

**An investigation into the nature of parental involvement at a rural
primary school**

By

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DECLARATION

I, Krishna Sivalingam Rajin declare that:

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Signed: K.S. Rajin

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my 79-year-old mother, Mrs Chinnama Raju who is still alive and in good health. I am grateful to my mother, who in spite of her low level of formal schooling, devoted much time to teaching me to read and write during my formative years of schooling.

I still remember those family literacy evenings when all the children sat around a table and took turns to read from old story books. I cherish those dotting moments when my mother tenderly held my hand and helped me to write my alphabets and numbers in an old scrapbook.

Fond memories of those early learning experiences have inculcated in me an insatiable desire for reading and writing which is the key to knowledge and understanding.

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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to explore the nature of parental involvement at a rural primary school situated in KwaZulu-Natal Midlands of South Africa. The study was conducted within the qualitative mode of enquiry. Data was gathered by means of in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis and observations. The data was collected from a convenience sample made up of eight parents from a case study school. Data analysis was an ongoing process from the day that I entered the research site until the completion of data collection.

The findings revealed that parents from a poor rural community gave an exceptionally good account of their involvement, and were determined to be involved and supportive in their children's schooling. However, various factors, such as parent illiteracy, the new school curriculum, the parents' low socio-economic status, the slow pace of infrastructure development in the community and the lack of educational resources in the home made it difficult for the parents' to carry out the roles and responsibilities expected of them by the school.

Finally, this study also shows that adults inadvertently learn literacy and numeracy skills through their daily engagement in social and cultural activities. It is this learning in practice that equipped and encouraged the participants to be involved in their children's schooling.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABET:	Adult Basic Education and Training
BEA:	Bantu Education Authority
DoE:	Department of Education
EMIS:	Education Management Information System
FGD:	Focus Group Discussion
HoD:	Head of Department (school level)
IDP:	Integrated Development Plan
IFP:	Inkatha Freedom Party
OBE:	Outcomes Based Education
Q1:	Quintile 1
SASA:	South African Schools Act
SGB:	School Governing Body
UDF:	United Democratic Front
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational and Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Scholars writing on the home-school partnership model (i.e. a model that expects the parent and school to be equal partners in the child's schooling) maintain that parents who are involved in their children's schooling make a significant contribution to their children's academic performance and other school-related activities. Atmore (1994) maintains that young children who receive help and encouragement from their parents are inclined to perform better at school, when compared to children of similar socio-economic status but who receive less or no parental help at all. Sui-Chu and Willms (1996) explain that greater parental involvement promotes a positive attitude in the child towards his/her schoolwork and this result in improved performance. This home-school partnership model on parental involvement has its merits, and has been widely accepted both locally and abroad.

However, the implementation of the home-school partnership model in South African schools, especially in rural areas, has been fraught with problems. According to Lemmer (2007, p. 218) "parent participation is not significant in many schools even where parents are invited." Mncube (2009) also shows a growing trend of non-participation of parents in both rural and urban schools in South Africa. Mbokodi (2008) maintains that over the past decade the parent-school partnership has been especially lacking in the rural areas of South Africa. This study has shown that parental involvement and participation in schooling activities is communal learning process that not only enhances children's performance at school but also facilitates informal parental learning.

This study was part of a broader reading research project that set out to investigate the nature of parental involvement at a rural primary school situated in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands. Most of the learners at this school came from a disadvantaged background. The school curricula catered for Grades R to 7 for children and an Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) centre for adult learners.

1.2 Profile of the school

Information in this section on the profile of the school was extracted from the School's Archive (2011) and the informal discussions with educators on the staff.

The school first opened its doors in 1957 with two classrooms that were built out of mud by members of the community. Many years later, due to a high demand for schooling in the area, the Bantu Education Authority undertook further extension to the school by adding 13 classrooms.

After the demise of apartheid, the Department of Education (DoE) earmarked this school for upgrade as part of its improvement plan. In 1996 the school received its first supply of electricity. In that same year, two Heads of Department were appointed at the school. Progressively since then the authorities have undertaken many projects to improve the infrastructure of the school.

In 2008 the Department of Works carried renovation work of R2.5 million on the school buildings. Although the school now has 23 classrooms and one computer laboratory, the authorities still have to upgrade other facilities such as the ablution and tapped water supply.

According to Teacher A (2011), the staff component at the school in 2011 comprised of the principal, 3 Heads of Department and 19 level one educators (a total of 23 educators) with an enrolment of 995 learners. Hence, the learner-teacher ratio was 43:1.

Furthermore, the school had a fully constituted governing body that was assigned roles as laid out in the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA). The parents and community members keenly support the school activities and provided voluntary labour for certain projects undertaken by the school.

1.3 Level of education in the community

Table 1 below gives an indication of the most recent levels of education in Mkhambathini Municipality where the school is situated.

Table 1: Education profile of Mkhambathini Local Municipality

No formal schooling	Grade 1/sub A (complete/in process) up to Grade 5	Grade 6 up to Grade 11 or Form 4 / NTC II	Grade 12/NTC III (without university exemption)	Certificate with Grade 12
5854	10 697	18 085	2537	90

Source: Mkhambathini Local Municipality Integrated Development Plan (IDP) for 2011/2012 (figures provided by Stats SA Community Survey 2007)

The above table shows that a total of 37 263 people participated in the 2007 municipal survey, and of that figure, 5854 (15.7%) have no formal schooling at all, 10 067 (28.7%) are in the process or have completed lower grades in primary school, 18 085 (48.5%) are in primary to high school, 2537 (6.8%) have not achieved Grade 12 and only 90 (0.2%) have a Grade 12 certificate. These figures do not bode well for academic progress in the area, since only 0.2% of the people had the prospect of entering institutions of higher education.

Mkhambathini Municipality (2011) has identified the following core reasons for the low level of education of the rural people living within the municipality:

- Poor or non-existent educational facilities.
- Limited investment in education on the part of the government.
- Lack of ABET, which includes language, literacy/numeracy and communication.

1.4 Legacy of political unrest in the area

Although relative peace and calm prevails in the vicinity of Ward 1 of Mkhambathini today, the people who reside in the area still remember the ravages of the political unrest that occurred during the 1990s. The situation in this part of the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands turned ugly in the early 1990s, when political violence swept across townships close to Pietermaritzburg. Kockott (1990) reports that during the period of unrest, the people living in the townships around Pietermaritzburg split into bitter conflict between supporters of the Inkatha Freedom Party and of the United Democratic Front. These clashes forced thousands of victims to seek refuge in the once peaceful area of Ward 1 of Mkhambathini. My perusal of School Archive (2011) revealed that during this period of violence and upheaval, five children from this school were killed in crossfire while travelling to school.

1.5 Rationale

1.5.1 The importance of this study

In order to understand the nature of parental involvement in their children's schooling in a South African context, the country's legacy of apartheid and its debilitating effects on the country's poor Black population must be taken into account. Studies reveal that during the apartheid era the roles of Black parents were limited to serving on school boards, financing their children's schooling or offering their services in voluntary work (Lemmer, 2007; Butler, 2011). According to Butler (2011) the government gave strong management control to the school boards, who were elected by the parents in each district. Ntantala (2012) explains that since Black parents did not support the government's initiative in setting up school boards, the BEA nominated representatives who did not enjoy the confidence of the people.

However, after the first democratic elections in 1994, the newly elected government implemented measures to transform education along with the country's democratisation process. The South African School's Act No.84 of 1996 (SASA) that then followed granted parents the right to be partners in their children's schooling. SASA empowered parents in making it compulsory for them to serve on the schools governing bodies (SGB) and entrusted them with various roles in school governance. This set the legal basis for the home-school partnership model in the country.

Some of the important responsibilities included the development and adoption of a Constitution, developing a Mission statement, and the administration and control of school's property. The democratic nature of the election and adoption of the SGB's made the new structure different from the earlier school boards that were merely manipulated by the BEA. With the advent of SASA, parents in each school in the country were now granted the right to elect its own SGB. Singh, Mbokodi and Msila (2004, p.301) states that "the underpinning philosophy of SASA is that schools are encouraged to become self-managed as well as self-reliant."

However, some studies show that parents, especially those of children in rural schools, are averse to taking on the responsibilities delegated to them by SASA (Mbokodi, 2008; Mncube, 2009). Lemmer (2007) explains that relatively small number of parents has been actively involved, and some who do get involved opt out after few years of service. Mncube (2009, p. 99) states that "some parents, particularly those in rural schools, are not always given sufficient opportunity to participate in crucial decisions affecting the life of the school." By failing to heed SASA's requirements, such schools have been functioning without a legal basis.

1.5.2 Some of the existing scholarship

Some of the available scholarships on the nature of parental involvement in South African schools include topics such as:

- Community and parent involvement in early childhood development (Atmore, 1994)
- Parent involvement with Grade 8 learners of Mathematics (Govender, 2007)
- Parent involvement in teacher education in South Africa (Lemmer, 2007)
- Participation politics: African parents' negotiation of social identities in school governance and its policy implications (Brown & Duku, 2008)
- Black parental involvement in education (Mbokodi, 2008)
- Home-school partnership - a study of opinions of selected parents and teachers in KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa (Bojuwoye, 2009)
- The perceptions of parents of their role in the democratic governance of schools in South Africa (Mncube, 2009).

While these studies have made meaningful contributions in the field of parental involvement in general, there still exists a need for further investigation in this area of research in schools situated in poor rural communities of South Africa.

1.5.3 My personal interest and motivation

While serving as a member on the management team at a poor semi-urban school, I observed a low level of parental participation in their children's schooling. For instance, my school has on record a low level of interest and participation at governing body meetings, parent-teacher meetings and school activities. There could be underlying factors such as work fatigue, transport problems, illiteracy or poverty that impedes parental participation.

In order to unravel the reality of the problems that poor parents experience in undertaking the responsibilities expected of them by SASA, I assumed my study in a community that most likely abounded with high levels adult illiteracy and unemployment. I therefore embarked on this study with a team of UKZN students who conducted a reading research project at a rural primary school in Kwa Zulu-Natal Midlands.

1.6 Key question and subsidiary questions

Key question: What is the nature of parental involvement at a rural primary school?

Subsidiary questions:

- How are the parents of learners at the rural primary school involved in their children's schooling?
- What factors enhance parental involvement at the school?
- What factors inhibit parental involvement at the school?
- What role does the level of the parents' literacy play in their involvement at the school?

1.7 Methodology

The study was conducted at a rural primary school. It embarked on an investigation into the nature of parental involvement at that school.

The study was conducted within the interpretive paradigm, which enabled me to gain a deep understanding of the nature of the participants' involvement with the school.

The study adopted a descriptive, qualitative case study approach, thus producing a rich, descriptive account of the manner in which the main role-players interacted with each other and the school.

The main methods of data collection were focus group discussions (FGDs), in-depth interviews, documents analysis and field notes of observations recorded during my visits to the site.

1.8 Outline of the dissertation

This dissertation is organised into five chapters, as follows:

Chapter One: This chapter provides an introduction to the study by exploring the contextual factors that have a bearing on it. This includes my rationale for this study, the research questions and a brief outline of the methodology.

Chapter Two: This chapter reviews empirical studies conducted by other researchers on similar topics on parental involvement. It presents a review of literature on the dominant view that parental involvement enhances the child's academic performance, and a differing view in favour of poor and illiterate parents who find it difficult to meet the standards of accountability and responsibility expected of them by the school authorities. The chapter also reviews key concepts and various literatures that relate to the research questions of the study. Finally, the chapter presents the conceptual framework that underpins this study.

Chapter Three: This chapter outlines the methodology that was used in the study. It explains the research design which includes the paradigm, approach and method of enquiry used in the study. It also includes an outline of the site and sampling, methods of data collection and analysis, ethics and trustworthiness, positionality and limitations to the study.

Chapter Four: This chapter presents the findings of the study that relate to the research questions.

Chapter Five: This chapter contains a summary of the main findings, makes recommendations and explains the contribution to further research relevant to this field of study.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews empirical studies conducted by other researchers on similar topics based on parental involvement. It presents a review of literature on two notions, one that supports the dominant view that parental involvement enhances the child's academic performance and a dissenting view in favour of poor and illiterate parents who find it difficult to meet the standards of accountability and responsibility expected of them by the school authorities. The chapter also reviews literature on key concepts and various issues that relates to the research questions of the study. Finally the chapter presents the conceptual framework that underpins this study.

2.2 Contextual issues related to this study

Parents living in Black African rural communities of South Africa experience many difficulties in fulfilling the roles that are expected of them in their children's schooling. This situation prevails because of the high level of unemployment and poverty, mainly inherited from the era of apartheid.

