Furthermore, interpretive research paradigm was preferred because it allows the researcher to interact closely with the participants to gain insights and form clear understandings of events and experiences (Nieuwenhuis, cited in Maree, 2007).

According to van Rensburg in Henning (2004) in interpretivist paradigm there is no generalising but the generating of the meaning is the key. The positivist paradigm is complemented in the interpretivist paradigm since it reveals what I realised in the interpretivist paradigm that social realm are not the same as the natural sciences and therefore can be researched differently. In the three schools the meaning was generated through semi-structured interviews, document analysis and observations of the SGB's meetings and parents' evenings. I was more interested in the deeper understanding of what parents and schools understand about parental involvement in teaching and learning. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000; 2007) assert that the strength of the interpretive paradigm lies in the fact that it provides the voices of the participants in their own voices and it is directly associated with qualitative research methodology. It was appropriate to use qualitative research methodology as this is an interpretive research paradigm.

3.3.2 Selection of participants and sites

3.3.2.1 Participants

The participating schools were selected from three different contexts, from rural, township and urban schools. The reason for that was, I wanted to obtain a comprehensive picture from the three contexts regarding parental involvement in activities that are meant to support teaching and learning. I visited the schools to introduce the study and myself to the participants. These participants were principals of primary schools, Head of Departments (HODs), post level one educators and two parents

who were not members of the SGB. Participants were chosen according to the roles they play in the schools.

3.3.2.2 Tables

The following schematic representation illustrates the composition of the various participants and their gender after purposeful sampling was made.

Schools	A	B	C	Totals
Principals	1 Female	1 Female	1 Male	3
HODs	1 Female	1 Female	1 Male	3
Post level ones educators	1 Female	1 Female	1 Female	3
Parents	2 Females	1 Male and 1 Female	2 Males	6
Total	5	5	5	15

3.4 Sampling of schools for this research

A combination of purposive and convenient selection method was used in the study since it sought information-rich cases which can be studied in-depth (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). When using the purposive selection the researcher handpicks the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of typicality (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The study was not funded, therefore, for each category of schools sought; I had to select those schools that were of a reasonable distance from my place of work. Random sampling was not relevant for this study as it is based on the principle of equal opportunity of being selected to the sample. Kerlinger (1986) explains purposive sampling as another type of non-probability sampling, which is characterised by the use of judgment and a deliberate effort to obtain a representative samples by including typical areas or groups in the sample.

The three cases study sites were selected because of their differences in contexts, one in

rural area, and the other in the township area and the last one being in the urban area. Only the reachable parents that were in the School Governing Body (SGB) meeting were selected for the interviews. I selected one educator that represented educators in the SGB in each site because they know about the mandates of White Paper 2 that refers parents as role players in education. The HODs were selected because they invite parents to schools to check on learners' work.

3.5 Methods of data collection

For the data elicitation I used semi-structured interviews, participant observations and document analysis. In qualitative research there are mainly different kinds of interviews, the semi-structured interviews, open-ended interviews and structured-interviews (Key 1997). I decide to use semi-structured interviews because they are flexible, and allow participants time and scope to voice their opinions, and the researcher to follow-up and probe (Powney & Watts, 1987; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007. Hughes, (1995) commends this method for its ability to provide much more scope for discussions.

3.5.1 The pilot phase

This study had two phases one being the pilot phase and the other one being the main data production phase. It is significant to have the pilot phase because it helped me to go back to adjust and fine tune my interviews. On the 02 February 2009 I did the pilot interviews among my six colleagues. For the pilot interviews I only spoke to two parents that were serving in the SGB as I needed to pilot the parents' interviews too. I was not nervous because I was talking to people I interact with everyday. The challenge during the pilot interviews seemed that my research questions were not properly structured. I kept on explaining the research questions to the participants. They lasted for about five hours for the six colleagues. The two parents were interviewed after the parents' meeting that took place on the 23 July.

3.5.2 Semi-structured interviews

I used the semi-structured interviews because the method seemed most appropriate for the study due its flexibility and it allows participants to express themselves freely. Behr (1988) cited in Klein (1997) states that semi-structured interviews allow flexibility in answering questions and they allow more in-depth discussions since I probed to clarify the responses.

I used the semi-structured interviews as the main method to collect data. The semi-structured interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis. To strengthen the data I complemented the semi-structured interviews with the unstructured observations of the SGB meetings, parents' nights and document analysis found in the three sites. I used the semi-structured interviews because the method seemed most appropriate for the study due its flexibility and the fact that it allows participants to express themselves freely. There was a participant who was unable to speak English so I interviewed her in IsiZulu and later I transcribed data to English.

3.5.3 Participants observations

I mentioned elsewhere in this document that I serve as a member of the SGB teacher component in my school. In a way I am an insider when it comes to SGB related matters. In this study I adopted a non- participant observer mode in order to be able to see parents and educators perspectives in their involvement in the parent's evenings and School Governing Body meetings in respect of parental involvement. According to Key 1997; Henning 2004; Maree 2006 and Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007) a non-participant observer stands aloof from the group activities he is investigating. Participant observations were conducted after semi-structured interviews sessions had been completed. That was to ensure that rapport between the researcher and the researched had been established, and therefore, participants would feel at ease with my presence in their meeting. I did the observations on the fifth visit to the sites. I was observing School Governing Body (SGB) meetings and parents' evenings for the purpose of understanding the parents' behaviour and interactions in these meetings. Maree (2007) asserts that observation becomes essential in data collection because it provides inside perspective of the group' dynamics and behaviours in different settings.

In this study I became a non-participant observer because I wanted to see the parents and educators perspectives in their involvement in the parent's evenings and School Governing Body meetings in respect of parental involvement. According to (Henning, 2004; Maree, 2006 and Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007) a non-participant observer stands aloof from the group activities he is investigating. I did the observations after the interviews because I wanted the participants to feel at ease in my presence and to be used to me being in the sites. I did the observations on the fifth visit to the sites. I was observing School Governing Body (SGB) meetings and parents' nights for the purpose of understanding the parents'

behaviour and interactions in these meetings. Maree (2007) asserts that observation becomes essential in data collection because it provides inside perspective of the group' dynamics and behaviours in different settings.

3.5.4 Document Analysis

Document analysis was one of the other methods of generating qualitative data used in this study. I did not want to rely only to the semi-structured interviews and observations so I decided to use document analysis in order to know if these documents were used in the schools. Nieuwenhuis (1979) in Maree (2007) asserts that document analysis is a data source that overlaps with the other methods. The documents I found in all the schools were the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) document, the training manuals and Public Financial Management Act (PMFA) the training manuals and that speak to the responsibilities of all the stakeholders in the schools. PAM document, PMFA, school policy documents and Training Manuals on managing relationships were used in the schools. Are the parents accessing the documents and know how to use them? Do they know what is in the documents? These are some of the questions that guided me in terms of what is contained in the documents. I also used minutes of the SGB meetings to elicit parental involvement in curricular, extra curricular and co-curricular activities. I also used NCS and a PAM document as sources of information that was valuable to qualitative researchers in analysing the documents.

3.6 Recording the data

It is important that information that obtained during the research process is recorded and that it is recorded accurately. For the three methods of qualitative data generation, that data had to be recorded. The description of how data generated through different methods is presented below.

(a) Semi-structured interviews

Before interview sessions started I asked for each participant's permission to use the tape-recorder and the cell phone to record our discussions. I explained that recording the discussions was only meant to ensure accuracy of the content of our discussions, and that it was not for any other purpose. All interviews were tape-recorded using the cell-phone and a battery-charged tape recorder as a back-up. I also took notes whilst interviews were in progress. Recording the interviews was easy because I was able to focus on the

discussions. Terre-Blanche and Durrheim (2002) highlight that tape recorders are useful in allowing researchers to focus on the discussion and also keep the records of the interviews without any destruction. Using the tape-recorder helped me to focus on how the participants engaged with the affairs of the school.

(b) Participants observation

I recorded observations in a research journal I could not record the behaviours of participants at the same time listening to the interviews. I focused on understanding deeper knowledge on how parents understand their involvement in schools. The principals of School-A and School-B were fine with the idea of me recording the observations as long as they were going to know the things I have observed but the principal in School-C wanted me to be accompanied by one of the post-level one educator to explain to me some of the important things I would ask whilst moving around the premises of the school. As in School-A and School-B I moved around the schools' premises seeing some of the things I missed when coming to the schools. Observations were for me to understand how parents interacted with educators in the SGB meetings and parents' evenings. There were still some reservations on the parents' side. They still believed that educators knew more than they do.

(c) Document Analysis

Document analysis was one of the other methods of collecting data I used in this study. I did not want to rely only on semi-structured interviews and observations so I decided to use document analysis in order to know if these documents, PAM document, PMFA, school policy documents and Training Manuals on managing relationships were used in the schools.

3.7 Data analysis

The analysis of qualitative data within the interpretivist paradigm involves the construction of ideas and theories about what is being studied. Dey (1993 cited in Henning 2005) defines this process as where the researcher identifies substantive connections by linking the data. The connection and correlation of data may be studied and this will help build a certain clear picture. The data will help the researcher to shape his or her thinking in terms of what has been perceived. When I analysed data, I listened to the transcripts more than five times because I wanted to be sure of what the participants said. After reading it several times, I highlighted groups of words and organised them into codes of meaning. Similar codes were linked with the others to form categories and themes. Terre-Blanche & Durrheim (2002)

refers to the chunks of data organised to themes as the bottom-up approach where the researcher looks at the organised principles as the ones that naturally organise the material. I looked for differences and similarities in each research site. That enabled me to identify similarities and differences within each case study site. I also did the same thing across the three case study sites, and that enabled me to identify similarities and differences in what participants were saying across the three case study sites. Where I did not understand what was emerging as findings, I checked with each participant if my interpretation was accurate. This is a process that is called member-checking. The entire analysis process took about two months, moving forward and backwards trying to understand what was coming through.