This study was conducted at a school situated in a poor rural community within the Mkhambathini municipality, approximately 25 km away from Pietermaritzburg. Mkhambathini Municipality (2011) reveals that in spite of a high production level of farming within the municipality, the local black inhabitants who provided labour on the farms, reaped very little from the capital generated through the economic activities in the area. Low income and unemployment led to poverty and other social ills. Mkhambathini Municipality (2011) has identified income poverty and human poverty as being the most common problems to deal with in the municipality, and defines these as follows:

- **Income poverty** results from a lack of sufficient income to satisfy basic food needs and essential non-food needs such as clothing, energy and shelter.
- **Human poverty** results from the lack of basic human capacity such as literacy and numeracy. The people therefore have difficulty in finding employment and in handling their daily affairs. It also limits the people from having access to basic services. The ripple effect is malnutrition, sickness and even death.

With little consideration about the parents' socio-economic background, the South African schooling system is designed to forge a partnership between parents and their children's school. DoE (1996) stipulate that parents must serve on the school's governing body. School further impose other requirements such as attending parent-teacher meetings and assisting their children with their homework. Meeting these requirements may be easy for parents residing in affluent communities but is not the case for poor parents living in rural areas of the country.

Today's Black African adult population in South Africa grew up during the era of apartheid. At that time, the Bantu Education Authority, under the control of the Nationalist Party focused mainly on basic literacy for Black children. Research documented by Butler (2011) and Giliomee (2009) suggest that the BEA used this as their strategy to prepare Black people mainly for semi-skilled and menial jobs.

Furthermore, research reveals that while under the BEA, Black African parents played a very limited role in their children's schooling. For instance, Butler (2011) and Mabasa and Themane (2002) show that while the BEA made provision for parents to be elected to serve on school boards or school committees, these boards were directly responsible to the Bantu Education Authority and were dominated by school principals.

However, changes in education were slowly introduced as political unrest swept across the townships. Mabasa and Themane (2002) explain that after the 1976 student uprisings and the subsequent political unrest of the 1980's, the BEA yielded on its high-handed authority by introducing the Parent Teacher Student Association that gave parents greater roles to play in their children's schooling.

2.3 SASA No. 84 of 1996

After the demise of apartheid in South Africa the State moved swiftly in providing a new national educational system for schools. On 15 November 1996 the President's Office of the country signed into power the South African School's Act (SASA). DoE (1996) shows that the new education Act was designed to redress past inequalities and promote democratisation in education.

In its preamble the SASA 84 of 1996 outlined the parents' role in their children's schooling. It explains that parents have the right to join the State as a partner in their

children's schooling by serving on the SGB and that they comprise the majority membership on the SGB when compared to other members such as the teachers, learners, support staff and the principal (as *ex-officio*).

The (DoE, 1996) stipulates the SGB's major roles as follows:

- adoption of a Constitution and a Mission statement for the school
- assist the principal and staff in conducting their professional duties
- motivate parents to offer voluntary service and assume responsibility over the maintenance of school property.

These roles made the SGB central in the parent-school partnership. Brown and Duku (2008) maintain that the SGB gave parents the representation of a legitimate interest in the school system.

However, since the promulgation of SASA in 1996, the changes that were envisaged have not been straightforward and simple to implement. Reviewing the implementation of SASA, Daniel, Southall and Lachman (2005, p. 206) report that "the educational gap between the urban and rural areas and between different social classes remains vast."

Due to the legacy of apartheid this new legislation of the SASA does little to undo inequalities in education. Black parents are still left behind – particularly rural, poor and illiterate parents. They struggle to take on new responsibilities and often transfer school governance back to the school principal, "only to serve as passive participants" (Mncube, 2009, p.95). Daniel et al. (2005) reveal that Black schools, particularly those in rural areas, still reflect and reproduce patterns of illiteracy, unemployment and poverty that are similar to the situation in the pre-1994 era.

Although the SASA has empowered parents in school governance, ultimately implementing measures to involve parents meaningfully in school activities is the responsibility of the school management. The management's failure to build on this parent-school partnership leaves parents alienated from the school. Lemmer (2007, p. 218) claims that "schools frequently fail to establish strong links between home, school and parent."

2.4 Definition of terms

This section defines terms which are relevant and critical to this study: parent, learner, literacy and parental involvement.

2.4.1 Parent

In the African context, particularly among the Nguni speaking people, every adult in the community is regarded as a parent. In other words, every adult is not only responsible for his/her biological child but for all children in the village. Hence the notion of an orphan is foreign. According to Lekoko and Modise (2011) and Ntseane (2011), bringing up a child is a responsibility of the whole village, and not just of the biological parent.

On the other hand, the western view is that the child be reared in a home with both his/her biological parents. However, there is a growing tendency in both developed and developing countries for children to be brought up in single-parent families and foster-care homes. Ramirez (2001) explains term parent to refer to a sibling, adult friend or any older individual who takes a special interest in the development of a child upon the death of its parent or abandonment by its parents.

Unfortunately, due to systemic breaking down of African communities during the colonial and apartheid era, abounding illness and poverty, African children are more likely to lose their parents at an early age. The HIV & AIDS epidemic and other poverty-related terminal illnesses are a major cause of the high adult mortality rate in poor communities. Ayieko (2003, p.1) states that “child-headed households are becoming more and more frequent in rural areas.” Such children are sometimes left to fend for themselves or be placed in foster-care homes. Understanding this situation has been important in this study, because five of the participants were foster care parents.

In this study the term parent is defined according to DoE (1996) as “one or both of a child’s biological parents, a caregiver or guardian in whose custody the child resides, and who shows a keen interest in developing the child’s mental and physical capabilities.”

2.4.2 Learner

The term learner used in this study refers to a child who receives education at an institution where knowledge and understanding are imparted. SASA defines a learner as any person who receives education or is obliged to receive education. SASA makes it obligatory for a child between the ages of 6-15 years to attend school where he/she is to receive education. Furthermore, the child must not be prejudiced because of gender, disability, socio-economic background, race, ethnicity or religious background.

Unfortunately, the stigma that stems from apartheid still haunts the lives of many children who live in poor communities of the country. The prevalence of poverty and the slow pace of infrastructure development in the area where my study was conducted show that rural learners continue to be at the receiving end of hardship and deprivation. In other words, learners in rural areas, unlike their counterparts in urban or affluent communities, continue to be disadvantaged in this post-1994 era.

2.4.3 Literacy

Literacy has long been synonymous with a person's ability to read and write. People who are unable to read and write may be classified as being illiterate. Then there are adults or adolescents who are semi-literate because of their low level of formal schooling. Joshi and Ghose (2006, p.78) refer to this category of learners as school "drop outs before the 5th grade."

At its most basic level, literacy enables a person to do simple activities such as writing his/her name, and writing simple sentences describing daily activities or self-reports. Kalman (2008, p. 525) states that "the characterisation of being literate is centered on the most rudimentary part of reading, writing and basic education." Some adults who have no formal schooling have acquired literacy skills through their daily informal activities. Prinsloo and Breier (1996, p. 1) claim that this is "not simply a set of technical skills learnt in formal education, but as social practices embedded in specific contexts, discourses and positions."

However, Stroup (2001) explains that scholars from different disciplines have found it difficult to give a clear definition of literacy, and in the course of history the definition

has often been subject to historical, social, economic, political and other forces. According to Stroup (2001), during the Middle Ages in Europe literacy was generally associated with a person's ability to read and write Latin, a privilege that was enjoyed by a small elite group of people. However, upon the advent of the printing press in the 16th century, other languages became commonly used, thus resulting in an explosion of literacy levels, even among people belonging to the lower social order.

More recently academics have suggested that literacy must go beyond the skills of reading and writing. Stroup (2001, p. 2) states that the "United Nations Educational and Scientific and Cultural Organisation defines literacy as one's ability to engage in all activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing, and calculation for his own and community's development."

Literate adults are better equipped to deal with their children's schooling. Literacy equips them with the skills to understand schooling requirements and help their children with their homework. Chen and Harris (2009) relate that literate parents are inclined to understand the literacy demands placed on their children at school, and are better off than illiterate parents in providing a meaningful environment for literacy development at home. Benjamin (1993, p. 4) claims that "literate parents are more likely to exert a positive influence on their children's academic achievement."

On the other hand, according to Smith and Elish-Piper (2002), adults who struggle to cope with literacy skills are less likely to help their children with school work or school-related activities. Govender (2007) maintains that parents who do not read books cannot expect the school to make their children become avid readers of books, and that the academic performance of children ultimately reflects their intellectual life at home. Furthermore, Bohler et al. (1996) maintain that parents who fail to make their high school grades are more likely to have children who will drop out of school in later years.

In an article on adult literacy Baatjes and Mathe (2004) make a distinction between two approaches, namely the instrumentalist approach and the emancipatory approach. In their view the dominant instrumentalist approach, while good in generating positive statistics about adult literacy, falls short in providing adults with the necessary skills to

bring about change in their lives. Baatjes and Mathe (2004) explain that even if parents are literate this does not mean that they have developed capacities beyond rudimentary reading and writing.

In South Africa, Aitchison and Harley (2006, p. 96) argue that “KwaZulu-Natal remained the province with the highest number of adults with no education at all.” They further argue that “the vast majority of adults with little or no education in 2001 were Black Africans (93.9%), as was the case in 1996” (Aitchison & Harley, 2006, p. 96). However, recent statistics show a promising outlook to the provision of adult education in the province of Kwa Zulu-Natal (KZN). In the Daily News, Barbeau (2012) reports that “South Africans are becoming increasingly educated, with the number of adults who have received no education falling from 19 percent in Census 1996 to 8.7 percent in Census 2011 and in KZN, there have been improvements too, with a decrease from 22.5 percent in 1996 to 10.8 percent in 2011.” While this may be a positive sign for adult education in the province, education stakeholders must work hard to maintain the existing status quo or improve the situation in future years to come. It is in this context that the issue of literacy has to be discussed in the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

Although the Black African population of South Africa is now politically liberated, adult illiteracy still abounds in the rural communities of the country. As in the case of my study, participants who were illiterate or semi-literate were not equipped to teach their children at home while the literate parents had the efficacy in helping their children with their schoolwork and in participating in school meetings.

In rural areas where illiteracy is rife, ABET centres could devise programmes that promote family literacy. Family literacy includes various activities to be woven into the fabric of peoples’ daily lives. Auerbach (1989) explains that the social context becomes a rich resource that informs learning. According to Land (2012), family literacy improves communication between parents and children on matters relating to sex, breastfeeding basic health and nutrition. Furthermore, Land (2012) maintains that family literacy encourages parents to read with their children, play literacy-related games and guide their children in the choices and decisions that they face. The participants in this study have alluded to engaging in similar family literacy programmes in their homes.

This study upholds the view that is echoed in the work of Lim (1996) that literacy must be seen as a means of empowering underprivileged people to attain justice and liberation from social evils of the past.

2.4.4 Parental involvement and participation

In this section I would like to clarify the interchange of the concepts of parental involvement and parental participation. While the title of this study places emphasis on involvement, I would like to argue that in the nature of this study, involvement implies participation.

Participation is a critical concept in adult education discourse. Theorists, such as social learning theorist Bandura (2001), situated cognition theorist Lave (1988) and critical theorists Freire and Macedo (1995) have all based their arguments on learning as taking place through participation. Lave (1988) explains that learning is a process of enculturation within a social context, incorporating behaviours (actions) and cognition by recognizing the interaction between people and environment and the role of their situation. For Lave (1988), people develop practical solutions based not on what they would have learnt formally but on practical, collective experience informed by informal learning. In this study participation reflects a collective learning process that facilitates parental involvement in schooling activities that is based on informal learning.

Some scholars claim that parental participation enables both parent and teacher to enjoy mutual support and that the parent is seen as integral to the child's schooling and primarily responsible for their education (Lemmer, 2007; Macbeth, 1989). The interaction results in improved academic achievement for the child.

Furthermore, Huntsinger, Krieg, and Jose (1998, p. 3) define parental involvement as "the dedication of resources by the parent to the child in a specific domain." Govender (2007, p. 16) explains it as "participating in activities such as school events, meetings, workshops, governance activities, working as teacher aides, tutors and school advocates, within the larger school community." DCSF (2007) maintains that parental involvement takes place at many levels, such as at school level, helping in school governance or helping in classrooms and at home level, reading to the child, assisting with homework or singing nursery rhymes.

This study also espouses ideas from a leading research conducted by Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) who attribute parental involvement to the parent's construction of their role (they see it as part of their role or job), their perceptions of self efficacy (the extent to which they are able to make a difference), opportunities and barriers afforded by school teachers and the dynamic role their children play in mediating between parent and school.

Since parents make up the larger component of all the stakeholders at a school, it is imperative that they play a significant role in their children's education. Singh et al. (2004) explain that parents must be well informed of their children's progress, participate in decision making and keep themselves abreast with current educational issues. However, the parents' socio-economic has a bearing on the extent and nature of their involvement.

DCSF (2007) maintains that although most parents have high aspirations for their children, parents from advantaged socio-economic backgrounds have stronger predictors for achievement for their children than parents from low socio-economic backgrounds. In this study, it was necessary for me to consider the impact of the socio-economic status of the parents. Singh et al. (2004) reveal that in historically disadvantaged areas in South Africa, large scale unemployment and adult illiteracy contribute to non-participation of parents in their children's schooling.

While most policy makers and researchers are of the notion that the dominant view of parental involvement (i.e. home-school partnership) is the effective means of improving the scholastic performance of the child, they should also consider the impact that the parents' low socio-economic status may have on their involvement. De Carvalho (2001) explains that the dominant view fail to address the changing social structure of our modern society based on social class background and family power relations. Furthermore, De Carvalho (2001) argues that the dominant view caters for the upper to middle class and suburban community's schooling and does not consider the plight of parents who come from diverse social and cultural backgrounds.

Since this study was located in a historically disadvantaged community, it questions the impact of the dominant view of parental involvement on scholastic performance

which takes for granted that all parents have the same historical and social backgrounds and equal access to power. Lott (2001, p. 247) shows that in the dominant view “the desired and comfortable partnership seems to be that between school and ‘nice’ middle class parents.”

2.5 Pull and push factors to parental involvement

In order for effective teaching and learning to take place in schools, Lemmer (2007) suggests that parents must play supportive roles in the home-school partnership. While there are factors that attract parents to play roles in their children’s schooling, other factors prevent them from participating. This section reviews the literature on these pull and push factors.

2.5.1 Maintaining home-school communication

Schools must use constructive means of communicating with parents. Hartlep and Ellis (2010) reveal that communication should be a meaningful and regular two-way process between the parent and the school. According to Machen, Wilson and Notar (2005), the parent-school relationship is positively influenced by a proactive communication between the home and school. In other words, as Hiatt-Michael (2001) explains, the teachers take the first step to create and maintain two-way communication. The school must therefore initiate the home-school connection.

The principal and his staff must “find realistic and workable ways” (Machen et al., 2005, p.15) to involve parents in their children’s schooling. In order to improve the communication between parent and school, Hornby and Witte (2010) suggest that school must develop written policies for parental involvement in collaboration with parents, so that both parent and school are familiar with the parameters within which they operate.

Apart from telephone calls, letters and notifications that are made out in the parent’s home language, teachers are also encouraged to visit the homes of parents in order to discuss the child’s performance. Crawford and Zygouris-Coe (2006) explain that home visits afford the parents an opportunity to have a face-to-face discussion with the teachers on their home soil. This in turn helps teachers to build a rapport with parents and to understand the home conditions under which parents live, as echoed in Hornby and Witte (2010). This arrangement relieves the parents of the trouble of arranging

transport to attend meetings or someone else to care for other siblings on the meeting nights.

Effective home-school partnership depends on the manner in which schools liaise with parents. According to Singh et al. (2004) schools merely dissuade parents from getting involved in their children's schooling when they make them feel intimidated. Bojuwoye (2009, p. 473) states that the "attitudes of parents to home-school partnership are often driven by previous unfriendly or unwelcome experiences." This unfriendliness on the part of the school merely drives parents away from the school. Machen et al. (2005, p. 15) also observe that "poor parents are far less likely to be involved in school-based activities and far less likely to meet with educators due to this sense of intimidation and past negative experiences." Harris and Goodall (2008) suggest that parents will get involved if the school creates the capacity for them to contribute to their children's schooling.

Smith & Elish-Piper (2002) explain that the readability, language usage and types of letters and messages that are dispatched from the school are critical strategies to increase parental involvement. According to Bojuwoye (2009) the lack of understanding in the school system can be attributed to parents' low educational backgrounds.

This study supports the notion that it is essential for schools to keep the lines of parent-school communication open at all times. However, expecting schools to apply the same general standards of communication across the board, that is, the same standards for schools from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, may pose certain practical problems. For example, the principal at a rural school may experience difficulties in reaching the parents because of poor roads and the high cost of telecommunication. In such cases the only option in contacting the parent is by means of a letter that is sent with the child and sometimes never reaches the parent.

2.5.2 Involvement in school activities

There are different ways in which parents can be involved in activities organised by the school. Studies show that parental involvement includes a number of activities, such as attending open days, parent evenings, participation on school committees, helping the child with his/her homework, test preparation and volunteering

(Bojuwoye, 2009; Rätty, Kasanen & Laine, 2009). This section will consider two elements of involvement, namely school-based parent meetings and helping the child with his/her homework.

School-based parent meetings are convenient ways of creating dialogue between the school and the parent. They give the parents a platform to express themselves on issues relating to their involvement in their children's schooling (issues such as timing of parent meetings, homework demands, payment of school fees, etc). Schools, on the other hand, use these meetings to discuss issues such as the changing trends in the school curriculum, learner performance and the general problems that the school encounters with the child during the learning process.

Crawford and Zygouris-Coe (2006, p. 263) states that "these meetings can take the form of introductory back-to-school nights, regularly scheduled informational meetings, or ongoing support groups." Rätty et al. (2009) explain that parent meetings are positive means of empowering parents to become more competent in helping their children cope with their school work.

However, in order to reap successful outcomes for the child, the parents must cooperate with the school authorities by making themselves available for these meetings. According to Bojuwoye (2009, p. 472) "parents know that a good investment in children's education is to volunteer, make themselves available, be involved in school and interact with their children's teachers."

Helping children with their homework and reading assignments is another important way of helping pupils to make a success of their schooling. These forms of involvement are not solely restricted to the affluent schools only. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2001, p. 206) state that "parents across socio-economic, ethnic, and geographic groups assume that they should be involved in homework and value-specific guidance for involvement from schools and teachers."

However, parents sometimes do not understand the school's expectation of their role in assisting the child with homework. Vatterott (2009) found that there needs to be more guidance and communication from teachers on what they expect of parents, and that teachers must respect the parents' limitations in assisting with homework.

Unfortunately, poor and illiterate parents find it difficult to meet these requirements. People living in economically deprived communities are apprehensive about what the school expects of them. In a South African context, Singh et al. (2004) maintain that parents who are involved felt intimidated, and the schools appeared to be unwelcoming to their ideas. Hence, the school must build a relationship based on trust and respect for the parents' ability to fulfil their responsibilities. It was noteworthy in this study that the principal and staff treated parents in a respectful way and this encourage involvement.

2.5.3 Socio-economic status of the parent

The socio-economic circumstances of the parents' have a bearing on their level of involvement in their children's education. Harris and Goodall (2008, p. 279) states that "the socio-economic status of the parent mediates both parental engagement and pupil achievement." Sui-Chu and Willms (1996) claim that the parent's socio-economic status is one of the key factors that accounts for the extent to which they are involved in their children's schooling. According to Singh et al. (2004), children who are brought up in affluent homes are at an advantage because their parents have the money to buy them books, study materials and provide study facilities. Furthermore these parents have acquired the cultural capital that articulates with that of the school.

On the other hand, the parents' low socio-economic status inhibits the level of parental involvement. Harris and Goodall (2008, p. 279) explain that "socio-economic status impact, in part, negatively, through material deprivation, and in part, through attitudes and behaviours towards education." Huang and Mason (2008) claim that parents of lower socio-economic status work long and unpredictable hours with inflexible schedules thus restricting their involvement in parent meetings and other activities organised by the school.

Furthermore, Hornby (2005) explains that in single-parent households, especially those headed by mothers who are working, it is difficult for them to display a high level of involvement in their children's schooling. In the South African context, low socio-economic status often affects Black parents, who through apartheid were never encouraged to participate in the educational activities of their children.

However, it is not always the case that poor and low-income parents are disinterested in getting involved in their children's schooling. Lott (2001) is of the view that while educational professionals construe non-involvement as disinterest and apathy, the low-income parents attribute this to poor communication and discouragement regarding their efforts to participate in a world in which they have little control.

2.5.4 The role of the level of parents' literacy on parental involvement

Since this study was part of a broader literacy project, it was useful to investigate ways in which literacy levels of parents' affects their involvement in their children's schooling. Literature based on studies conducted in both affluent and non-affluent countries suggests that parent literacy levels have an effect on their children's achievement at school (Govender, 2007; Chen and Harris, 2009; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Oluwatelure & Oloruntegbe, 2010).

Chen and Harris (2009), writing in a first world perspective, explain that literate parents are inclined to understand the literacy demands placed on their children at school, and are in a better position to provide a meaningful environment for literacy development at home. Similarly, from a western perspective, Benjamin (1993, p. 4) states that "literate parents are more likely to exert a positive influence on their children's academic achievement." Both perspectives reflect situations in more affluent countries of the world.

On the other hand adults who struggle to cope with literacy skills are less likely to help their children with school work or school-related activities. This situation is common in most schools located in underprivileged areas of South Africa. A study conducted by Govender (2007) maintains that parents who do not read books cannot expect the school to make their children avid readers of books, and that the academic performance of children ultimately reflects their intellectual life at home. The situation is exacerbated when children from such homes tend to drop out of school at a tender age. Bohler et al. (1996) state that when parents who fail to make their high school grades are more likely to have children who will drop out of school in later years.

In this study it was evident that the participants who had gone beyond elementary schooling were more adept to assisting their children with their school work than those without formal schooling.

2.5.5 Parents' sense of efficacy

Studies conducted in western countries maintain that the parents' sense of efficacy also has a bearing on their level of involvement in their children's schooling. The parents' sense of efficacy refers to their "own belief or confidence that they can help the child with school work" (Eccles & Harold, 1993, p. 571). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997, p. 19) mention that "parents with a higher sense of efficacy are likely to believe that their involvement will make a positive difference for their children." Wallace (2007, p. 27) states that "greater efficacy creates higher goals for children and leads to greater persistence on the part of the parent." Two important factors that have a bearing on the parents' sense of efficacy are discussed below.

Firstly, the parent's level of earning influences the way they feel about themselves. Harris, Andrew-Power and Goodall (2009) maintain that parents who earn higher incomes tend to have a higher sense of efficacy than parents who are financially disadvantaged.

Secondly, parents' failure to achieve success reduces their motivation to become involved in their children's schooling. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997, p. 19) explain that "parents with low efficacy for helping their children in school would likely find this low efficacy itself interfering with involvement intentions, aimed at achieving even highly desired goals such as improved performance for their children."

While higher income levels and higher educational levels may be important factors in determining the parents' sense of efficacy in affluent countries, poor rural parents usually lack these norms and learn to adopt their sense efficacy over a period of time. This will be discussed later in Chapter 4.

2.6 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework was used to give direction to this study and shows the relationships between the different constructs under investigation. Maxwell (2005) explains that the conceptual framework consists of ideas, assumptions, expectations and beliefs that inform a study.

In this study I used an adaptation of the Hoover-Dempsey Sandler model in conjunction and relevant ideas from cultural capital theory as the conceptual

framework.

The Hoover-Dempsey Sandler model was adapted for this study by using the first two variables, namely, the parents' involvement decisions and their choice of involvement. These provided assumptions and expectations that underpinned my understanding of the nature of parental involvement at the rural primary school.

Relevant ideas from the Cultural Capital theory was used to highlight the imbalances that existed between the family dynamic of people (i.e. socio-economic status of the parents) living in a poor rural community and the Western middle-class ethos practiced at a public school situated in a rural community.

The differences that existed between the cultural capital at home and the school's cultural capital were shown to affect the nature of parental involvement in their children's schooling. In a study conducted in a first world country, Reay (2004, p. 74) argues that "schools tend to measure success by the amount and type of cultural capital inherited from the family milieu rather than by measures of individual talent or achievement."

2.6.1 Variables from the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model

According to Lavenda (2011) the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model was designed and tested in educational systems and cultural contexts within the United States of America. This model was originally designed to support work done in the field of psychology. However, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) maintain that it is also possible to use this model in studies involving education and social sciences. It examined specific aspects of parental involvement and a wide range of parent, child, school and community variables related to parental involvement and its outcomes.

Although the Hoover-Dempsey Sandler Model was developed and used in a western context, the two variables extracted for discussion in this study were used appropriately as a yardstick in underpinning the nature of parental involvement at a South African rural primary school.

2.6.1.1 Why do parents become involved in their children's education?

This variable is influenced by the parent's positive decision to become involved in the child's schooling. It is motivated by two belief systems, namely, the parents' role construction and their sense of efficacy in helping the child succeed in school (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

The parents' role construction: This is defined as the parent's beliefs about the things that they are supposed to do for their children regarding their children's education, and the pattern of parental behaviour that follows those beliefs. Research show that it often includes the parent's own experiences with schooling, with teachers and with other parents that influenced their involvement in their children's schooling (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) maintain that parents' role construction is learned largely through the observation and modelling of their own former school-related involvement. The study used this variable to explore and understand its applicability in a community that was affected by apartheid and violence and which in its post-independence remained poor and located in a rural area.