3.8 Ensuring trustworthiness

Guba and Lincoln (1985) present four criteria, namely credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. I used this model especially because it seems to be more inclusive of other methods mentioned by other authors. Researchers who do case studies have obligations to make their studies trustworthy and credible. In Guba and Lincoln (1985) model there is an emphasis on using these criteria credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. Yin (2004) emphasises that it is significant that the researcher ensures trustworthiness in a study. One of the ways of ensuring trustworthiness of the findings is to use multiple data sources. In this study multiple data sources refer to different participants that provided information that assisted in answering the research questions. These data sources were parents, educators, HODs as well as principals. In fact there are too many ways of ensuring trustworthiness of the findings. Different writers use or emphasise different methods to ensure that the findings of the study enjoys credibility among research community.

To ensure credibility in this study I went back to the sites with the transcripts to confirm what I have written with participants. Observing ethical conduct is one of the ways which I believe enhances credibility and dependability of the study. For example, I gave participants guarantees that what they told me in the interviews would remain within us. In that way they talked freely without any fear of victimisation (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). To ensure trustworthiness I used different participants to explore the extent to which parents are indeed able and are providing support to learners. I ensured that I interviewed educators, principals, HODs and parents to provide a balanced picture about what was happening in the

participating schools. Secondly, credibility was ensured through using both different data gathering methods and different data sources (Oka & Shaw, 2000). In this study I used multiple methods, namely, interviews, participant observations and documentary analysis. The documents I used were the minutes of the School Governing Body meetings, the Personnel Administrative Measures, Public Financial Management Act and the National Curriculum Statement.

I did member-checking to confirm the data. This was done by asking each participant about the issues of parental involvement whether what I have been told is what they understand happening in the school and that corroborated data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to credibility as the ability the researcher uses to produce findings that are convincing and believable. For example, Mertens and McLaughlin (2004) assert that trustworthiness can be ensured by using member-checking technique to ascertain whether the participants agree with the recorded version of the interviews. I also used triangulation of methods e.g. semi-structured interviews, participants' observation and document analysis.

Durrheim and Wassenaar (2002) cited in Yin (2004) assert that dependability refers to the degree to which the reader can be convinced that findings did indeed occur as I mentioned. As expected in the case study that utilises interpretive paradigm, the participants express different opinions and behave differently in changing contexts. I saw this when I did member checking for all the participants. Also I did triangulation of data from all the participants to check whether I will get the similar responses, (Henning, 2004; Maree, 2007). Dependability of the findings was ensured by the use of an "inquiry audit," in which reviewers examine both the process and the product of the research for consistency (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, p. 317). The qualitative semi-structured interviews were used as the primary strategy for data generation in conjunction with observation and document analysis.

Transferability is a way of producing detailed and rich descriptions of the contexts (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). Transferability in naturalistic paradigm depends on the degree of similarity between the original situation and the situation to which it is transferred. Lincoln and Guba (1985) states that transferability of a working hypothesis to other situations only depends on the degree of similarity between the original situation and the other situation to which it is transferred as researchers cannot specify the transferability

findings so I provided as much information on parental involvement in teaching and learning.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) states that transferability of a working hypothesis to other situations only depends on the degree of similarity between the original situation and the other situation to which it is transferred as researchers cannot specify the transferability findings so I provided as much information on parental involvement in teaching and learning.

3.9 Ethical issues

Ethical issues are very significant when conducting research. It is important that participants voluntarily agree to participate in the research. I gave them consent that the study will not be of any harm or maybe they can benefit from the study. This means that before doing the research the participants and everyone involved need to be fully informed about what will happen. Kvale (1996) in Henning (2005) asserts that participants or informants need to give their consent and be fully informed about the research before they participate.

The schools gave me letters that confirmed that I can do research. I also clearly explained to the participants that if they feel they cannot go on with the interview, they can withdraw at any time. I also explained to the participants that I will be using the tape-recorder to record the conversations and they could tell me if they were comfortable or not. They had to retain the rights to object to the usage of tape-recorder nonetheless, and I observed their rights. In research it is important that the researched is protected against any form of harm (Henning, 2004; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007), and one way of protecting participants against harm is to guarantee anonymity. I made sure that the names of the participants and their schools' names were kept anonymous so that no one could identify them when reading the research report.

To ensure that all ethical issues were observed, I applied for ethical clearances from the University's Faculty Research Office then thereafter I applied for the permission to conduct the study from the Department of Education, Pinetown District. I then went to the three schools where I was going to do the research and I also asked for their permissions from the school principals and SGB. I also went to the schools to ask the participants to participate in

the study. When they agreed I then gave them letters of consent to read and sign. I explained to them that the interviews would be face-to-face and that their names and those of the schools would never be disclosed to anywhere in the report. After that discussion I then asked them to sign the consent forms.

Cohen and Manion (2007) address the principle that states that no harm of any kind should happen to the participants. The researcher will have to take full responsibility to prevent or minimise harm or injury that can happen to those involved in the study. There were so many gate-keepers that I had to go through. Firstly I had to ask for the permission from the Department of Education in Pinetown District to conduct the research in the three schools. I tried to protect participants from danger especially whilst I was doing interviews. I also explained to them that there were no financial gains from doing the study.

3.10 Coding of schools and participants

In research it is important that identities of the researched are protected. One way of hiding the identities of participants is to use pseudonyms. The normal practice is to code for names of institutions and participants. The codes that I used are explained below.

3.10.1 The schools

The schools and various participants were coded to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

School in Rural Area was coded as School-A

School in the Township area was coded as School-B

School in the Urban area was coded as School-C

3.10.2 Participants

3.10.2.1 Principals

Principal in School-A was coded as Principal-A

Principal in School-B was coded as Principal-B

Principal in School-C was coded as Principal-C

3.10.2.2 Heads of Departments

HOD in School-A was coded as HOD-A

HOD in School-B was coded as HOD-B

HOD in School-C was coded as HOD-C

3.10.2.3 Post level one educators

Post level one educator in School-A was coded as PL-A

Post level one educator in School-B was coded as PL-B

Post level one educator in School-C was coded as PL-C

3.10.2.4 Parents

The first parent in School-A was coded as Par-A-1

The second parent in School-A was coded as ParA-2

The first parent in School-B was coded as Par-B-1

The second parent in School-B was coded as Par-B-2

The first parent in School-C was coded as Par-C-1

The second parent in School-C was coded as Par-C-2

3.11 Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the research design, methodology and other elements of the research process such as the description of data recording, analysis, trustworthiness issues and ethical considerations that were observed during the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

EMERGING STORIES FROM THE FIELD

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data that was produced through semi-structured interviews, observations, as well as document analysis. The data was produced from the three case study sites which were drawn from three different contexts. **School-A** is located in a rural area, **School-B** in a township and **School-C** in an urban area. The data presentation consists of two sections; the first part is about profiles of the case study school and the second focuses on the themes that emerged when analysing the data on parental involvement in supporting teaching and learning in the school studied.

4.2 The profiles of three sites

4.2.1 School-A

School-A is about 15 kilometres away from Pinetown Central Business District (CBD) and it is classified as a 'No-fees-School'. 'No-fee-schools' are determined by the National Government by looking at schools' socio-economic backgrounds. The school is located in a rural community under the traditional leadership as defined in the KwaZulu-Natal Traditional Leadership and Governance Act (No. 5 of 2005), and thus is under the authority of Inkosi (Chief). Like many rural communities in KwaZulu-Natal, the area lacks many aspects of basic infrastructural needs such as clean piped water and electricity. It is in a disadvantaged community and is under-resourced in terms of facilities. As might be expected, there is no electricity in school but it has clean-piped water supply. It was reported that the principal and the School Governing Body (SGB) played a leading role in the provision of this clean-piped water project. Commenting on her role in bringing about infrastructural development in the school the principal had this to say:

I was promoted in this staff as a principal and I know that if you do not do things in this community, nothing will ever happen, it took our old principal and the SGB four years talking to the community to build that block (she pointed at a building near her office) where the kitchen was to be built, that is why I advised the SGB to talk to the Municipality to get us clean-running water [Principal-A].

The school's three buildings are not inviting at all; they are in a state of disrepair. The classrooms walls have old cracked paint. The first two buildings have five classrooms each and the third small mud building is the kitchen that was allegedly built by the parents about ten years ago. The walls are still un-plastered and they show that it has been years since they were erected. This was up to the time when the principal and the SGB applied for the additional classrooms that were built by the Department of Education in 2007. The conditions of the school buildings negatively affected teaching and learning because they do not look conducive enough for a school to function productively.

The classrooms' furniture looks very old. Some of the desks had another schools' name engraved on them. It is alleged that school has a shortage of resources. Three learners shared one desk at a time during lessons. When I was there, it appeared as if there was no life in the school. In the kitchen there were few nicely-packed plastic dishes and cups that learners used for feeding. In the principal's office there were two tables. One table is where we were sitting during the interviews and the other smaller one had a pile of books on top. Some of the books looked very old and yellowish.

The school had an enrolment of 450 learners and a staff complement of 12 educators of which 10 were post-level one educators, one female principal, one male deputy principal who is displaced to another school and one HOD. The deputy principal is displaced to another school due to Post Provisioning Norm provisions which disqualify the school from having a deputy principal post. Out of the 12 post-level one educators 10 were females and two were males. Among the post-level-one educators, there were 3 Grade leaders. Grade leaders are post-level-one educators who assist HODs in terms of managing educators' files since the school qualified for 2 HODs but had only one.

The old ground's man cleaned the yard using large leaves and the yard was neat. He also cleaned the classrooms in the afternoon. There were 10 classrooms and 10 post-level one educators, that meant every educators was allocated to one classroom each. The principal and the HOD shared an office. The school apparently had a floor space problem because the HOD did not have an office; furthermore, there was a need for an Administration Block. In terms of Post Provisioning Norms (PPN), the school qualified for 2 HOD posts but had only one and it was reported that such a situation made it difficult for the principal and the HOD to distribute workloads equally. That was why they came up with the 'Grade leader'

solution. Grade leaders are experienced (post-level one educators with more than 10 years of teaching service) who help the HOD to supervise and monitor educators' work.

The community was facing huge socio-economic challenges which have a direct impact on the school operations and learner achievements. Unemployment, poverty, hunger, illnesses and illiteracy are among the main ones. It was also reported that some of the learners came to school hungry and that those who received government-grants and those that lived with their grandparents were very keen to come to school. The principal stated that she realised that the community was poverty-stricken and because of that she had recommended that the School Governing Body (SGB) had to apply for the feeding scheme, which they did. Learners benefited from the establishment of the feeding scheme in the school. In addition to poverty, members of the community complained about the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS pandemic in the area. They cited HIV/AIDS pandemic in the area as the main cause of high learner absenteeism in the school. It was suspected that the pandemic is the main contributory factor to the sickness problem.

The pass rate has been fluctuating and this was alleged to be due to the fact that some learners were very sick in this community. The school was operating under difficult conditions particularly during cold and rainy days as both the learners and educators had to cross the river to come to school. Although there were taxis that took educators to and from school, such a service used to be disrupted during heavy rains because the taxis could not cross rivers to the school in the absence of a bridge. The principal said that the situation was so dire that during heavy rains both educators and learners were unable to come to school at all as the river became flooded.

The socio-economic challenges around the school also have negative impact on the schools' operational ability as parents were usually not able to pay school fees. This would assist the school to alleviate its own financial situation and improve curriculum delivery. Although this school was declared a 'No Fees-School' by the Department of Education at national level, parents who received government grants still felt financially pressured in meeting other schools' demands like the uniform and other essential items such as stationery and other school necessities. The following extract from an interview with a parent illustrates this point:

My daughters' two children go to the school sometimes hungry because I don't have enough money to support them, I am an old woman I do not have money for school needs and taxi fare to take me to school. We get help from my neighbours. When the principal calls the parents' meeting, I do not attend because my knees cannot carry me through that mountain (pointing to the mountain across the valley) [Parent-2-A].

It was reported that most of the parents in the school were grandmothers of the children who attended the school and also that biological parents of children in the school were living in towns and cities where they worked. Having learners under the care of grandmothers was mentioned by many participants as not assisting the learners develop pedagogically. The HOD had this to say:

Sometimes learners come to school having not done their homework and when you ask them why they will tell you that the grandmother was unable to help because she could not understand the requirements of the school work. And when you follow up about the parents' where-about, the learner will tell you that the parents live in town where they are working [HOD-A].

Learners come to school hungry. A post level-one educator said that this is because some learners stay with their grandparents who are unemployed and who rely only on their pension money to support and educate their grandchildren. The HOD had this to say about these learners:

As an educator sometimes you are faced with challenges of learners who will come to school in dirty uniforms and when you ask them about that you will also find out that the whole family slept without anything to eat and you can see that the learner is hungry so it becomes very difficult to teach in such situations. I wish there was something the Department could do [HOD-B].

The community is marginalised by poverty and the school lacks teaching and learning resources. Beside running water there is nothing else that characterises the community as

progressive. The lack of infrastructure in the school influences the smooth running of the teaching and learning.

It was reported that the pass rate in the school fluctuated because learners in the community were very sick. They used to be absent from school most of the time. The community complains about the HIV/AIDS pandemic as the main cause of learner absenteeism. This statement was emphasised by the HOD who said that:

As educators we want to work with parents but we cannot force matters, some of the parents here are very sick and the community is stricken by poverty. Learners sometimes declare that they go to bed without food so how can we push the issue of parental involvement and communication to such people. We need to be patient with them [HOD-A].

The principal also mentioned that the parents' inadequacies to contribute to the curriculum was due to illiteracy but (Davies, 1988; Mashishi, 1994; Mncube, 2009) state that communities need not be literate to contribute in the curriculum planning. This can be done in terms of what the parents think is significant for the learners to learn. The communities know what is important for learners to learn. The schools and communities get along fine because schools respect the values and morals of the community. The principal further explained that parents were not in a position to make effective contributions to supporting curriculum activities due to problems related to illiteracy among them.

4.2.2 School-B

The school is about 10 kilometres from Pinetown Central Business District (CBD), and is located in a township. As it may be expected in the township schools, the road is tarred and it is easy to access in all weather conditions. The school looks new and it is surrounded by the informal settlements which are as a result of influx of different people who come from different parts of the country. The HOD had this to say about the learners in the school:

Sometimes it is difficult to see to it that all the learners in the classroom have done

their work satisfactory because we have about 70 learners in each class and that is too much, some of these learners are sick, some come to school hungry and they are under tremendous stress. Some learners we teach are very ill-disciplined in class maybe because they come from informal settlement nearer this school [HOD-B].

The school was declared by the national government as a Section-21 school. Schools classified as Section-21 are given their own budget to manage themselves. The national department deposits the school's money into its account for the school to use according to its requirements. This allocation is a certain amount of money to be used in one calendar-year but financial records had to be kept for accountability purposes. Monies allocated to the school were based on its socio-economic situation. School-B is in a disadvantaged community and it was alleged that parents could not afford to pay school fees, and because of that the school survived on monies from the national government. The few parents who were able to pay school-fees, that money was used to supplement funds from the national government. This was confirmed by the HOD who said:

This community is very challenged by poverty, some parents are unemployed. They survive on Government-grants. It is even difficult for those who use public transport to get parents to attend meetings. They do not pay school fees. It used to be a hassle before we qualified to be in Section-21. When they are called for meetings they come up with all sorts of excuses [HOD-B].

The school had electricity and clean-piped water. There were three parallel blocks of 5 classrooms in each. In addition to the classrooms there was another detached (prefab) building where Grade R learners were taught. The school buildings were attractive and there was a beautiful garden next to the administration building and it maintained daily. The administration block was another building standing on its own with high-tech alarm system. The outside the school looked clean and classrooms looked new. Whilst talking to the principal next to her office I could see the kitchen door open and the fully fitted kitchen with a refrigerator and a microwave oven. In the principal's office there was a telephone and a fax-machine. The HOD was busy in the photo-copier machine making copies of what looks like learners' work.

The school had an enrolment of 900 learners. There were 22 post level-one educators

consisting of 13 female and 9 male educators. There were 4 female HODs, 2 male deputy principals and a female principal. The classrooms were over-crowded and educators felt that a situation made it difficult for them to teach properly. Educators and learners were in the classrooms, teaching and learning seemed to be going on smoothly. I was told by the principal that the school was under-resourced and that it needed a library, a resource centre and a laboratory. The HOD had this to say about the lack of resources in the school:

We need a library in the school; we seem to be struggling on teaching our learners because the school does not have enough books. We need to wait for each year's money- allocation, maybe up to the second or third month. In the mean time there are other things to care of. The learners are really struggling [HOD-B].

The principal claimed that the school played a significant role in mitigating poverty in that community. She stated that in that township people faced huge socio-economic challenges such as crime, hunger, poverty, HIV/AIDS, and unemployment. Many learners in the school received government-grant and some lived with their grandmothers because their parents were reported to have been lost to HIV/AIDS. The principal said that some learners came from child-headed homes and that is where the school had to play a bigger role in seeing to it that these learners received their necessities. There was a feeding scheme in the school and the educators stated that it attracted learners to school. This was confirmed by the principal when she said the following:

Our learners come from the informal settlement. We deal with so many problems like crime, rape, poverty, unemployment and worse of all learner-absenteeism. A day cannot go by without hearing learners swearing, learners stealing.....I suspect that they pick this up from the informal settlement where they stay [Principal-B].

In the school there were about 10 destitute learners. Destitute learners are those learners that are orphaned and who sometimes had no homes. These learners lived in the township hall nearer the school under the guidance of the care-givers in the area. There were 2 churches in the Pinetown CBD that donated clothing, bread and soup for these learners. The principal liaised with the churches to collect these items for the learners especially bread and soup every morning before coming to school. The principal did that so that the learners could be fed with bread and soup before going to the classrooms. It was alleged that the

food played a big role in minimising absenteeism. Post level-one educator had this to say about the project in the school:

This is a very poor community. Learners would be absent from school and when asked why, they would say that they did not have food to eat the day before so the school have just started a project where we ask for food donations from the churches, this is helping [PL-B].

I said earlier that the school was situated next to an informal settlement, and there used to be a loud music playing during school hours. This was causing a distraction from effective teaching and learning. The principal highlighted that crime in the area contributed tremendously in discouraging parents from attending school activities that were usually held in the afternoons and evenings. The only available time is on weekends where parents are at home. The Principal commended those parents who were able to help in the affairs of the school. The principal is very annoyed by the crime and loud music, she even said the following:

The young parents who live in this community seem not to care much about educating their children. They do not support their learners who are at school but at the same time they complain about unemployment [Principal-B].

It was reported that most of the parents in the school were also grand-mothers of which most of them were illiterate. Some of the parents were young girls who were single parents. The level of education of these young parents made it possible to contribute to the curriculum planning in the school. However, it was reported that many of them were not available when needed to assist. It was reported that their contribution was hampered by curriculum changes which made it difficult for them to cope.

4.2.3 School-C

The school was located in an urban area, in the Pinetown Central Business District. School-C was categorised as the former Model-C which was reserved for Whites only during the apartheid government. It is not surprising that electricity and piped clean-running water were readily available, and so was an abundance of teaching and learning materials. The school was in an advantaged community and richly resourced. It had a library, a resource

centre, a uniform shop as well as a tuck-shop. It had an enrolment of 1200 learners and staff complement of 51 post level-one educators. There were 40 state paid educators and 11 SGB paid educators. Among the 11 SGB paid educators there were 2 two HODs who were also paid by the SGB. Amongst the 51 educators, 45 were White, (35 females and 10 males), 5 were Indian females, and 1 was a Black female.

South African Schools Act (SASA) reclassified these schools as public schools and allowed all race groups to be admitted. However, these schools continue to be inaccessible to many parents, particularly the poor and unemployed. It was only the children whose parents were well off that were admitted in these schools. The principal had this to say about the learners:

The school caters for all races and that is a big challenge because that means all these learners needs to be catered for in terms of their languages. We are much challenged but we are coping since the SGB agreed that we have English as an instructional language and Afrikaans, IsiZulu and IsiXhosa as the second languages. The big challenge in this issue is the grandmothers who cannot read and write [Principal-C].