The parent's sense of efficacy in helping the child succeed in school: According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995), the parents' personal sense of efficacy arises from their own belief that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to help their children succeed at school. The parent therefore makes choices of involvement by "thinking in advance about their behaviour and the outcomes it would produce" (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) explain that parents who have a high sense of efficacy usually make positive decisions as they persist in the face of challenges, while parents who are low in efficacy tend to have low expectations about outcomes of their efforts to help their child succeed in school and therefore have low persistence in overcoming obstacles.

This study considered the ways in which parents' self-efficacy is developed from four general sources proposed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995), namely: the parents' direct experience (their own schooling experiences), indirect experiences (the observation of others), verbal persuasion (verbal encouragement from important role-

players) and emotional arousal (direct and emotional concern for the educational success of their children).

2.6.1.2 How do parents choose specific types of involvement?

According to Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1995) this variable is first influenced by the parents' specific domain of skills and knowledge and secondly by the amount of time and energy sapped due to employment/unemployment and family responsibilities.

Each parent possesses their own particular domain of skills and knowledge, which will determine the type of involvement they may choose to engage in. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, p. 317) states that "parents will tend to choose involvement forms in which they believe they can be successful." For example, a parent who is gifted in the sciences will prefer tutoring his/her child in science, or a parent who is business-minded will enjoy helping the school with its fund-raising projects.

Furthermore, the amount of time and energy that parents devote towards their choice of activities is dependent on the demands that arise from the parents' employment and family commitments. Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1995) explain that employment demand includes the difficulty that parents experience in taking time off from work or the parents' busy work schedule and family demands includes the care of infant, elderly or other siblings. The legacy of apartheid in South Africa created situations where Black people are now often located very far from their places of employment due to migrant labour system. This has led to a breakdown of family life in many rural communities.

In a rural context the parents may or may not possess the specific domain of skills and knowledge that is needed in influencing their involvement in their children's schooling. However, they should not think that they do not have the specific skills and knowledge to make a contribution towards their children's schooling.

2.6.2 Cultural Capital theory

In most countries today, class structure determines the norms for academic success. Andersen and Hansen (2011) maintain that "the culture of the most powerful classes serves as a legitimate culture that can be mastered to varying extents and students who have been inculcated in these cultural forms from childhood will have the greatest

probability of academic success.” Lamont and Lareau (1988) differentiated between three types of cultural capital that the parent may possess, namely, *embodied* cultural capital (cultural attitudes, preferences and behaviours which are internalised), *objectified* cultural capital (transmission of goods such as books, computers, paintings etc.) and *institutionalised* cultural capital (educational qualifications such as degrees and diplomas).

In affluent countries it is common to find people participating in intellectual activities that decide their social status. Writing in an European context, De Graaf, De Graaf and Kraaykamp (2000, p. 93) relate that “the cultural capital theory is based on the importance of socialization into highbrow activities, like interest in art and classical music, theatre and museum attendance, and reading literature.” However, children who are unfamiliar with this kind of socialisation in such societies will find school to be an unfriendly environment.

Furthermore, cultural capital is all-inclusive and manifests itself in families in many forms. In an article that gives a western perspective, Wegmann and Bowen (2010, p. 7) explain cultural capital to be “material resources that are accessible and feasible for the family, level of education that family members attain, the time family members have available to spend on the activities supporting a child’s education, knowledge of the educational system, social confidence particularly in school communication, general knowledge of learning and educational process.”

In Kingston (2001), cultural capital is described as money that can be invested in the child’s schooling and used later to obtain other resources, such as access to better economic status. Hence, it is reasonable to believe that children who come from families that possess large amounts of cultural capital are at an advantage and stand the chance of better scholastic performance than children who come from homes that are deprived of cultural capital.

This study has created space for considering the plight of poor rural parents in line with the view taken by Yosso (2005), that is, whether all cultures have relevant and equal capital. Wegmann and Bowen (2010) explain that families who lack the norms of educational culture associated with a school will have to conscientiously learn these norms, and are therefore placed at a disadvantage compared to families whose norms match well with the school’s educational culture.

2.7 Conclusion

The review of literature in this chapter first presented contextual issues, a definition of terms and the pull and push factors to parental involvement. Next the conceptual framework, based on two different orientations of parental involvement, was presented. The variables from the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model underpinned aspects contributing to parental involvement while a discussion of the Cultural Capital theory created spaces to think about and question issues that affect parents and is often taken for granted.

This chapter provided me with the ‘lenses’ to focus on parental involvement. It also provided insight into possible setbacks that can be encountered by applying the same standards and expectations of parental involvement across diverse socio-economic settings.

While studies have consistently agreed that parental involvement enhances educational outcomes for the child, a growing body of literature now contradict this view. Such literature cautions schools and the educational authorities to be aware that parents who come from poor rural communities find it difficult to meet the same level of involvement in their children’s schooling when compared to parents from affluent communities.

The next chapter focuses on the research process adopted in this study which includes aspects such as the research design, method of enquiry and ethical issues raised in the study.

Chapter 3: Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the design and methodology used in the study. It explains the research design which includes the paradigm, approach and method of enquiry. It also discusses aspects such as site and sampling, methods of data collection and analysis, ethics, trustworthiness and positionality.

3.2 Research design

3.2.1 Research paradigm

The main focus of my study was an attempt to understand the nature of the participants' involvement in their children's schooling. Like in other research, I had to situate this study within the context of a paradigm. Maree (2007, p. 47) explain that a paradigm is "a set of assumptions or beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality which gives rise to a particular world view." According to Hatch (2002, p. 11) a paradigm is used to "reveal sets of assumptions that distinguish fundamentally different belief systems concerning how the world is ordered, what we know about it and how we may know it."

I conducted this study within the interpretive paradigm. My main aim in using the interpretive paradigm was to understand the participants' subjective world of human experience as echoed in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007). This paradigm also helped me to understand this phenomenon from within, without compromising its integrity, as outlined in Cohen et al. (2007). Furthermore, using the suggestions from Basit (2010) and Maree (2007) on the interpretive paradigm, I was able to gain a deep understanding of ways in which the participants constructed meaning in their interaction with the school.

3.2.2 Case study design

Research has shown that a case study design enables the researcher to focus on a single entity with the intention of gaining an in-depth understanding of how it functions in its natural setting (Chilisa & Preece, 2005; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Gerring (2004, p. 342) defines a case study as "an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units." Furthermore, a

case study entails a detailed description of a phenomenon based on the observation of “the characteristics of an individual unit - a child, a clique, a class, a school or a community” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 258).

This research was conducted as a case study. The case in this study was the parents of children at a primary school situated in a rural community. A detailed account of the case and the perceptions of the participants are presented in Chapter 4 of this study.

3.2.3 Method of enquiry

A qualitative method of enquiry was suited for this study since it allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of the nature of parental involvement at the school. Maree (2007, p. 51) states that “qualitative research places emphasis on the quality and depth of information.” As explained in Cohen et al. (2007) the qualitative method enabled me to probe into and analyse more intensely the diverse experiences of the participants in respect of their involvement or non-involvement with the school. Using the suggestion in Maree (2007), I conducted the study in an environment where the participants felt most comfortable to give me a better understanding of their behaviour.

Furthermore, the data collected in qualitative research are descriptive in nature. Siegle (2002) reports that data collected through qualitative research is rich in its description of the various role-players, their conversations and the environment. Using the descriptive format as suggested in Bogdan and Biklen (2007), I presented data in the form of words and pictures which were obtained from field notes, transcripts, documents, memoranda and audio recordings.

3.3 The site and sampling

3.3.1 Research site

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001) the researcher usually obtains advance information about the site from previous interests shown by the principal actors, social systems and activities at the site. The research site for this study was selected by the project co-ordinator of the broader reading research project (refer to Appendix A). The project co-ordinator chose a primary school situated in a rural area on the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg. The school was chosen for the following reasons:

- Schooling ranged from Grades R to 7 for junior learners; and
- An ABET centre was situated at and operates from the site.

This school was an ideal site for research of this nature because of the wide scope of curricula at the school and the fact that some of the ABET students were parents of children at the same school. Furthermore, Teacher A (2011) explained that most learners at the school came from disadvantaged homes that lacked adequate resources for learning (such as tables, chairs, writing materials etc.), electricity and water.

My understanding the experiences of parents from such a background has been vital to this study. Mncube (2009, p. 99) states that “some parents, particularly those in rural schools, are not always given sufficient opportunity to participate in crucial decisions affecting the life of the school.”

3.3.2 Sampling technique and study sample

I used the convenience sampling technique in order to obtain participants for this study. Some scholars explain that convenience sampling enables the researcher to obtain a group of subjects on the basis of being easily accessible and conveniently available (Cohen et al., 2007; Maree, 2007; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Furthermore, Cohen et al. (2007) claim that this type of sampling technique is useful for a case study.

I used this technique because of the difficulty I encountered in accessing the general parent population of the school. Being an outsider to the school, I had no contact with the school’s general parent population. Hence, the principal, as the head of the institution was the best person to assist me in obtaining participants for the study.

I therefore left selection of the participants to the discretion of the principal. However, I requested that the principal seek out participants who would provide abundant data in relation to the research questions. McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p. 433) claim that the researcher must choose participants “who are most likely to yield fruitful data about the evolving research questions.”

Eight parents with children at the school were selected to participate in this study. The group comprised of six females and two males. Corresponding to the general socio-economic make-up of the community, the eight participants occupied a low socio-economic status in the community. All of the eight parents participated in the focus group discussions (FGDs) and individually in the in-depth interviews.

3.4 Methods of data collection and analysis

3.4.1 Data collection techniques

The main techniques used to collect data in this study were focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and analysis of documents.

Supplementary data was retrieved from written records of my discussions with the school principal and the deputy (including telephonic), field notes and photographs taken at the site. This data assisted me in clarifying information pertinent to this study.

The techniques of data collection used in this study are discussed in detail below.

3.4.1.1 Focus group discussions

The eight participants selected for the study joined me in two sessions of focus group discussions. The first session was used in gathering data for this study, and the second session was conducted later in the study in order to confirm certain aspects of the data that emerged.

Cohen et al. (2007) explain that focus group discussions rely on an interaction within the group to discuss topics provided by the researcher. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) claim that one of the advantages of using focus group discussions is that it is a resourceful means of creating a social environment in which members are stimulated by the perceptions and ideas of each other, thus producing rich data for the study.

In order to encourage participation, I commenced the session by presenting a collage

of photographs together with interest-arousing questions (refer to Appendices E & G). The photographs were used to initiate discussion. However, it was imperative that I focused my attention on the participants' own perceptions rather than the story that seemed to have emerged from the collage of photographs.

In the first session, after introducing ourselves to each other and a brief initiation using the collage of photographs, I led the group into discussing issues based on a structured set of questions from an interview schedule (refer to Appendices E & G). In the second session I used the interview schedule to confirm data gathered on the previous occasion.

3.4.1.2 In-depth interview

An in-depth interview involves a conversation between the interviewer and the participant. However, researchers maintain that this is a conversation with a purpose and bears little resemblance to everyday conversation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

Since this was the core data collection strategy for the study, the sessions were longer in duration. I spent approximately one hour with each of the participants to probe deeper into their involvement and to explore more fully the factors underpinning their responses, namely, their reasons, feelings, opinions and beliefs, as echoed in Ritchie and Lewis (2003).

Furthermore, using the suggestions in Ritchie and Lewis (2003), I created an interview schedule with questions that were flexible and convenient for the interviewees. The questions were mainly open-ended thus allowing the participants to provide deep and rich data relevant to the topic. Cohen et al. (2007) maintain that open-ended questions catch the authenticity, richness, depth of response, honesty and candour which are hallmarks of qualitative data. The interview schedule also included a range of close-ended questions that were intended to generate statistical data through words or figures. Cohen et al. (2007, p.359) states that this is a "convenient and short-hand way of recording complex information."

By using the suggestions from Chilisa and Preece (2005) and Cohen et al. (2007), I approached each participant with the same basic questions in order to extract similar data from each of them.

I commenced the in-depth interview sessions with each of the eight participants by first filling in a survey form (Appendix I) that provided me with their biographical data. Next, using the in-depth interview schedule, I proceeded with the interviews in order to gather data relevant to the research questions of this study. As the interviews progressed there were occasions when the participants drifted into talking about issues that were not related to the study. In such cases, I used the suggestion in Maree (2007) by interjecting and bringing them back in line with the interview schedule.

3.4.1.3 Documents

At the school data was retrieved from documents such as minutes of parent meetings, parent meeting registers, notices to parents and sections of the Education Management Information System (EMIS) 2011.

Apart from the documents provided by the school, I also referred to the 2011/2012 Integrated Development Plan of Mkhambathini Local Municipality. I extracted information from this document to determine infrastructure development and the socio-economic conditions of the school's community at large.

According to Chilisa and Preece (2005) and Maree (2007) documents obtained from the study site are used to corroborate the data obtained from other sources. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) maintain that this approach provides an inner perspective on issues relating to the participants in the study.

3.4.1.4 Field notes

The field notes used in this study contained reflections of my observations at the site and in the community. These notes were taken during my visits to the study site on six different occasions over a period of one year. The notes were dated on each occasion and the context of my observations was written down as outlined in McMillan and Schumacher (2001).

Field notes included my reflections of incidents at the site and verbal responses from the principal, participants and other role-players during informal discussions. As explained in Maree (2007), I jotted down my moments of confusion in my field notes.

However, I was careful of not being biased when writing the field notes. I attempted to be clear and precise with the details that I presented. McMillan and Schumacher

(2001, p. 442) maintain that field notes should “not be vague or judgemental.”

As outlined in Maree (2007), I similarly used my field notes to provide a clear indication of where my study was heading. Furthermore, McMillan and Schumacher (2001) explain that the researcher must discover discrepancies between what was said and what actually happened. Hence, I was prompted to revisit issues raised in the study by going back to the site on subsequent occasions to interview the participants and review documents.

3.4.2 Translation

As an English speaking person and due to my inability to speak and understand isiZulu, I had to enlist the support of a translator/interpreter in this study. Firstly, the isiZulu teacher at my school helped me to translate the consent form and the interview schedules from English to isiZulu (Appendices D, G & H). During the interviews, my fellow isiZulu speaking researchers who were also on the reading research project assisted me in translating data. At each interview session, after carefully listening to my questions and referring to the isiZulu version of the schedules, they translated my questions into isiZulu. Thereafter, the participants’ responses were translated into English. As the interviews progressed, I made handwritten notes of the responses as well as digital recordings of the conversations. The digital recordings were played later during the data analysis process in order to capture data that I may have missed while making handwritten notes.

3.4.3 Data analysis

As it is outlined in Maree (2007) and Cohen et al., (2007) I analysed data immediately after visiting the research site. Every day after visiting the site I spent long hours listening to the digital recordings, comparing these to my handwritten notes taken during the interviews. The digital recordings captured during the interviews contained the interpretations that I was interested in hearing (i.e. from isiZulu to English). Before transcribing data I listened very carefully to the interpreter’s enunciation and other sounds in the background (such as laughing, clapping and voice etc.) and compared this to my handwritten notes.

Next, I carefully transcribed this material for coding with utmost accuracy. The raw data were then captured on Nvivo, which is a qualitative data analysis computer-

assisted program. This computer-assisted program enabled me to sort and code the data. Finally, I was able to generate a detailed report into different categories. As espoused in Cohen et al. (2007), my prompt analysis of data on a day to day basis reduced the possibility of data overload.

The information that emerged through this process was used to present the findings of this study. Maree (2007, p. 99) explains that in inductive analyses of qualitative data “the main purpose is to allow research findings to emerge from frequent, dominant or significant themes, inherent in raw data, without restraints imposed by a more structured theoretical orientation.”

Since qualitative data analysis is a non-linear process I had to, as mentioned earlier, constantly go back to my field notes and interview notes or back to the participants to verify conclusions. According to Maree (2007, p. 100), the researcher goes through “three essential elements: noticing, collecting and reflecting.” Noticing involved my observation and recording of details while at the research site. Collecting involved the process of my recording the raw data during the interviews. Later the same day the process of reflecting on the raw data helped me to discard irrelevant data and focus on those relevant to the research questions.

3.5 Ethics

I had to attend to important ethical concerns such as confidentiality, voluntary participation and informed consent before proceeding with the study.

Firstly, the issue of anonymity was raised in the study. The principal of the school requested for the identity of the school and the names of participants to remain anonymous. I had to keep the following factors in mind:

- In order to maintain anonymity throughout the study I used pseudonyms for both the name of the school and of the participants. I named the school Intaba Umbukiso Primary School (Mountain View Primary School).
- Since there were five other learning institutions in the area, it was not easy to identify this particular school.
- The photographs that were used in this study did not reveal names or precise details that could make the school or any site portrayed easily identifiable.

- However, it was necessary to retain the names and details about the Municipality and the Ward within which the school was located. For a case study it is vital to have insight into contextual factors such as infrastructure development and housing, location of the school, education and employment/unemployment. The rich information that arose from the contextual factors would have been obscured if the identity of the Municipality and Ward were replaced by pseudonyms.

Secondly, the participants were informed by means of a letter of consent written in English and isiZulu (Appendices C & D) of the nature of this study and that their participation was of a voluntary nature.

Thirdly, I had to obtain ethical clearance in order to conduct this research. The co-ordinator of the broader reading research project first obtained permission from the DoE and the school principal to conduct research at the site. Subsequently the project was granted ethical clearance by the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Appendix A). Next, I also applied for and was also granted ethical clearance by the University of KwaZulu-Natal to conduct my study at the same site (Appendix B).

3.6 Trustworthiness

In order to add a meaningful contribution to existing scholarship on parental involvement, I strove to make my research findings reliable and valid. Golafshani (2003) claims that the concepts of reliability and validity belong to quantitative methods of enquiry, which determines whether the results are replicable and the means of measurement accurate. According to Maree (2007), reliability and validity are crucial aspects in quantitative research and must be redefined in qualitative research. Rule and John (2011) explain that in qualitative research, use of the concept ‘trustworthiness’ redefines reliability and validity.

In order to demonstrate trustworthiness in this study, the following measures were adopted:

- The research was conducted strictly according to a research design and within a conceptual framework.
- To confirm my findings I used triangulation of data wherever possible. Rule and John (2011) explain that triangulation involves the use of multiple sources.

I used data from the focus group discussion and documents in order to triangulate data obtained in the interviews.

- While presenting my findings in this study, I used the suggestions found in Rule and John (2011) by going back to the site, the participants and the documents in order to verify data.

3.7 Positionality

Throughout this study I maintained self-awareness about the difference in race and social status between myself and the participants. As an Indian male school teacher of a middle-income group, I conducted this study among Black African rural people from a low socio-economic background. To the best of my knowledge, I did not allow such differences or stereotyping to interfere with my investigation on the ways in which Black African rural parents participate in their children's schooling.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has provided details about the research process used in investigating the nature of parental involvement at a rural primary school. It outlined the research design, site and sampling, methods of data collection and analysis. The chapter also discussed other issues such as ethics, trustworthiness and positionality.

The next chapter deals with the findings of this study.

Chapter 4: Research findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses findings on the nature of parental involvement at a rural primary school. Firstly, the findings are presented as a case that covers the biographical data of the participants and contextual information about the school and the community. Next, the chapter unpacks the participants' perception of the nature of parental involvement at the school, the factors enhancing parental involvement, the factors inhibiting parental involvement and the role of literacy in parental involvement.

4.2 The parents in the study

The crux of this case study was the parents, whose perceptions provided insight into the nature of parental involvement at the school. The biographical details of the eight participants (shown in Table 2 below) and their perceptions on parental involvement reflect and represent the general parent population of the school.

Providing the biographical information of the parents adds depth and richness to the study. In order to protect the identity of the participants, each person was given a fictitious name. Also, as a mark of respect the participants were accorded titles such as uGogo (granny), uMama (mother), Sis (sister) and uBaba (father).

Table 2: Biographical information on the participants

Name	Age	Gender	Employment	Monthly income	Level of education	Parentage	
uGogo Busi	71	F	Pensioner	R1070.00 plus R740.00 foster care grant	No formal schooling	Caregiver (biological granny)	Mother deceased
uMama Princess	36	F	Unemployed	Not declared	Grade 11 & ABET L4	Biological mother	-----
Sis Margaret	31	F	Domestic worker	R1800.00	Grade 12	Biological mother	-----
uBaba Martin	45	M	Unemployed	Received R740.00 foster care grant	Grade 10	Caregiver (biological uncle)	Parents deceased
uMama Thandi	58	F	Unemployed	Received R740.00 foster care grant	No formal schooling	Caregiver (biological granny)	Mother deceased
uMama Thembi	48	F	Unemployed	Received R740.00 foster care grant	No formal schooling	Caregiver (biological aunt)	Parents deceased
uBaba Jeff	52	M	Unemployed	Received R740.00 foster care grant	Grade 10	Caregiver (biological uncle)	Child abandoned by parent
Sis Lelile	30	F	Works part-time	R1000.00	Grade 4	Biological mother	-----

Information retrieved from the participants prior to their interview

While the above table reveals details of only the eight participants in this study, in many ways it reflects the general parent population of the school.

4.2.1 The participants' ages

The participants' ages ranged from 30 to 71 years. The youngest was a 30-year-old biological mother (Sis Lelile) and the oldest was a 71-year-old grandmother (uGogo Busi). Most of the participants were middle-aged people (ages 45-58 years).

4.2.2 Nature of employment and income

Sis Margaret had a full-time job as a domestic worker and earned an average monthly income of R1800.00. Sis Lelile worked part-time as a cleaner and earned R1000.00 per month. The 71-year-old granny, uGogo Busi, received an old-age pension of R1070.00 per month plus a foster care grant of R740.00 for her grandchild living under her foster care.

uMama Thandi, uMama Thembi, uBaba Martin and uBaba Jeff were unemployed but received a monthly amount of R740.00 as a foster care grant for each of the children in their care. uMama Princess who was also unemployed did not earn/receive a stable monthly income.

4.2.3 Level of literacy

Three of the participants, uGogo Busi, uMama Thandi and uMama Thembi, were illiterate people (i.e. they had no formal schooling and were unable to read and write, both in isiZulu and/or English). Sis Lelile was semi-literate (i.e. she completed Grade 4 level of schooling and could read and write basic words in isiZulu).

The four other participants were able to read and write both in English and isiZulu because they attended high school. uBaba Martin and uBaba Jeff completed Standard 8 (Grade 10), uMama Princess completed ABET L4 and also Standard 9 (Grade 11) schooling, and Sis Margaret completed Standard 10 (Grade 12). The ability to read and write equipped these participants with the understanding of the literacy demands placed on their children at school and it made them more inclined to provide a meaningful environment for literacy development at home, as echoed in Chen and Harris (2009). Benjamin (1993, p.4) explain that literate parents are “more likely to exert a positive influence on their children’s academic achievement.”

4.2.4 Home language and communication

All eight participants were IsiZulu speaking. However, uBaba Martin, uBaba Jeff and uMama Princess and Sis Margaret communicated fluently in English. While the school used English as a medium of instruction, all the educators were fluent isiZulu speakers and familiar with the local culture and language. Teacher B (2011) explained that letters and notices to parents were written in isiZulu. This facilitated good home-school communication.

4.2.5 Place of residence

All eight participants lived in Ward 1 and their homes were in close proximity to the school (not more than 1 km away). Living close to the school made it easy for them to attend school activities and to check on their children’s school work.

4.2.6 Deceased parents

Table 2 above shows that four participants were caregivers of children of deceased parents. My perusal of the records at the school show that 35% of learners had one or more parents deceased (Table 3 below).

Table 3: Learners with deceased parents (out of 995 learners)

	Only mother deceased	Only father deceased	Both deceased
Grade R	3	16	39
Grade 1	4	10	8
Grade 2	4	10	7
Grade 3	6	23	8
Grade 4	7	31	13
Grade 5	8	21	26
Grade 6	9	31	16
Grade 7	10	30	15
Total	51 (5%)	172 (17%)	132 (13%)

Source: The school's EMIS, 2011

In this school, 13% of children were living with caregiver or guardian because both biological parents were deceased. In total, 35% of the children lost one or both of their biological parents. It is under such conditions children are usually reared by a single parent, a sibling or a foster care parent. Often, under these circumstances, the single parent or caregiver must work longer hours or over time to provide for the family. This limits the amount of time that they can spend in participating in their children's schooling.

This section has provided me with detailed information on the participants in the study which resonates with the general parent population of the school. Next, I will discuss details about the school in which this study was conducted.