School-C was huge compared to School-B and School-A respectively. The school had 4 double-story buildings on the premises. Whilst approaching the gate, there was a big advertisement board welcoming visitors to the school with arrows indicating where the administration block and classrooms were. There were different companies' advertising boards around the school; this is how the parents and community leaders support the school. This is seen with the number of billboards sponsoring the school's sports. The school had an electric fence, an alarm system and a guard who managed the gate for visitors. This guard used an inter-corm to inform the principal that I was coming to see him. Though the buildings looked old but they were well maintained. The school had a well equipped laboratory and a library. This was clearly visible as I approached the corridor leading to the principals' office. The school had a tuck shop where learners and some educators bought some snacks during break time. The principal said that learners were not allowed to go out of the school premises during breaks, so they utilised the tuck shop to buy small items. As I walked past the SMT offices, I could see they were all fully furnished and air-conditioned. This is what the principal had to say about the resources in the school:

Yes we have facilities in the school though the resources we have are inaccessible to parents, I mean things like the library, the resources centre, science laboratory, they are used by learners and there are rules and regulations on how to use them. I believe we are fortunate enough to have a library, a laboratory, sporting facilities and SGB paid coaches and we make it a point that learners benefit from these resources [Principal-C].

The classrooms were located further from the administration block. The school was doing very well in terms of teaching and learning. They have a library, a Life Science laboratory a science laboratory, hockey sports-field and they just received a netball court from one of the sponsors. The pathways were quiet, with all learners in their classrooms and those doing extra-curricular activities were in their respective places, such as in the swimming pool area. According to the minutes read at the SGB meeting, the school was financially secure. The principal commended the SGB and Finance Committee on the work well done in respect of finances. A parent had this to say about the school's financial standing:

Yes, parents play a significant role in the school's finances. I am a member of the Fundraising Committee and we work very hard to see our children reach their dreams. The programme reaches almost all the needy children in the school but we feel it is still not enough. The principal is a good man. He sees to it that we take part in the education of our children. Sometimes we as parents make decisions and the school functions smoothly [Parent-C-1].

The SMT believes in parents taking initiative in the schools because in all the activities that take place in the school parents were involved. Such activities included sports and educator-parent sessions, parents' evenings and learners' excursions. The parents took part in fundraising functions. The principal claimed that the parents' attendance was usually about 89%. The parents agreed in the meetings that those parents who seemed to be struggling with their children's work needed to come early for the meeting so that relevant educators could provide assistance. Parents with fundraising expertise were willing to share their skills with educators and visa-versa. The sports fields were located near the school, with high fence and secure. The school had SGB paid coaches for rugby, swimming and hockey.

The resources for the learners were enormous and this is emphasised by the Principal who said:

We are trying our utmost best to do what is best for the learners, the educators give more than expected and the resources are there for the learners to utilise. It is not like we do everything but it is the responsibility of the learners to see all the resources and make them useful. They have our support and also their parents' support [Principal-A].

School-C was in an urban area and seemed to be doing very well in terms of teaching and learning resources. There were different socio-economic challenges as compared to the other two schools. There were also learners who were raised by grand-mothers who happened to be illiterate. Also this community was faced with high prevalence of HIV/AIDS pandemic. The other worrying issue among parents was unemployment factor among the parents. The financial support that the school received from nearby companies helped in purchasing teaching and learning resources. The school was highly appreciative of the parental involvement because the photographs of the parents who participate in various school activities were displayed on the notice-board next to the principal's office for every one to see.

4.3 Themes that emerged from the data collected

4.3.1 Schools confuse the policy on parental involvement in teaching and learning

As per requirement of the NCS, Education White Paper 2, (1996) and the South African Schools Act, parents have an obligation to support teaching and learning in schools. School and parents need to promote partnerships between them. On the other hand, schools confuse the policy on parental involvement and support on teaching and learning as a place where learners need to be disciplined when misbehaving. Schools only see an urge for parents' support only when there are problems with disciplining learners who misbehave. They also see the need for parental support when there are financial challenges in the schools or when there are school related work. This was confirmed by a post level-one educator in School-B who said:

I ask parents to come to school especially when the learner is struggling with his/her school work to sort out work schedules but normally I do not get response but if I do, the parent will lament about how the child misbehaves at home that leads to him/her not doing school their work properly. That is when parents suggest that the school needs to discipline learners [PL-B].

The legislation mandated stakeholders (parents and educators) to take full responsibilities of their schools. These stakeholders were mandated to create an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. They also have to promote the best interests of school and ensuring quality education for learners. Some of these issues are still a problem in some schools. In rural areas parents are still reluctant to support teaching and learning. Learners do not receive support in their school work therefore see no reason to go to school. Parents still feel that educators are experts in the teaching and learning field, and therefore that as parents, they need to leave school work to the experts (that is, educators). Mashishi (1994), Mncube (2009) and Macleod (1989) all echo that when parents shy away from schools, learners will perform badly. Schools that undertake to support a strong comprehensive parent involvement effort are more likely to produce students who perform better than identical schools. The educators cite parents who do not participate as those with low educational levels. However, in former Model-C schools support in teaching and learning is said to be relatively much higher compared to their counterparts in the former Black school. This is as a result of parents' level of education. A parent in School-A had this to say about supporting learners in their education:

I like to attend the meetings when the principal calls us but there are things I sometimes do not understand that are written down since I cannot read and write. Sometimes, I cannot always ask questions because that takes up too-much time and sometimes I feel embarrassed. It is easy when I am with my eldest daughter because she is educated [Parent-A1].

The educator in School-C has this to say about the support of parents in teaching and learners:

The principal and the SGB make it a point that the parents are part of the teaching and learning in the school. They are invited for the curriculum planning though as a

school we have our planning but their inputs is seen to have significance in the learners' work [PL-C].

Some parents know the policy that they are legislated to have a direct involvement in supporting teaching and learning as this will somehow eliminate challenges like ill-discipline in education. The South African Schools Act provided formal power in education to parents as well as communities. Hall and Engelbrecht (1999) made it clear that the introduction of Outcome Based Education in schools was paving a way for parents to play a great role in their children's education. In some schools the policy on parental involvement takes place in the school only because it is supported by the principal. The policies are used to bench mark schools' performance irrespective of whether principals like these policies or not. Schools have an obligation to implement all policies not because it is a policy that favours them or not. A post level-one educator had this to say about involving parents in the school:

As a school in the rural area we know that parents fear to come to school so we try harder to be inviting, inviting them for tea during the afternoon, to let them feel at ease by inviting them in meetings, assist them with learners' homework, sometimes give them feedback on how learners do at school and just to see how much interest they have [PL-B].

4.3.2 Parents and educators have different ideologies about parental involvement in teaching and learning

The South African Schools Act , the National Curriculum Statement and the South African Constitution clearly state that all public schools in South Africa must have democratically elected School Governing Bodies comprising parents, learners (where the school has Grade 8 learners), educators, non-teaching staff and a school principal as an ex-officio member. They all have a responsibility to create an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. They need to promote the best interests in the schools, ensuring that learners receive quality education. Contrary to the policy, educators have their own different views about the lack of parents' interest in the affairs of the schools. Their claims varied from illiteracy being the reason for parents shying away from supporting their children's schooling.

On the other hand, parents blame their inability to support learners on them not having enough information and knowledge about curriculum related matters. The Outcome Based Education policy was implemented because it was seen as a policy that would help parents to support the children with their school work but that is not happening. Learners still come to school having not done their homework and they give excuses that there was no one at home to help since their grandmothers with whom they stay could not understand the work. Parents also still feel they are barred from the school. There is this ‘imaginary fence’ that keeps them away from schools (Bhengu, 2007, p. 132). The policy on parental involvement states that parents will be workshopped on how to tackle the learners’ work but schools do not have those workshops. In School-B the parent had this to say about them helping learners with school work:

If I go to school I will be interfering with the educator’s work. I do go to school for my child’s report card and sometimes I encounter problems because I cannot read or write. We, older people, do not like interfering with school work; we want the educators to work without any interference from us [Parent-A-1].

Parents who are unable to support learners with their school work are sometimes embarrassed when confronted about this issue. Some know that they are disadvantaged because of their low levels of education. Parents in rural areas expect educators to teach learners though they are frustrated that sometimes they do not understand the curriculum. In the three sites parents show interest in their children’s education in spite of the lack of skills in education. This was confirmed by this statement from one of the parents in School-A. The parents explained the following:

The principal and the SGB make it possible for all the parents to be in the parents’ meetings, though the school has an enrolment of about 600 learners but in the school curriculum planning or school development meetings, it’s only about 50-70 parents that attend. Things will be different when its sports day because the parents will be in the sports field cheering the learners. They really come in numbers for sports [Parent-B-2].

4.3.3 Fighting against all odds

All three case study sites seemed to be facing a number of challenges. In School-A, educators and learners crossed rivers in order to reach to the school. That posed a serious challenge during heavy rains weathers. Not only that the school is under resourced but educators are obligated to continue with teaching and learning. School-A is a 'no fees-school' but teaching and learning has to take centre stage. In all the three case study sites there were challenges of the socio-economic nature such as poverty, unemployment, and over-crowding in the classrooms. Schools still function in spite of all the challenges. Some of the main participants in the study are working parents who also take part in governing the school. School-B was challenged with overcrowding since the school is situated close to an informal settlement. Resources seem to be inadequate because more learners have been admitted in the school in the recent years. Some parents that were employed lived in urban areas, and as a result, they were not able to attend school functions. The school relied heavily on grandmothers to attend to the school needs. Some of these grandmothers were illiterate but were expected to take charge in the children's education as their guardians. That is an unfair expectation. School-C was situated in an urban area and had enormous resources but it also had its challenges that make it rise up, above all the odds and ensure that teaching and learning goes on. Some of the learners in the school were raised by grandmothers and some were orphans. Many parents were unemployed and that posed a big challenge since the school depended on school fees paid by parents. This was confirmed by the principal who said:

The parents are part of our school; we invite them to attend parents' evenings, parents' meetings, graduation days, and sports activities, to come and support teaching and learning in spite of all their problems of unemployment. We are somehow happy because 70-80% of the parents still pay their dues [Principal-C].