4.3 The school

4.3.1 History of the school

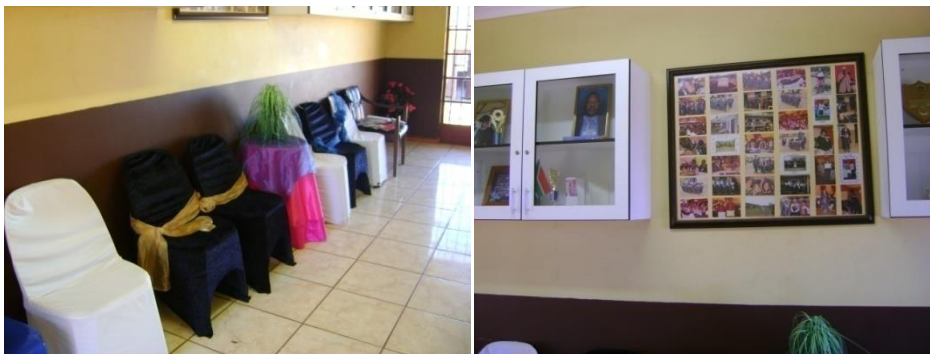
Information taken from School Archives (2011) revealed details about the history of the school. Intaba Umbukiso Primary School was built in 1957 with two classrooms which were made of mud. This school, like all other schools under the Bantu

Education Authority, was poorly funded. With very little money available for school maintenance, the school building was left in a state of disrepair (broken window panes, leaking roofs and shabby paintwork). During this period large numbers of children (80 plus) were crammed into each classroom.

After the country's first democratic elections in 1994, the DoE progressively began providing funds for upgrading this school. Large amounts of State money were spent on improving its facilities and staffing. In 1996 the school received its first supply of piped water and electricity. In 2004, a kitchen and storeroom were built, with tapped water and electricity. Two years later the administration block was built, which includes the principal's and deputy principal's offices, a secretary's office, a Head of Departments' hall, a strong room and a parents' waiting hall.

The parents' waiting hall was added to the school's administrative block in order to accommodate parents who report to school to discuss various issues related to their children's schooling (such as admissions, homework, performance, behaviour, etc.)

Figure 1: The parents' waiting hall at the school



Photographs taken at the site in 2011

Figure 1 shows the layout of the waiting hall, with chairs, tables, plants, trophies and a collection of photographs. The elegant displays in the waiting hall reflecting a middle-class schooling ethos may be welcoming and appealing to teachers and department officials that visit the school. However, it could be unwelcoming to the poor rural parents and discourage from visiting the school to discuss their children's performance. The school layout and setting should reflect a rural setting that satisfied the cultural ethos of the community.

In 2011 the school building comprised 23 classrooms and one computer laboratory. The 12 computers in the computer laboratory were donated by an America-based company. However, the steady increase in learner enrolment over the past years has created further constraints, such as a need to upgrade the school's piped water and ablution facilities.

4.3.2 State funding

According to Teacher A (2011), Intaba Umbukiso Primary School is ranked at quintile 3 on the Norms and Standards for funding. Department of Education (2010) explains that quintiles are poverty score index (ranges from Q1 = poorest schools to Q5 = least poor schools) assigned to schools in South Africa, based on three poverty indicators, namely income, unemployment rates and level of education of the community. Teacher A (2011) further explained that due to the poor socio-economic background of the parents and their inability to pay school fees, this school was declared a non-fee paying school in 2011.

4.3.3 Learner enrolment

The demographic representation of people living in Ward 1 is mainly Black African people and this has not changed since the demise of apartheid in the country. Hence, the learner enrolment at Intaba Umbukiso Primary School comprised of Black African children. Table 4 shows a breakdown of the learner population into two phases (Grades R- 3 and Grades 4-7). An enrolment of 995 learners was accommodated in 23 classrooms, and hence enrolment in each class unit ranged between 40 and 50 learners.

Table 4: School learner enrolment for 2011

Grade	Boys	Girls	Total
R to 3	247	256	503
4 to 7	246	246	492
TOTAL	493 (49. 6%)	502 (50. 4%)	995

Figures extracted from the school records

4.3.4 The staff

The school's teaching staff, based on the learner enrolment for 2011, comprised the principal, three HoDs and 19 level one educators. Furthermore, three educators from the staff taught at the ABET centre situated at the school. With 995 learners and a staff of 23 educators, the learner-teacher ratio for 2011 was 43:1.

The non-educator staff component was made up of the administration clerk, a cleaner and a security guard.

4.3.5 The administration block

A glimpse into the administration block revealed that it housed all the important school records and office equipment such as the telephone, fax machine, computers, printers and duplicating machines. Teacher B (2011) explained that these modern equipment were not accessible to the parents and members of the community because these were specifically set aside for administrative purposes (the school and the ABET centre).

During my visits to the school I was warmly welcomed by the friendly school clerk who sat at the entrance to the school foyer. Each time I visited the school, she promptly directed me to the principal's office. The principal's office held all the important school records, stored in lever arch files. Also important information such as emergency numbers, learner enrolment figures, names of SGB members and the school timetable were clearly displayed on the walls of the office.

4.3.6 The school curricula

The outcomes based education school curricula catered for learners from Grades R to 7 (children) and an ABET centre for adults. There were 24 learners studying at the ABET centre in 2011. Some of the adult learners were the parents of children schooling at the same school.

This section has expounded on the history and details about Intaba Umbukiso Primary School. In the next section, I will discuss the contextual factors within which this school is embedded.

4.4 The community

Intaba Umbukiso Primary School is situated in a rural community close to Pietermaritzburg, in Ward 1 of Mkhambathini Municipality. This is a relatively peaceful area in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands.

Some of the inhabitants provide their labour to the local sugar cane and poultry farms, while others who are unemployed cultivate crops for home use or to be sold in the

local market.

Table 5 below reveals several contextual factors that have a bearing on parental involvement at the school. These factors relate to the socio-economic conditions in the community. It is against this backdrop that they participate in their children's schooling.

Table 5: Current level of development in Ward 1 of Mkhambathini Local Municipality

Service/issue	Status quo
Potable water and Sanitation	Only 30% have access to water.
Electricity/alternative Energy	Only 30% have access to electricity, a much-needed commodity.
Access roads	The existing roads need to be upgraded.
Public health facilities	There is only one clinic available and it is not accessible, therefore public health facilities are needed.
Housing	Housing provided by government is needed.
Education facilities	Educational facilities such as schools are needed.
Levels of unemployment	Approximately 70% of the population in Ward 1 are unemployed.

Source: Extracted from Mkhambathini Local Municipality Draft Integrated Development Plan 2011/2012 (Mkhambathini Municipality, 2011)

The socio-economic status of the parents informs the amount of cultural capital that they may possess. Lamont and Lareau (1988) refer to cultural capital as embodied cultural capital (cultural attitudes, preferences and behaviours which are internalised), objectified cultural capital (transmission of goods such as books, computers, paintings etc.), and institutionalised cultural capital (educational qualifications such as degrees and diplomas) that the parents are capable of presenting.

By virtue of the low socio-economic conditions that existed in this rural community (as revealed in Table 5), the parents who lived in this community lacked the middle-class cultural goods mentioned in Lamont and Lareau (1988). Furthermore, as echoed in Yosso (2005), it was also evident in this rural community that the slow pace of development raised the question whether all cultures have relevant and equal capital when compared to urban communities.

Table 5 reveals the following:

The table shows that only 30% of the people in this community have access to water/sanitation and electricity. A situation like this affects the livelihood of the people. In most rural households families are dependent on women's work to survive. The women shoulder the responsibility of obtaining water and firewood by travelling long distances on foot to rivers and nearby forests. This situation impacts adversely on the female parents' availability of time and resources to participate in their children's schooling. This is how one participant explained her situation at the FGD:

uMama Thandi: We have no electricity and water. Some houses have electricity and they live in better conditions. Because we have no electricity, the children do their homework while it is bright.

Secondly, the table reveals a need for infrastructure development in the area (i.e. the need for more houses and schools to be built and for upgrading of the roads). Most of the inhabitants live in mud huts and two-roomed block houses. Under such conditions large families are confined to limited spaces that make it difficult for parents to assist their children with their homework and reading. Most of the roads are built from gravel, with many potholes and dongas.

Thirdly, the table reveals that approximately 70% of the people living in the area are unemployed. Usually few jobs are available in rural areas. Hence, the men sometimes travel long distances to places such as Pietermaritzburg or as far as Pinetown, Durban and Johannesburg in search of employment. Others do menial work or rely on social grants for a living. The time and effort spent in providing for the basic needs of the family limits the amount of time parents can spend in playing an active role in their children's schooling.

Fourthly, it reveals that there is a shortage of educational facilities in the area. The Department of Education (2010) EMIS statistics reveal that there are two high schools and three primary schools in Ward 1. Building more educational facilities in the area will promote skills development (e.g. bricklaying, building, welding, and carpentry) which can create opportunities for setting up self-employment in the community.

Finally, the inadequate provision of public health facilities is another concern. According to Mkhambathini Municipality (2011), Ward 1 has a population of 46 569

inhabitants that rely on public health facilities. Family heads (especially women and the children in child-headed homes) may spend long hours travelling and waiting in queues to receive medical treatment. The time wasted in this way leaves the parents feeling too exhausted to participate meaningfully in their children's schooling.

The above five factors describe the socio-economic conditions prevailing in the community. The low state of service delivery revealed in Table 5 means that the parents and families live under conditions that impede their ability to develop and accrue the cultural capital (embodied, objectified and institutionalised) that the middle class ethos of the public school demands of them.

This section has probed into the circumstances that affected the livelihood of the participants in the study. The next section will discuss the nature of parental involvement at the school.

4.5 The nature of parental involvement at the school

The discussion that follows presents the nature of the participants' involvement and their perceptions of involvement of the general parent population of the school. This covers the following four aspects:

- Parental involvement at the school (school level and home level).
- The factors enhancing parental involvement.
- The factors inhibiting parental involvement.
- The role the level of the parents' literacy play in their involvement at the school.

4.5.1 Parental involvement at the school

Responses elicited from all eight participants through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions revealed two 'spaces' through which parents in this school were involved in their children's schooling (i.e. at school level and at home level). At school level, I will discuss parent teacher meetings, involvement in school governance and the *Ilima* and at the home level, the parent's ability to assist with homework and checking on the child's progress.

4.5.1.1 The school level

The school has on record a profile of the various meetings and activities held during the year. Table 6 shows the attendance record for the period June 2010 to June 2011.

Table 6: Different types of parent meetings and school activities held during the year

TYPES OF MEETINGS	PURPOSE	FREQUENCY	ATTENDANCE (percentage based on actual figures in the attendance register)
SGB (8 members)	Discuss issues relating to school governance	4 times a year	100% of SGB members
Open days (class visitation)	Meet teachers, check and discuss children's progress	2 times a year (March and September)	60% of school's parent population
<i>Ilima</i> (tree planting and maintenance)	Planting trees and school upkeep	Once a year	85% of school's parent population
Grade 7 farewell	Bid farewell to Grade 7 learners	Once a year	100% (parents of Grade 7 learners)
Graduation	Grade R graduation	Once a year	100% (parents of Grade R learners)
Budget	School budget presented for endorsement	Once a year	80% of parents of school population
Financial	Discuss school financial matters	Once a year	80% of parents of school population

Information extracted from school records, June 2010 to June 2011

Arising from the analysis of the above table, what is relevant and critical for this study is the attendance level column, which indicates a high level of involvement and participation by parents in most of the activities. However, it is interesting to note and highlight the fact that 60% of parents attended the two open days. While this was an above average attendance, comparatively speaking it is the lowest in this school. This raises the question whether more could be done about the open days.

During the open days, the parents who visit the school interact and engage with class teachers to check and discuss their children's progress. This is a valuable experience since it brings together the teachers and parents from two different cultural capitals whose interaction will benefit each other. De Graaf et al. (2000) explain that such engagement results in a space of power and contestation, where each of their cultural capital is valued. In this instance, parents might be less involved because of their low

levels of literacy, given the purpose and nature of their engagement.

Since the requirements for participation in open days, the *Ilima*, graduation and budget meetings differ in nature, the levels of participation in each of these meetings also differ. Regarding parents’ choice of involvement, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, p. 317) state that “parents will tend to choose involvement forms in which they believe they can be successful. Each parent possesses his/her own particular domain of skills and knowledge which determines the type of involvement they wish to engage in.”

Furthermore, in South Africa, Black African rural communities are rich in cultural goods such as history, religion, culture and ancestral heritage. Yosso (2005) maintains that marginalised communities possess a wealth of cultural goods, such as community history, memory, cultural intuition, communication experiences and resistance capital. In this school the value of these cultural goods has been utilised through school activities such as the *Ilima* and Grade 1 graduation.

During the in-depth interviews, I used a quantitative tool to provide statistical information to compare levels of parental involvement within different types of activities at the school. Table 7 below illustrate the findings from this exercise.

Table 7: The participants involvement in school activities (√ means yes)

	SGB	ILIMA		FUND RAISING	ENV. PROJ	SCHOOL SOCIAL	SPORT	EXCURSION
		GARDENING	MAINTENANCE					
uGogo Busi	√	√	√	√				√
uMama Princess	√	√	√	√	√			√
Sis Margaret	√	√	√	√			√	
uBaba Martin		√	√					
uMama Thandi		√	√					
uMama Thembu		√	√					
uBaba Jeff		√	√					
Sis Lelile		√	√		√			
TOTAL (YES)	3	8	8	3	2	0	1	2

Information extracted from the In-depth interview schedule (Question 1.5)

The analysis of Table 7 reveals the following:

- A high level of participation in the *Ilima* (eight indicated yes response)
- An exceptionally good level of interest in school governance since three participants of the eight made up the five members component of the SGB.
- Low levels of involvement in sport and excursions
- No involvement in social activities.