The principal in School-A was in my view, highly committed to ensuring that teaching and learning goes on in the school even when the school was under such tremendous challenges. During rainy days educators and learners are unable to come to school due to overflowing rivers. There were too many challenges in School-A but the school used to rise up and meet them head on. There were high levels of unemployment and poverty in the area, and that contributed to high levels of learner absenteeism. The school had no electricity at the same time and it desperately needed equipment and resources that require electricity like the photocopier and fax machines. These facilities and equipment are very

essential for the school to ensure that teaching and learning is supported. The principal resilient and determined to do the best in spite of all the challenges she faces. She has demonstrated an ability to face to all the obstacles in the school to make it work. She worked with the SGB to get clean-piped water for the school. This principal was able to negotiate with the SGB to build the kitchen since the school was now having a feeding scheme not forgetting that she negotiated the piped-clean water for the school.

Post level-one educators in School-B also played a significant role in supporting learners face their social problems. These educators were facing big challenges of having to teach hungry learners. They go out of their way to make time to feed destitute learners soup and bread before learners go to classrooms. That act did not only help the learners only but also the school as they performed better in classes. They did not wait for the principal or the Department of Health to intervene; they used the resources they had at their disposal to solve the problems. There were also Grade 6 and Grade 7 learners who spent their afternoons in School-C dedicating their time to assist the struggling learners to do their homework. Such learners deserve praises since they used to do all this as a way of helping others.

Teaching and learning takes place in all the case study sites. School-A and School-B were located in communities that were faced with so many socio-economic challenges but they were coping quite well. Complaining about parents' high levels of illiteracy, poverty in the community will not benefit schools or parents. Being cognisant of this reality, parents played a big role in running schools irrespective of their level of education. What I found pleasing was that in all the three schools teaching and learning took a centre stage. One post level-one educator explained the following:

The parents are part of the school activities, but not to a full extent, some parents would not attend the parent's night because they are working or committed somewhere but they are able to write back to the educators about their concerns in the learners' homework books. Sometimes the issues the school discusses in the meetings become very intense, some parents hate this situation [PL-C].

Schools initiate parental involvement; they initiate meetings, parents' evenings and parents' visits in the school. The parents on the other hand, had a tendency of waiting for the invites

even in instances where they could be more proactive; they know that they should be part of the school development. Such a passive stance could be an indication that there are still issues on the parents' side that need to be addressed because parents are supported by the policy on parental involvement. They have an obligation to their children. The HOD highlighted the following:

Parents are urged to be involved in teaching and learning in the school. They also respond to the communiqué from the school. The Grade R class has their communication book that the children take home; it serves as a home-school communication tool. The parents write on the same book and the educators use the same book to respond. For the other grades the principal and SGB write letters to parents [HOD-C].

In **School-C** parents seemed to be taking their children's education very seriously. This has been shown by the percentage of parents that attend the school meetings and parents' evenings as well as the support the school receives from parents regarding the provision of teaching and learning resources. Parents in the urban areas were responsible for the prospects of education in the learners' lives. Beside that School-C which was located in an urban area it had enormous resources, thanks to parents who played a significant role in making sure that there were sponsors in the school. A post level-one educator had this to say about the resources:

Parents in our school are divided into three categories, the educated, academics and the illiterate parents but I want to tell you something, listen to all the three categories, though sometimes the academics want to take over the school in the meetings but we are able to work with them. The educated ones always come up with innovative ideas especially on how to keep the school financially sound. The academics will share with us information that is still new that we are trying to find footing on. And the last group will come up with issues of discipline and how it is important that learners respect the adults and so on [PL-C].

4.3.4 Parents have difficulties in understanding school curriculum

In South Africa the introduction of outcomes-based education (OBE) paved the way for more parental involvement in education (Lemmer, 2007 & Desgorges, 2003). This was

done so that parents can support learners in schools and in a way, to understand school curriculum related matters. The key problem is that, there has been no evidence of follow-up conducted by the Department of Education to monitor and assess whether this happened as planned or not. In schools communication needs to be two-way and needs to reflect an equal partnership between the two. The new education system reflects difficulties as some parents are illiterate and cannot understand ways around OBE. During curriculum planning schools invite parents to take part but this becomes a challenge since some parents are illiterate and cannot contribute to curriculum planning and school development. In School-A and in School-B a small percentage of parents has been able to attend such meetings. Parents are expected to understand values and morals of communities so they are expected to play significant roles in curriculum formations but they have difficulties in doing that. The principal in School-A had this to say about this behaviour of parents:

Parents in the school are very supportive to the learners on the sports day; they come in numbers to cheer the learners when they have tournaments but on the day for formal meetings and curriculum planning, it is a very small percentage that attends. I think they like sports more than the schools work [Principal-A].

On sports days parents just come to watch their children play without any invitation. This shows that they are concerned about their children's schooling and that is where the prior knowledge comes in easily to help the learners. Communication in the schools in schools and homes should be a two way, Mncube (2009). In rural areas this is lacking because parents there are illiterate. They leave the teaching and learning to the educators because sometimes they feel as if they are interfering and this response from a parent proves that fact:

The principal works with parents in the annual planning, where parents discuss what they wish learners to be taught, we also plan that we will call them four times a year for monitoring the school work of our children and the principal calls us for monitoring and for development sessions in the school and some come for the children's work. In any way, I am involved in my son's education though it is not enough because my son is struggling at school and I am working I cannot always go to school but I do have interest [Parent-C-2].

Principals can no longer work as the only persons who make decisions in the schools. Parents are now involved in their children's school work and that may be interpreted as parents showing commitment to the education of their children. The commitment of parents was confirmed in School-C where the principal responded as follows:

I try by all means to communicate with parents to come to school when they need help concerning their children's work but they do not make any effort. Even if they have other problems, I try to be there for them but with the limited time we have at school, it is difficult. Though, I wish there was more I could do. I know that some parents are illiterate but one can only do what the Department tells us to do. This is a big challenge for all SMTs in schools [Principal-A].

I felt the same situation in School-A that parents shy away from schools, principals and educators try to extend their invitations but the principal confirmed that all their efforts fall on deaf ears. What came out of the interviews is that parents in School-A spoke about the school communicating with parents and that, parents were not responding to the invitations. Both parties blamed each other. Educators felt that the parents were the culprits since they were invited but did not show up at the meetings.

4.3.5 Socio-economic challenges have a negative effect on teaching and learning in the school

The communities in rural areas and townships were among the poorest sections of society, they were locked in the difficult struggle to survive. Some parents lived in inadequate housing and were unemployed. Education is hampered by poverty, unemployment and most importantly, single parenting. Children were often left alone at home for long hours without any parent supervision. The school was struggling with the problem of chronic absenteeism as parents left their children at home with an understanding that they would go to school but sometimes these children ended up not going to school. Sometimes, it is impossible for learners to get support in their school work. This is because there is no one at home to help, parents come home late and tired. In these situations parents are often under pressure and unable to assist their children in their school work. Furthermore, parents are often uncertain about what to do in supporting their children in school work. They are sometimes intimidated and unsure about their involvement in teaching and learning. The HOD had this to say about learners taking their school work home:

As an HOD I invite parents to come and check their children's work but it is now like a norm that before we can address work we need to talk about problems faced by learners in the community. These talks will also lead to the parent's challenges of poverty and unemployment, there is very little that we, as a school, can do to help them in those challenges since we are already having bigger challenges on the learner's school work [HOD-B].

Schools seem to be on the receiving end because they invite parents to school so that they can get feedback on how the learners are progressing throughout the year. Also it is importance that community values are included in the curriculum but it becomes extremely difficult to address such issues when there is no feedback from parents. Issues like poverty, unemployment, crime, HIV/AIDS pandemic, healthy eating, bullying etc. seem to be very significant but it is difficult for schools to include them in the curriculum without parents' inputs and concerns. In addition, the education system has the responsibility to educate parents about their involvement in the schools in order to see the curriculum enriched. It is small numbers of parents who are able to take initiative in the education of their children. The situation in the three communities was different; in School-C parents attended meetings in their numbers whereas in the other two schools parents have issues that make them not to attend meetings. The HOD-B had this to say about parents who do not attend meetings when invited:

Few parents attend meetings, about thirty percent, come, also some do not contribute to the curriculum issues even when we guide them towards what they should be talking about but still it is difficult for them. I think they still need guidance from the school or from the Department [of Education]. They show interest only in things that concern them like the learner pregnancy, crime and HIV/AIDS. Those are things they show interest on [HOD-B].

Parents and guardians want to take part in the education of their children but in School- B issues of social contextual factors like child-headed homes, HIV/AIDS issues, teenage pregnancy, substance and sexual abuse are hindering the process. Near the school, learners are abused in different ways that hinder parental involvement. When the school confronts parents and asks questions about these issues, parents complain about unemployment and

poverty, and attribute their conduct on poverty related reasons. They cannot focus because these are big social- issues.

The small number that attends show that there is development and they want their children to receive proper education. Sometimes in the meetings they come up with issues like learner pregnancy, healthy living and information about HIV/AIDS. They feel that learners should be taught these issues. The workshops that were conducted by the Department of Education for the SGB shed some light but parents and educators felt that it was not enough because these workshops did not seem to arm them for the crises they faced. They have issues to discuss in the curriculum planning but they are unable to voice that in the meetings because the majority is illiterate. The principal also alluded to the following:

Yes, when parents take charge of their children's work we are so excited and that's what the school needs. We have parents' days where they come in numbers of course to check learner's work, to participate in the learners' extra curriculum activities, to ask questions on the issues on Learning Areas (LA) that they have difficulty in understanding. As I said before it works for us. We do not have many problems of unruly children though we both know that children are children but we are still able to work with them properly. Eighty percent of the learners behave very well, and then there is the twenty percent who misbehave sometimes and come to school late, not really a big issue just that we have to deal with a problem early before it becomes really big [Principal-C].

There are workshops that were done by the Department of Education some time ago of which parents thought they benefited from them a little. The post level-one educator in School-C said that parents were very keen in helping out their children at school and this was confirmed by the HOD who said:

There is nothing in particular that the schools have done for the parents. In fact there is no support that the parents receive from the school. Parents were left to the Department of Education to workshop them on the policies that regulate and govern schools but proper support and guidance was never given to parents. Though the number of parents who support their children has risen [HOD-A].