Table 7 above aptly reflects of the nature of activities poor rural parents are capable of undertaking. Given the low socio-economic status of the school's community, the parents did not have the money and time to participate in activities such as sport, school socials and excursions. However, these participants eagerly participated in the *Ilima* because it suited their interest.

The discussion that now follows reveals the participants' involvement in various school based activities.

a) Parent-Teacher meetings (Open Days)

All eight participants in the study adopted a positive view of the roles expected of them in their children's schooling. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) explain that when parents are emotionally aroused over their children's schooling, it develops in them a sense of efficacy for wanting educational success for their children.

The responses below show the participant's view on their involvement in parent-teacher meetings (open days) as the means of checking on their children's schoolwork.

Interviewer: Please tell me about your views on open days. Why do you attend?

uMama Princess: I attend regularly because I know that if you have children at school it is important to know how the children work at school. It is important to communicate with teachers because they stay longer with the children at school. I always come to meetings because I want to know everything about my children at school.

uMama Princess was mindful of the value of a good education. She kept herself informed about her children's progress at school by regularly communicating with the school. Since she was emotionally concerned, uMama Princess developed an

improved sense of efficacy in helping her child make a success of its schooling. Although she faced challenges such as unemployment and low income, she was positive about her child's schooling.

When the above question was raised with uBaba Martin, notice his response:

uBaba Martin: I worry about my child. These days the children find it hard to get a job when she or he is not going to school. I therefore check on their schooling and visit the school often to check on what's going on. So I am very involved.

This participant's comments allude to the fact that education help to secure employment opportunities in later life. As espoused in Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995), his anxiety over this prospect raised his sense of efficacy of getting involved in his child's schooling. Hence, felt an obligation to call at school to check on his child's progress.

During the in-depth interview, uGogo Busi responded as follows:

Interviewer: Please tell me about your views on open days. Why do you attend?

uGogo Busi: I worry whether they are learning at school. When I meet the teachers I see how they are doing at school. I don't want them to be without education.

uGogo Busi, one of the illiterate participant's (caregiver) also showed a deep sense of efficacy about her grandchild making a success of her schooling. Her concerns were rooted in many years of hardships and deprivation.

Taking into account some of the problems that generally hinder parental involvement, during the in-depth interviews I used an instrument to gauge the participants' perception on the reasons for non-attendance of general parent population.

Table 8: The participants’ perception of the possible reasons for non-attendance of the general parent population

Reasons	YES
Time of meetings	3 out of 8
Working overtime	2 out of 8
No transport	2 out of 8
Infirm or disabled	2 out of 8
Tired from work	2 out of 8
Not interested	3 out of 8

Information extracted from the In-depth interview schedule (Question 2.2)

The responses elicited in the above table on the six categories revealed that these were not the major reasons for non- attendance at parent-teacher meetings. However, it is imperative that I discuss the views of the participants.

One participant who felt that the timing of the meeting presented a challenge to parents explained:

Interviewer: What is the reason for the choice you made?

Sis Margaret: Some of them are working or could be tired because they work nightshift.

Sis Margaret who was a domestic worker outlined the views of the working parents. Since the parent-teacher meeting (open day) was held at 10:00am in the morning, she suggested the following:

Interviewer: What suggestion can you give the school to improve the situation?

Sis Margaret: I think it is better to talk with the parents, which day and which time will be good. This will improve the level of attendance at the open days.

This was a valuable contribution since consultation with parents can improve parental involvement.

Other suggestions obtained at the in-depth interviews on improving meeting attendance were as follows:

Interviewer: What suggestion can you give the school to improve the situation?

uMama Princess: They do it twice a year in this school. Why, not do it more often. According to my opinion this must be held each quarter.

uMama Princess suggests a more dynamic engagement between parents and teachers. Wallace (2007) explains that greater persistence from parents creates higher goals for their children.

On the same subject, Sis Lelile made a practical suggestion which the school can consider.

Interviewer: What suggestion can you give the school to improve the situation?

Sis Lelile: The hall is small, some parents cannot come in. They stand outside and talk. They make a big noise so that others can't hear. Make a bigger hall.

All the above responses show that the participants had the desire to attend and participate in parent- teacher meetings. The participants in the study viewed parent-teacher meetings as an important way of improving scholastic performance. The responses from the in-depth interviews and the statistical data attest to the participants' aspiration of giving their children a better education.

It was also evident that the participants held a common vision for their children to perform well at school in order to meet the challenges in our changing society. Their many years of oppression and living under low socio-economic conditions gave them determination to break free from this vicious cycle of poverty. They therefore wanted to make sure that their children succeeded at school – this commitment was translated into participation in their children's schooling.

b) School Governance

As discussed in Chapter 2, SASA endorsed the right for parents to serve on schools governing bodies. According to Department of Education (1996), some of the major roles of the SGB involve the adoption of a Constitution and a Mission statement for the school, assisting the principal and staff in conducting their professional duties and motivating parents to offer voluntary service and assume responsibility over the maintenance of school property.

Table 7 shows that three female participants of this study served on the SGB. This meant that they made up the majority of the five member parent component of the school's SGB. The fact that the Table 6 reveals 100% attendance at SGB meetings attests to the commitment of these participants to their respective roles on the SGB.

During the in-depth interviews, the three participants gave an account of their involvement in the SGB.

Interviewer: Are you a member on the school's governing body? What roles do you serve?

uGogo Busi: I am on the SGB. As a committee do come together to address problems that the school experiences. When there is a problem with a particular child, we call the family to discuss the problems.

Interviewer: Are you a member on the school's governing body? What roles do you serve?

Sis Margaret: As the SGB, we make it our duty to communicate with the parents. The teachers when they see there is a problem with the child, they refer it to us. The school has telephone numbers for parents in the files. We phone the parent. Whether it is health related, socially, educational, we get hold of the parent.

Both these member assisted the school by effectively communicating with parents and with counselling and discipline. By procuring their expertise, the school inadvertently was using their embodied cultural capital as a means of solving problems.

uMama Princess also explained her role on the SGB as follows.

uMama Princess: As a member of SGB I help all round . I help with cleaning the school and the windows with other mothers. If there is a function at school I help with cooking along with other mothers.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, p. 317) state that “parents will tend to choose involvement forms in which they believe they can be successful.” We see an example of this in uMama Princess. As a SGB member, she used her gardening and cooking skills to make a meaningful contribution to the life of the school.

Also at the focus group discussion the other participants commented on some of the important contributions of the SGB.

Facilitator: Please tell me about the role of the governing body at this school?

Sis Lelile: They play a big role in organising the *Ilima*. They arrange for the parents to come to the school to cut grass and cut trees. When they get donation of trees, we help them to plant trees.

uMama Thembi: The SGB members help the principal to organise school functions. They are always present at the functions and this encourages us to also attend.

These responses reveal that the SGB at this school made a meaningful contribution that was within their means, towards the life of this school.

c) **Ilima**

The participants explained that parents were enthusiastic about assisting the school with the *Ilima* project. This project involved gardening, tree felling, tree planting and school maintenance. *Ilima* is an African tradition that encourages community members to come together and plough each other’s fields (Lokufunda, 2008). The tradition and the values of the *Ilima* espoused the embodied cultural capital explained in Lamont and Lareau (1988) which is common among rural people.

Regarding the *Ilima* the following three responses were elicited at the in-depth interviews:

Interviewer: Please tell me whether you assist the school with any of its activities.

uMama Princess: I know gardening. I like helping with gardening when I am called at the beginning of the year for the *Ilima*.

uMama Thandi: Every year the school call all the parents together. We work for the whole day cutting grass, raking and planting trees. We get to know all the other parents from this school.

Sis Lelile: I help when we get together for the *Ilima* to cut grass. It is a way of paying back the school for our children's education. Also when our children go to school, we know that the snakes won't bite them.

At the FGD uBaba Martin also commented on the parents' involvement in the *Ilima* project:

Facilitator: What is the level of support at parent meetings and school activities?

uBaba Martin: I can talk about the *Ilima*. At the beginning of each year we as parents come to school to cut grass and plant trees. This is our *Ilima*. *[All the other participants nod]*

Participating in the *Ilima* project is an example of the parents' efficacy for being involved in their children's schooling. It gave them the opportunity of using their horticultural skills and enjoying the camaraderie of other rural parents. This form parental involvement created space for informal learning as echoed in adult education discourses presented by Bandura (2001), Freire and Macedo (1995) and Lave (1988). Rural parents, especially those who are illiterate, may lack the efficacy to attend school meetings, yet may feel at ease to assist with school activities that are less demanding and require simple skills.

This example supports the model developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) which states that parents will tend to find alternate means of skills and knowledge to help with their children’s schooling. Furthermore, in this way the value of the cultural goods of the community, as echoed in Yosso (2005), was utilized through the *Ilima*.

4.5.1.2 Home level - homework and assignments

The efficacy of the parents is reflected on how they play a part in assisting with and checking on their children’s homework. This section discusses the participants’ views of their personal involvement in their children’s homework and reading. Their responses were rated as follows:

High: Ability to understand the curricula and to cope well in assisting the child with schoolwork.

Medium: Having a basic understanding of the school curricula and rendering partial assistance with homework.

Low: Having very little understanding of the school curricula and with little moral support in assisting with school tasks.

None: The parents’ inability to assist the child and give moral support with homework.

Table 9: The participants’ ability to assist with homework (levels: high–medium–low–none)

NAME	AGE	GENDER	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	NONE
uGogo Busi	71	F	No formal schooling			√	
uMama Princess	36	F	Grade 11 & ABET L4		√		
Sis Margaret	31	F	Grade 12		√		
uBaba Martin	45	M	Grade 10		√		
uMama Thandi	58	F	No formal schooling				√
uMama Thembi	48	F	No formal schooling				√
uBaba Jeff	52	M	Grade 10		√		
Sis Lelile	30	F	Grade 4			√	
TOTAL				0	4	2	2

Information extracted from the In-depth interview schedule (Question1.4)

Analysis of the above table reveals the following:

- Four participants were able to offer a medium level of assistance. It meant that they were able to help with the homework given at primary school level.
- Two participants were able help with very basic things that required oral explanation.
- Two participants were unable to help.

The table reveals the correlation between parent literacy levels and the amount of help that parents were able to give their children with homework and assignments.

The data reflected in the table is supplemented by the responses received during the interviews.

The following responses were elicited from the literate participants at the in-depth interviews:

Interviewer: Please tell me the benefits of checking on your child's school work daily.

uBaba Martin: It is important. You will know that she is attending school and that she doing work every day.

uBaba Martin's explanation suggests that he is keeping his 'finger on the pulse' on the matter of homework.

uBaba Jeff answered the same question in the following way:

uBaba Jeff: I want my child to achieve her goals. It is my duty to check her work.

uBaba Jeff was interested in his child making a success at school. His daily involvement was crucial for this to take place.

Mama Princess answered as follows:

uMama Princess: ... And every day when they come from school we open exercise books and check the school dates to check if work is done. We check the following day that the homework we helped the child with has been

marked. I check where they are lacking to see how I can push them where it is lacking.

uMama Princess' response reveals that daily checking on homework is important for successful schooling. She was thorough about her child's completion of homework. Her formal schooling (both Grade 11 and ABET Level 4) equipped her with skills and knowledge to assist with her child's homework. Her comments support the view of scholars who maintain that literate parents tend to cope better with the literacy demands in their children's schooling (Benjamin, 1993; Chen & Harris, 2009)

On the other hand the illiterate participants revealed that they found it difficult to assist their children with their homework.

Their responses at the in-depth interviews were as follows:

Interviewer: What level of help can you offer your child with her/his homework?

uGogo Busi: Low level because sometimes there are things to be explained. When it is only oral I don't have a problem in explaining. When it is reading and writing and with numbers then I have a problem.

Without formal schooling uGogo Busi's found it difficult to assist her grandchild with school work. However, informal learning equipped her to deal with certain aspects of schoolwork.

On the other hand, responses from the two other illiterate participants indicated that they were unable to help their children's with their homework.

Interviewer: What level of help can you offer your child with her/his homework?

uMama Thembi: None. I feel foolish because my children know more than me. They know that I can't help them with their homework.

uMama Thandi: None. I cannot read and write and therefore do not understand the things my children are learning.

However, it is noteworthy these participants sought other means of getting help.

At the FGD these two participants explained ways in which they get others to help with their children's homework.