4.4 Conclusion

Parental involvement in the three different contexts differed from school to school. Although all three schools were involving parents in teaching and learning, their participation levels differed due to a number of challenges that have been discussed in this chapter. Schools in urban areas seemed to be responding much better compared to schools in rural and township settings. In rural schools some parents (mainly grandparents) were still illiterate and thus not effective in supporting learners and educators. Biological parents who work in the cities were not helpful either as they stayed away from their homes or came back late at night tired, and were not able to support educators in teaching and learning related matters. There were few parents who actively participated in the School Governing Body, and who had awareness about what is required of them by SASA, National Curriculum Statement and the Department of Education. The next chapter is about the findings in the research and some recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS, ANALYSIS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This is final chapter in the study. It presents analysis of data on parental involvement in supporting teaching and learning in three selected primary schools. Data was generated through my interactions with the principals, HODs, post level-one educators and parents in the three research sites. As part of the analysis this chapter also looks at similarities and differences between the principals, HODs, educators and parents in the three sites (School-A, School-B and School-C). I also looked at how the two theoretical frameworks Bronfenbrenner (1986) sociological theory and Olivos (2006) alternative school reform theory and research questions relate to the findings of the study. Lastly, I looked at the recommendations for future studies.

5.2 Data analysis

It is important that before getting into details about analysis and findings of the study, I briefly outline my understanding of what data analysis is all about. In research, data analysis is what researchers do with data in order to develop an explanation of events so that theories and or generalisations about causes, reasons and processes of any piece of social behaviour can be developed. In the context of qualitative research, analysis refers to an ongoing process which means that text from interviews, participants' observations and document analysis are interpreted and theorised in order to make sense (Henning, 2005).

This process involves breaking down the data and relating particular items of data to one another or any other categories which the researcher may have identified (Thitchcock & Hughes, 1995). Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to analysis of data generated as the process that constantly reflects on perceptions, impressions and relationships. The participants' profiles and what emerged as themes in the data to make sense out of the information from participants. There is still tension between educators and parents prevalent in 2 (school-A and School-B) of the 3 case study sites. This is referred to kinds of relationships and environment within which educators and parents talk to one another, how they resolve difficult issues and so on. Educators are still struggling due to the division

between them and parents. There were still issues of curriculum that needed to be addressed. The SMTs in the three sites believe that if parents have issues of concern they have rights to come to school and discuss it. This is contradicted by that schools seem to be not welcoming to parents (Moloi, 2005).

Taking into account socio-economic challenges of the three case study sites, teaching and learning is negatively affected and that has a huge impact on the parents' capabilities to support on teaching and learning. This issue was confirmed by a parent I spoke to in School-A who said she was taking care of her two grandchildren and that she was unable to meet school's financial obligations as she was a pensioner. Also the HOD in School-B said that sometimes learners come to school dirty and hungry as the community was afflicted by poverty. School-A and School-B were declared 'No-fees-schools' due to the socio-economic challenges in their communities. The principal in School-A mentioned that the school survives on financial support from sponsors other than that, it would be difficult to maintain the school budget.

5.3 Similarities and differences between the schools

The schools are similar despite that they are located in different contexts and learners in these schools come from different backgrounds. By different backgrounds I mean that some learners come from townships, some in the rural areas and some live in the urban areas. In the three case study sites the issues of poverty and dreaded illnesses are the main topics of discussions. I spoke to a parent in a township school and she was very quick to refer me to some challenges in the township and one of the other challenges was poverty in communities. Also a post level-one educator in School-A referred to unemployment and poverty as challenges that cripples education in rural areas. In rural area schools, grandparents take care of children whilst the biological parents are in the cities where they are working. Grandparents are said to be supporting the learners' school needs with their pension money. Also an educator in the township school said most of the learners in the townships are taken care of by grandparents because the biological parents have succumbed to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

In the urban school also there are issues of poverty and unemployment. The comment by a principal from an urban school that, "*we have our fair share of parents who can no longer afford to pay school fees because of loss of employment,*" bares testimony to the problem.

The three schools are similar in the sense and unemployment plays a bigger role. Parents in the township areas lament about the challenged by poverty and illnesses, like HIV/AIDS and teaching and learning in schools is affected by these issues. The three principals complained about learner absenteeism as due to hunger and sicknesses in these communities as they are also stricken by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. As a parent in School-B put it, *“Learners are absent more often in the school, said parent in School-B”*.

During the course of the study, it also came out that these socio-economic challenges i.e. crimes, illnesses and hunger were the main reasons for the decrease in the learners pass rate. Although School-C belongs to Quintile-5 (a school that is located in affluent surroundings) it also shares similar high challenges of unemployment and poverty among the community members. The three principals expressed their frustrations with the high levels of unemployment as it affected the schools’ financial positions. Refer to **Section 4.3.3 in Chapter 4** on the actual responses from stakeholders in this regard.

Unemployment and poverty seem to have a huge impact on school necessities not being met. In School-C the principal stated that even though there were serious problems where parents were unable to pay school fees but there were those parents (40% to 60%) who are well off and who pay their children’s school fees. Beside sicknesses that were referred to by the parents in School-B as the main cause of absenteeism in the schools, unemployment seems to be the worse socio-economic problem in the three sites.

The three sites are located in three different contexts, and as such, they enroll learners of different racial profiles. For example, in School-C the profile of learners is mixed, comprising local Africans, Africans from foreign countries, Whites, Indians and Coloured learners. In School-A and School-B, only local Africans and Africans from foreign countries are found there. That pattern also implies that even parents in the three case study sites differ according to these factors. Most of the parents found in School-C were financially well-off and White. But that does not mean that all parents in this community met the school’s financial demands. Some parents here are challenged like those in the rural and township areas.

All the three schools have different types of security arrangement to protect school property and human resources. School-C has an advanced security system, supported by the 24 hour-guard security guards at the gate. This is indicative of the fact that some parents are

able to pay for the school necessities. The principal in School-C confirmed this when he said, that there was crime in the area but also that it was not easy for criminals to come into the school's premises since the school is secured. School-A and School-B have no security system other than a fence and the gate. Both School-A and School-B cannot afford high tech security system. Some of the buildings in School-A are still under constructions and that is very different from School-C which has a well structured buildings.

In the three schools, parental involvement is different too. The principal in School-C spoke about 70-80% attendance of parents in the meetings whereas in the other 2 schools attendance was said to be far below 50%. School-A and School-B have high numbers of learners who are under their grandparents' or guardians' care, whereas in School-C there is a high number of learners who are cared for by their biological parents. The HOD in School-C said that there were learners who formed part of the Grade 6 and Grade 7 learners' project. In this project learners assist one another with school work. However, some of them lived with grandparents who were unable to help with homework. This challenge is more prevalent among learners in School-A and School-B who are under the guidance of grandparents who are unable to assist them with their school work.

5.4 Similarities and difference between principals

Calitz, Fuglestad and Lillejord (2002) state that leadership is not a one-man's task, it needs the participation of all stakeholders involved. Parents have a big role to play in educating their children. The school principal has a responsibility to influence and energise the team he or she works with, i.e. the educators, HODs, deputy principals and parents. Ruitzug (1993) refers to leadership as a process those results into determining some strategies in the work environment. Bamburg (1994), Chambers (1997), and Wallace (2001) suggest that principals play a significant role in involving parents in the schools. Heystek (1999) emphasise that the relationship between the schools and parents should no longer be client based but partnership based. Schools who restrict parents' roles in the school curriculum or fail to recognise the specific roles to be played by parents tend to experience problems. This is most notable in the school finances and community support environment and teaching staff sometimes get frustrated by a lot of ill disciplines with the learners, (Badenhorst, 1987; David, 1993; Gibbs, 2002). Commer (1991) further emphasises that neither the parents nor educators can fulfil the education task completely without the help of each other. Principals play significant roles in involving parents in teaching and learning in the schools. This is due

mainly to the fact that it is the principal's management that either promotes or frustrates the involvement of the parents in the schools (Coleman, 2003.) The data from the three show that principals supported learners in their education as they had projects in the schools which indicated that there was progress and that was good for the learners. They are able to ask for donations in order to enable them to buy school resources. For example, books and equipment for the library in School-C, was donated by Old-Mutual. In School-A and in School-B, there are advertising boards that were donated by various companies that support the schools.

In all three case study sites there is communication system between the schools and the parents. The HOD in School-B said that his school writes to the parents. The principal also communicates with the parents telephonically if there are urgent school matters. The three principals invited parents to the schools for curriculum planning. This is where the school is able to inform parents how they will manage to maintain quality of teaching and learning and to do workshops for parents as per SASA requirements. Parents are also invited in the schools to check learners work.

In the three schools the management styles are different with the three principals. Their management styles have an impact in the involvement of parents. They look at their responsibilities differently too because the principal in School-A stated that she saw the need of clean-piped water in the school and decided that it was her responsibility to have water installed. She said that she would like all the parents of the learners in the school to be part of the school development. School-A and School-B principals are both females and they both have higher diplomas the other one holds a Higher Diploma in Education diploma and the other one has a BA degree respectively. There is development in School-B as they are building new classrooms. She is urging parents to take part in developing the school. The principal in School-B is making sure that the destitute learners in the school are receiving food before they go to classes. She is able to offer assistance to the poverty stricken learners. She does this without asking anything in return. The principal in School-C allowed the Grade 6 and Grade 7 learners to help the struggling learners after hours in the school. The three principals are working with the community to assist where they can for learners to receive education.

5.5 Similarities and differences between the parents studied

The township schools have young single parents who mostly are unemployed but are receiving grants just like the grandparents. In the urban areas the children are mostly from the well-to-do families with both parents working. When I interviewed the parents in the three sites the issue of unemployment, poverty and hunger kept on coming out. This signifies that the three communities experience these challenges. Parents in all the three schools show commitment in educating their children, either grandparents or biological parents. Though almost all of them struggle with the curriculum but they make use of the avenues that are provided by the schools to assist where they can. Like in the cases where the educators invite parents to check on learner school work. Parents' contributions are measured by their affordability. Those who can afford more they contribute more to the school and visa versa.

Parents are different as the learners found in the schools. The grandparents in School-A are old and their level of education challenges them to support teaching and learning of their grandchildren. They are not comfortable coming to school because they know that they are unable to meet the schools' demands and also it is difficult for them to be part of the school development. They want their grandchildren to learn though. This is different from the parents in School-B because these parents are young and single and they are unemployed. They want to support their children in school but they are challenged with the NCS. This is seen when they come to support their children on sports days in the school. They do not want to come to schools and be exposed to issues that they have difficulties handling. This is due to unemployment. Parents in the urban area school could afford to support their children both financially and through teaching and learning. The view that even in the ex-Model-C school, some parents were struggling to meet their financial obligations, was supported by the principal when he *said that "parents are struggling financially but we are grateful to the companies who sponsor us"*.

5.6 Research questions restated:

5.6.1 What are parents' perspectives and expectations on parental involvement?

In this study biological parents in rural areas leave their children with grandparents and go to work in the cities. Many of these grandparents are illiterate so they cannot help learners

with their school work. Because of that reality, many of these parents do not perceive themselves as having important roles to play in supporting teaching and learning situation. More details on what various stakeholders say can be found in **Section 4.2.1** where educators' voices are expressed. It must be mentioned that there is no just one single perspective on this. For example, in School-C, there is evidence that parents understand the importance of their roles in ensuring that the school functions optimally.

It has also emerged in **Section 4.2.1** that parents expect schools to call meetings, invite them to attend, but they have not begun to view themselves as initiative takers when it comes to educational and school related matters. Parents still expect the principals to make the first move in terms of communicating with them and thinking about school needs. They seem to have forgotten that as members of the public, they are the true owners of public schools, and school management is an employee structure in the schools. . In addition, in communities which are preoccupied with many social ills such as poverty, unemployment and diseases, it may be asking a bit too much to expect parents to take initiatives on teaching and learning related matters. They expect schools to do what the educators are trained for i.e. teaching learners.

Educators in schools are expected to play different roles, like being health officials, welfare officers, see to the safety of learners. All these roles turn to be difficult for them because on top of that parents expect educators to teach, which ironically, is their main duty. This statement is confirmed by the HOD in **Section 4.3.1 in chapter 4**. Some of these children are orphans, some are destitute learners and some go to school hungry. In the two sites (School-A and School-B) the communities are focusing on getting help for these grandchildren. In this study I have found that, some parents believe that by electing SGB members to represent them in the school governance, and then they have no business to go to school and be educated about how they can help their children with school work. Educators need also to deal with the discipline issues of learners. There are conflicting roles between the different roles parents need to play especially in the urban areas. As I said in **Section 4.2.3 chapter 4** that in School-C there are different types of parents with different roles to play. The parents who work with finances need to get as much sponsors as possible for the school. Ordinary parents who do not play any role in the school SGB seem to be having no voice. They want to run the school where as according to SASA the school is run by the SMT and SGB.

5.6.2 How are educators and parents' interactions on parental involvement in teaching and learning?

The study was also looking at the interactions of both educators and parents in teaching and learning. What came out was that there were inexplicable tensions between educators and parents. This tension was prevalent in 2 of the 3 case study sites. By interactions, I am referring to some kinds of relationships and environment within which educators and parents talk to one another, how they resolve difficult issues and so on. Educators struggled due to the division between them and parents. Educators struggle for support from the parents who are unable to support learners with their school work.

Parents, on the other side do not feel welcomed in the schools, that is, School-A and School-B. In School-C, the relationship seemed to be more open and friendly. In School-C, parents where the relationship was friendlier supported the school's teaching and learning activities. That was not so in the other 2 schools where parents, overall, were unable to meet the school demands. Parents in the 2 schools (School-A and School-B) barely came to the schools to express their problems and challenges regarding a variety of issues. That basically indicates that there is very little interaction between educators and parents.

The tensions I referred to in the paragraph above could be linked to the fact that educators and parents have different expectations of one another. As mentioned elsewhere in this report, parents overall, feel inadequate to perform what they perceive to be a terrain of the experts. The parents feel they have no business in the schools anyways because they feel educators are doing what they are supposed to do, teaching, while they attend to other important issues and which they have capabilities and capacities to perform. On the other hand there are educators who feel that they are doing more than they need to. They play roles of being parents, social-workers, investigating officers, and food-suppliers. This is so mainly because they are teaching in a school with a high number of orphans and destitute learners.

The interaction between educators and parents is only when there are problems at schools and parents are called. Educators want parents to be part of education of their children by giving learners home work to be assisted by parents but this happens on a very low percentage. This makes educators think that parents do not care about their children's school work. The tensions I have mentioned have resulted in finger pointing between these

two important stakeholders. Other scholars have acknowledged the extent of the tensions. The fact that both parents and educators cannot freely express their feelings, educators still blame parents for not being supportive enough, (Calitz, Fuglestad & Lillejord 2002), is indicative of the tensions and finger-pointing that persist. For this some educators have blamed high levels of illiteracy among parents.

5.6.3 What support do parents receive from SMT's in schools to help the learners with their work?

Schools do not support parents whether in curriculum or in learners work. SMTs believe that if parents have issues of concern, they have to come to schools to discuss those issues. This is different with parents because schools are places which they really want to walk away from. Schools are under tremendous pressure of changing curriculum. Resources they have are for learners to improve their knowledge and they cannot help parents.

Olivos (2006) emphasises that parents must be visible and take initiative in the education of their children. It has been mentioned in this report that parents, in all three schools, have made their contributions, although at varied levels of success. What has emerged also, is that, overall, there is no clear evidence which suggests that the SMTs were supporting the parents in capacity building so that, they in turn can play meaningful roles. Thus far, it appears that the point raised by Olivos (2006) is still far from being realised.

Notwithstanding this, there is evidence that parents, particularly in School-C were playing a more visible role. For example, there are school library books donated by parents. When there is shortage of teaching staff, parents employ educators that are paid by them (SGB). There is enough floor space, and educators do not complain about overcrowding. Facilities for teaching are readily available in the school premises. I found that in School-C there are more than 40 teaching and learning classrooms including resource centres. Despite all this, there is no evidence which clearly shows that the SMT in School-C was providing support to the parents. When it comes to parents' taking the initiative, I found that in School-A and School-B, what Bronfenbrenner (1986) and Olivos (2006) notion of high parent visibility and initiative taking, does not happen. Educators are displaced because the learners' numbers do not meet the school's post provisioning norm (PPN). Literature speaks to some parents as illiterate and unable to take initiatives in the education of children.

5.8 Recommendations

These recommendations are directed to principals of schools, educators, HOD's and parents whom I believe when they are taken to cognisance they can work for all concerned.

5.8.1 Recommendations for school principals

Principals are aware that some parents in the townships and rural areas are illiterate. They are also aware that because of illiteracy challenges, parents do not have confidence to come forward and offer to assist in schools. This was confirmed by the principal in School-B who said: *“this is a township school and most parents here are illiterate and the educated ones are very young and see no value in attending to their children's school needs, the illiterate grandmothers are helping with school necessities but they struggle with learners work because some did not go to school what-so-ever”*

The following recommendations are made.

- Principals need to expose parents to more workshops with special focus to what parents can do to support their children in their learning as it is the principals' role to see to it that parents understand the policy on parental involvement in schools to eliminate confusions.

5.8.2 Recommendations for HODs

The HODs serve as a link between educators, learners and parents so they have to encourage parents to contact them on children's work. to enlighten parents on the curriculum issues to avoid confusions.

- HODs need to ensure that parents are always enlightened about curriculum issues to avoid confusions, share the vision of the school and help them feel welcome in the schools.
- HODs need to assist parents/ communities to deal with the economic social issues, like poverty and HIV/AIDS by involving them in curriculum planning.

5.8.3 Recommendations for parents

Parents are participating at highest structure in the school, the SGB. They need to be vigorous in utilising this structure to facilitate their challenges, like poverty, unemployment and HIV/AIDS.

- Parents in rural and township schools have a responsibility to upgrade their schools; push the Department of Education to assist them in upgrading their schools.
- Parents cannot leave the education of their children to educators; they are primary parents they have to be part of the education of their children.

5.9. Conclusion

The study has shown that parental involvement in the affairs of schools is crucial as it has been for the past decades. The advent of democracy in South Africa and the promulgation of various education policies have reaffirmed this need for active parental involvement in supporting teaching and learning activities. The socio-economic conditions, within which various communities and schools are situated, continue to influence and shape the extent to which parents are able to play meaningful roles in supporting the provision of quality education in the country. Although the findings of this study cannot be generalised on a wider population, they are nevertheless, consistent with other research findings which focus on parents and educators, and interactions between these two important stakeholders.

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Appendix 1

Letter to the Department of Education: Pinetown District

University of KwaZulu Natal

Private Bag X03

Ashwood

3605

15 March 2009

The Department of Education

Pinetown District

3610

Dear Sir/ Madam

I am currently registered at the University of Zululand (**Edgewood Campus**) towards a Masters degree in Education. My topic for research is “*Parental involvement in supporting teaching and learning*”. I asked for a permission to conduct this study at Schools A, B and C, at KwaNdengezi. I spoke to the principals and they showed interest in me doing the study in the schools.

I trust that my request will be favourably considered.

If you have any concerns or things you do not understand please contact me at the following address:

No.32 High Grove

10-38 James Herbert Road

Marianhill Park

3610

Home Tel: 0317002099

Cell : 0828442699

Email : 204520072@ukzn.ac.za/ blanchendlovu@ymail.com

For further information concerning the study, may I refer you to my supervisor, Dr TT Bhengu at this no: 0839475321

UKZN (Edgewood Campus) Faculty of Education

Tel No. 03126043499

Yours Faithfully

BN Ndlovu.

Appendix 2

Letters to the participants

University of KwaZulu Natal

Private Bag X03

Ashwood

3605

26 June 2009

School A, B and C Primary School

Pinetown

3600

Dear Participant

RE: REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY:

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

My name is Blanche Ndlovu. I am a Masters student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I intend to conduct a study on parental involvement in teaching and learning. I request you to participate in this study.

The aim of this study is to investigate the nature and level of parental involvement in teaching and learning in the school. I selected you to participate because you are one of the following: the Principal or HoD or the parent or the PL1 educator.

I am requesting to tape record the one on one session interview lasting for about thirty minutes. However if the need arises I may request you for an additional interview. I also request you to answer a short questionnaire which I will personally hand deliver to you.

All the information you will provide will be treated with strict confidence. Your name and the school's name will not be disclosed. Participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to withdraw from the study midstream you are free to do so and no action will be taken against you.

I do not envisage any physical harm on your part when participating in the study. You are not going to incur any costs in participating in the study whilst I will not be able to

compensate you for participating. I would like to let you know that the study is likely to be very useful in adding to our understanding of the roles of parents in the education of their children. The information you will provide will be stored in a safe place for a period of five years and thereafter it will be shredded.

Should you need any further information about this study please contact me at

No.32 High Grove

10-38 James Herbert Road

Marianhill Park

3610

Cell: 0828442699

Email: 204520072@ukzn.ac.za or blanchendlovu@gmail.com

Or my Supervisor: Dr TT Bhengu at this no: 0839475321

Or the co-supervisor:

Dr Bhengu at this address: UKZN (Edgewood Campus)

Faculty of Education

Tel No. 031 2602639

If you agree to participate in the study please sign the declaration.

I..... (**Full names of the participant**) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I also understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at anytime should I wish to do so.

Signature of the participant

.....

Date

.....

Yours Faithfully

B.N. Ndlovu

Appendix 3

Letter to participating schools

University of KwaZulu Natal
Private Bag X03
Ashwood
3605
25 May 2009
The Principal & SGB
Primary School (School A, B and C)
Pinetown
3610

Dear Sir/ Madam

I am currently registered at the above named institution (**University of KwaZulu Natal Edgewood Campus**) towards a Masters Degree in education. May I ask for a permission to conduct a study in your school. My research topic is "*Parental involvement in teaching and learning*". The purpose of the study is to see whether parents are part of their children's learning. A Deputy Principal, one educator and one accessible parent will administer a questionnaire and an interview schedule. May I assure you that your participation is voluntary. The confidentiality and anonymity will be respected and I will not use any institution's names.

I trust that my request will be favourably considered.

For any concerns please contact me in the following address:

No.32 High Grove

10-38 James Herbert Road

Marianhill Park

3610

Home Tel: 0317002099

Cell : 0828442699

Email : 204520072@ukzn.ac.za/ blanchendlovu@gmail.com

For further information concerning the research you may contact my supervisor, Dr TT Bhengu at this

no: 0839475321

Faculty of Education

Tel No. 03126043499

Yours Faithfully

BN Ndlovu

Ngiyavuma

Angivumi

Appendix 4

Observation Schedule

Date	Venue	Participants	Actions to be observed	Actions
8 July 2009	School B In classroom.	Parents and Educators of School B.	Discussions on school work for the learners. The educator explained to the parents why she needs to set dates for the due assignment. Why learners are expected to finish the work within the specified time.	Parents had questions on homework, assignment that needed the parents to do research. Parents were having concerns that sometimes there are limited times in assignment finishing.
20 July 2009	School B in the school hall	The SGB members, principal, educators and parents	Parents in the meetings whether they are able to voice out their concerns about learners' schooling.	They need the learners to be given more time, sometimes. Some parents were not free to talk in the meeting. Some would talk to the ones sitting next to whilst the meeting was progressing.

Interview Guide for Chairperson of SGB /Parents

Section A

Biographical Details

1. Age (in years)

18 to 25	01
25 to 35	02
35 to 45	03
45 to 55	04
55 and over	05

2. Gender

Male	01
Female	02

3. Your Status:

Single	01
Married	02
Divorced	03
Never Married	04
None of the above	05

4. Academic qualifications:

Between Std1 and Ten (Grade12)	01
Grade 12 and Diploma	02
Professional Qualification	03
Graduate	04
Post Graduate	05
None of the above	06

5. Occupation

.....

6. Your relationship with the learner:

Parent	01
Grand Parent	02

Sibling	03
Guardian	04
Relative	05
Other	06

7. Do you live in the:

Rural area	01
Urban area	02
Township	03

8. What is your home language?

IsiZulu	01
English	02
Afrikaans	03
IsiPedi	04
IsiXhosa	05
French	06
Other	07

9. Your Race

African	01
White	02
Coloured	03
Indian	04
Other	05

PARENTS

1. What do you understand by parental involvement?
2. How do you support your child in his/her education?
3. Are you involved in your child's education?
4. Are you able to do what you have in mind in terms of parental supporting your child?
5. Do you ask your child about him/ her school work?
6. Does your child bring home work from school?
7. Do you help your child with homework?
8. Are you happy with the work given to your child?

9. How often do you help your child?
10. Do you have difficulties with your child's homework?
11. If any, what are the difficulties?
12. Is there any support given by the school / educator for you to cope with your child's work?
13. Have you ever asked the educators for clarity in the child's homework?
14. Were your concerns handled well?
15. How often do you communicate with the educators in the school?
16. What kind of communication is used?
17. Do you receive any help or tips on the home work from the educator?
18. If you cannot manage with your child's homework, would you consult the educator?
19. Do you attend school meetings?
20. How often does the school have meetings?
21. Are you happy with the level of education your child receives in this school?
22. In your own thinking, what do you think as parents should do more for parental involvement?

Thank You very much for participating in my study.

Mzali

1. Yini oyaziyo nge parental involvement? (ukuzibandakanya kwabazali esikoleni)
2. Umlekelela kanjani umntanakho emsebenzini wakhe wesikole?
3. Uyazibandakanya nokufunda komntwana wakho?
4. Ngokwakho mzali ubona wenza okufanele ngomsebenzi wengane yakho?
5. Umntwana wakho uyafika nomsebenzi okumele awenze ekhaya?
6. Uyakhona ukumsiza uma enza lowomsebenzi?
7. Umsebenzi ubuya nawo zonke izinsuku?
8. Kuyenzeka uthole ukuthi awukhoni ukusiza umntwana wakho?
9. Uma kwenzeka kanjalo uye wenzenjani?
10. Iziphi lezo zinqinamba oye uhlangabezane nazo?
11. Uyakwazi ukubikela uthisha womntanakho ukuthi awukhonanga (did not manage) ukwenza umsebenzi?
12. Ube esenzenjani uthisha womntanakho?
13. Uye akusize?

14. Akakusizi?
15. Uma kwenzekile waba nezingqinamba uye uthintane kanjani nothisha womntanakho?
16. Yena uxhumana kanjani nawe?
17. Kuba kangaki ngeSonto ukuxhumana kwenu?
18. Senzani isikole ukusiza abazali ngezinto abazibona ziyizingqinamba ngomsebenzi wabantwana?
19. Nixoxa kanjani nesikole?
20. Nibhalelwa izincwadi noma Nitshelwa ngomlomo?
21. Ayabakhona ama meetings abazali esikoleni somntanakho?
22. Uyaya kuma Meetings esikoleni?
23. Ziyalalelwa izikhalo uma ninazo njengabazali, bese kwenziwanjani?
24. Uke umbuze imibuzo thisha wimntanakho mayelana ne zifundo zomntwana wakho?
25. Izimpendulo ozitholayo ziyakwanelisa?
26. Wenelisekile ngezinga lemfundo etholwa umntanakho kulesisikole?
27. Ngokucabanga kwakho yini enye abazali abangayenza ukungezelela ku parental involvement?

Ngiyabonga Kakhulu, Mzali ngokuphendula imibuzo yami.

Appendix 5

Interview Guide for Principals, HODs and Post Level One Educators

1. What is your understanding of parental involvement?
2. Do you give learners work to do at home?
3. Is the work done to your satisfaction?
4. Do parents ask for help with the homework you give to the children?
5. Are there any problems?
6. If any, what are those problems?
7. Do you call parents for meetings / to come and look at the learners work?
8. Do you think parents are copying with the curriculum in place? NCS
9. Do you feel maybe parents do not have enough support in the curriculum?
10. What do you do when children do not do the home work?
11. Do you communicate with your learner's parents about the work not done?
12. How often do you communicate with the parents?
13. What means of communication do you use with the parents?
14. Do struggling parents come to you for clarities?
15. Do you explain to the parents what you really expect the work to be done?
16. Where do you see them (parents) lacking? (what do you think cause their challenge) for 11
17. Are there any workshops for parents in the school?
18. In the meetings, do you discuss school work / school curriculum?
19. What seems to be parents concerns other than the school work?
20. Do parents feel happy with the kind of work given to the learners?

Thank you very much, for participating in my study.

Declaration

Mina..... (amagama ami aphelele) ngiyavuma ukuthi ngiyakuqonda okubhalwe kulolucwaningo. Ngियाqonda futhi ukuthi ngingazikhulula kulona uma ngibona kunesidingo.

Signature of the participant

.....

Date

.....

Declaration

I..... (**full names of the participant**) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I also understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at anytime should I wish to do so. I consent to partake.

Signature of the participant

.....

Date

.....

Appendix 6

Ethical Clearance

20 May 2009

Faculty Research Committee
Faculty of Education
Edgewood Campus
University of KwaZulu-Natal



Dear Dr Bhengu & Dr Chikoko,

Consideration of Ethical Clearance for student:

Ndlovu, Blanche Ntombizodwa - 204520072

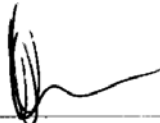
Your student's ethical clearance application has met with approval in terms of the **internal review process** of the Faculty of Education.

Approval has been obtained from the Faculty Research Committee, and the application will be forwarded for ratification (MEd) or recommended in the case of PhD and Staff applications, to the Ethics Sub-Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. All Masters applications approved by Faculty Research Committee may commence with research.

Both you and the student will be advised as to whether ethical clearance has been granted for the research thesis (PhD), once the Ethics Sub-Committee has reviewed the application. An ethical clearance certificate will be issued which you should retain with your records. The student should include the ethical clearance certificate in the final dissertation (appendixes).

Should you have any queries please contact the Faculty Research Officer on (031) 260 3524 or on the email buchler@ukzn.ac.za

Yours faithfully



PP Professor D. Bhana
Deputy Dean Postgraduate Studies and Research