Facilitator: When your child is given homework, do you manage to help them?

uMama Thembi: I got a daughter who is at home who passed Grade 12. She is of help. She is quite happy to help.

uMama Thandi: Because I don't understand the school work, I go to my neighbour for help.

The above comments reveal that these participants lacked the cultural capital to assist their children with their homework. However, they sought help from family and neighbours.

Arising from the responses in this section, it was clearly evident that the participants placed a high value on their children's schooling. The fact that they overcame obstacles to make it possible for their children to complete their homework tasks was commendable. Their efficacy was aroused by their determination to see their children make a success of their children's schooling.

This section has given a detailed account of the nature of participants' own involvement and their perception of parental involvement in general. The next section discusses the factors that enhanced parental involvement at the school.

4.5.2 Factors enhancing parental involvement

This section reveals that the respect accorded by the school staff and the support parents received from their children was the major factors that enhanced their involvement.

a) Cordial and respectful relationship

The respectful and cordial relationship that existed between the school (i.e. principal and staff) and the parents made the latter feel accepted at the school. This encouraged parents to attend meetings and school activities. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995)

regards this as a form of verbal persuasion that arises from the good communication and respect displayed by important role-players.

Notice the response received during the FGDs:

Facilitator: Please tell me of things that encourage parents to attend meetings.

uGogo Busi: I think that the manner in which the principal and teachers speak to us and the way they do things. It is a factor that encourages us to attend meetings. I think that the principal has a special way of treating parents. *[All the participants clapped their hands]*

By clapping their hands suggested that the participants all agreed that the kindness and respectful attitude of the principal and staff made them feel welcome to attend meetings and school functions. Furthermore, the cordial relationship that existed between members of staff and the participants also hinged on their common cultural and linguistic backgrounds (i.e. isiZulu). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) explains that parents who have such good experiences will probably be higher in efficacy than parents who are deprived of these experiences.

In some schools in the country, the parents sometimes feel apprehensive about engaging with the school in the home-school partnership. Singh et al. (2004) claim that in some South African schools, the management make parents feel unwelcomed or threatened. However, at this school the opposite is true. The principal's and staff's respectful way of handling the parents was a contributing factor to a high level of parental involvement.

b) Role of children in motivating parent participation

The participants maintained that the support they received from their children encouraged them to play greater roles in their children's schooling. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) maintain that parents whose children ask them to be involved or parents whose children communicate the value of their direct involvement will most likely have higher efficacy than those who do not experience this.

For instance, during the in-depth interview uMama Princess affectionately explained that her children expressed a desire to learn:

uMama Princess: My children like their books. When they come home they take their books and sit down and learn. This encourages me.

The fact that her children had desire to learn encouraged her to support their initiatives. Hence, her home had become a place of learning.

At the FGD uMama Thembi explained that children in her neighbourhood persuaded parents to attend the parent-teacher meetings.

uMama Thembi: They give letters to children. Every child takes the letter to parent. The little ones where I live make sure that their parents get the letters. They also remind their parents and bring them along to the meeting.

The children's actions committed the parents to attend the meetings. The children's role in motivating their parents to attend meetings is an example of verbal persuasion echoed in Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995). This reflected positively on the level of parental involvement at the school.

The findings in this section revealed that the respectful and cordial relationships between the school and parents the interest shown by the children enhanced parental involvement at Intaba Umbukiso Primary School.

In the next section I will discuss the factors that inhibit parental involvement at the school.

4.5.3 Factors that inhibit parental involvement

There were several factors that inhibited participants from helping their children with their schoolwork (such as completion of homework tasks and projects, reading, and writing).

These inhibiting factors were parent illiteracy, lack of understanding the outcomes-based education (OBE) curriculum, low socio-economic conditions, slow pace of service delivery in the community and the lack of resources to encourage learning in the home.

a) The dilemma experienced by the illiterate participants.

The negative impact of parent illiteracy on parental involvement was alluded to in section 4.5.1.2 above. The following excerpt taken from the focus group discussion shows the participant's dilemma that resulted of their state of illiteracy.

Facilitator: When the children are given homework, do you manage to help them?

uMama Thandi: I don't understand because I did not go to school...

uMama Thandi's brief and poignant reply underscored the predicament of illiterate parents.

During the in-depth interview, uMama Thandi used an illustration to describe her plight as an illiterate parent.

uMama Thandi: My neighbour, she teaches her children at home. Because I can't read and write, I feel like a donkey who doesn't understand things.

As explained in Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995), to be involved, the parent must take their role construction and act on it by applying the skills necessary for involvement. Since literacy skills were lacking among the illiterate participants, they fell short in role construction.

b) Difficulty in understanding the new school curriculum

The literate participants in the study were familiar with the old curricula used during their own schooling. In dealing with the old curricula, the teacher took the centre stage in teaching and gave little attention for learner reflection and learner activity.

Although the introduction of the OBE curriculum is useful and supports the changing trends in the country, understanding its contents and methodology presented a challenge to these participants.

The following responses were elicited during the in-depth interviews.

Interviewer: What level of help can you offer your child with his/her homework?

uBaba Jeff: ... Today's education is not the same like what we learnt when we went to school. It is different. We don't understand OBE. Therefore we find it hard to help our children with school work.

Interviewer: What level of help can you offer your child with his/her homework?

Sis Margaret: The principal explained that they teach OBE at the school. The children are doing new subjects. I don't understand how OBE works.

The expressions of both these participants have shown that their understanding of the nature and methodology of OBE was lacking and it therefore presented a challenge for them.

At the FGD Sis Margaret also spoke about OBE and the challenges that parents faced with the OBE curriculum.

Facilitator: When the child is given homework, do you manage to help them?

Sis Margaret: We can speak for all. OBE is different from what we were learning at school. It is difficult.

Difficulty in understanding OBE is a major concern raised by the participants because it hindered their ability to help their children with their homework and to follow up on their progress at school.

c) The low socio-economic conditions in the community

Table10: The participants' perception of socio-economic conditions in the community (Rated from high to low).

High refers to extreme levels of incidence, conditions or achievements

Medium refers to an average level of incidence, condition or achievement.

Low refers to small amounts of incidence, conditions or achievements.

NAME	AGE	GENDER	Social Status of Parents	Parents Level of Education	Income Level of Parents	Conditions at home that make it conducive to learning	Rate of divorce	Level of Substance Abuse (drugs and alcohol)
uGogo Busi	71	F	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	High
uMama Princess	36	F	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	High
Sis Margaret	31	F	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Medium
uBaba Martin	45	M	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium
uMama Thandi	58	F	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium
uMama Thembi	48	F	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium
uBaba Jeff	52	M	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium
Sis Lelile	30	F	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium

Information extracted from the In-depth interview schedule (Question 2.1)

The above table reveals the eight participants perception of the socio-economic status of the parents living in the community.

The rating revealed the following:

- Social status: 8 rated it as being low
- Level of Education: 8 rated is as being low
- Level of Income: 8 rated it as being low
- Standard of home environment: 1 rated medium and 7 rated low
- Divorce level of parents: 8 rated it as being low (which is a good sign)
- Level of substance abuse: 2 rated high and 6 rated medium

The major challenges in the community were the low level of income and the prevalence of substance abuse in the community.

The low level of income was due to the high rate of unemployment in the community. Regarding the effects of unemployment, the following responses were received at the in-depth interviews:

Interviewer: What is the nature of your employment?

uMama Princess: I am a single mother. I did schooling at a high school. I also learnt to do poultry and got a certificate. Still I don't have a job. I earn money by doing gardening and selling vegetables.

uMama Princess' situation illustrates the downside of unemployment in this community. In spite of her formal schooling and her study in poultry production, she was still unable to find a stable job. Hence she resorted to gardening and selling vegetables to eke out a living for herself and her family.

At the in-depth interview another participant explained the difficulties that he experienced in finding a job:

Interviewer: Do any of these factors affect your involvement?

uBaba Jeff: ... I am unemployed at the moment and I have to go around looking for employment. Therefore I am not at home sometimes to check on my child's homework.

uBaba Jeff spent long hours in search of employment. The time spent searching for employment robbed him of quality time that he could have spent helping his children with their school work.

At the FGD two other unemployed female participants maintained that they eked out a living through subsistence farming:

uMama Thandi: Planting vegetables and selling it takes up lot of my time. I also do domestic work. Otherwise my family will starve.

uMama Thembi: I do gardening and grow chickens. I also get a child support grant for the children which helps.

It is evident that these participants spent most of their time planting vegetables and growing chicken to provide food for their families. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler

(1995) explain that caring and providing for the needs of the family limits the availability of time that parents may devote towards their children's schooling. Furthermore, the meagre amount of money that they earned from selling their products or from doing domestic work were not enough to provide for their children's schooling.

d) Slow pace of infrastructure development

The fourth factor that inhibited parental involvement was the inadequate provision of basic services in the community. Main concerns were the provision of proper homes, electricity and piped water (refer to Table 5). These livelihood issues had a direct bearing on the nature of cultural capital (embodied, objectified and institutionalised) that these parents and families were able to produce.

During the FGD two participants described their dwellings as follows:

uMama Thembi: We live in hut houses made of *udaka* [mud].

uMama Thandi: We have no electricity and water. Some houses have electricity and they live in better conditions. Because we have no electricity, the children do their homework while it is bright.

Usually rural people living under such conditions obtain their firewood from a nearby field and water from a communal tap. Living under these conditions is not very easy. Much of their time and energy is used to obtain firewood and water. Taking care of these livelihood issues sapped the participants' time and energy that could have been devoted towards greater levels of involvement in checking and assisting their children with their homework. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, p.318) state that "the demands of family responsibilities create constraints on the range of involvement activities that are possible for any given parent."

Figure 2 below shows the rural setting in Ward 1. The houses are built of mud with corrugated iron roofs. It also shows crops being grown for home use. A bundle of wood is seen in the foreground. Owing to the shortage of housing in the area, extended families usually cram themselves into these small dwellings.

Figure 2: Typical dwellings in the community



Photograph taken 1 km from the site in January 2012

e) Lack of educational resources

Finally, the lack of educational resources in the home further impinged on the participants' ability to teach and assist their children with their homework and reading activities. These are the objectified cultural capital spoken of in Lamont and Lareau, (1988) that included as desks, chairs, books and computers. These are not found in rural homes but are more likely to be seen in middle-class homes.

Table 11: The availability of resources needed for learning (√ means available and x means not available)

NAME	uGogo Busi	uMama Princess	Sis Margaret	uBaba Martin	uMama Thandi	uMama Thembi	uBaba Jeff	Sis Lelile	TOTAL AVAIL.	TOTAL NOT AVAIL.
Electricity	√	√	√	√	×	×	√	√	6	2
Tables and chairs	√	×	√	×	×	×	×	×	2	6
Reading Material	×	√	√	×	×	×	×	×	2	6
Computer	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	0	8
Writing Material	×	√	√	×	×	×	×	×	2	6
Library	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	0	8
Youth Centre	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	0	8

Information extracted from the In-depth interview schedule (Question 2.3)

Analysis of the above table reveals that in the home/community environment did not have the basic things to promote good learning. The most serious problems were as follows:

- Six participants could not provide their children with reading and writing material.
- In six homes they did not have table and chairs.
- The community did not have a library or a youth centre to serve as the hub for learning.

Regarding the availability of resources in the home, the following responses were elicited during the in-depth interviews:

Interviewer: What is the availability of resources at home?

uMama Princess: I have electricity but no tables and chairs at home. Children sit on the floor and do their homework. No textbooks and reading material available at home. No computer. Not enough writing material, only use old exercise books for practising. I wish that I had these things to teach my children at home.

A similar question was raised with other participants during the in-depth interviews. Notice the responses that follow.

Interviewer: Without educational resources, how do you manage to teach the children at home?

uBaba Martin: Hey, it is hard. The children sit on the floor and do their homework. They sometimes get bored.

uBaba Jeff: It is a big problem. I find it hard to teach them without textbooks and writing materials.

Sis Lelile: Sometimes my children bring the advert papers from the shop. We try and read about the things they sell. Old newspapers and adverts are the only thing our children can read.

It is natural for the children to be distracted from learning when they lack these resources and are subjected to such discomforts. Furthermore, they easily lose interest in reading when reading material is not readily available.

Inadequate resources at home highlighted the inconsistency between the cultural goods (such as tables, chairs and writing material) at home and the cultural goods available at school (such as having desks, chairs, writing material, computers etc.). Hence, these rural children faced two opposing realities in their daily lives.

This section outlined the participants' perception of the major factors that inhibited parental involvement in their children's schooling. The next section discusses the role of parent literacy in parental involvement.

4.5.4 What role does the level of parent’s literacy play in their involvement at the school?

Table 12: The participants’ level of education.

Name	Age	Sex	Level of education
uGogo Busi	71	F	No formal schooling (illiterate)
uMama Princess	36	F	Grade 11 & ABET L4
Sis Margaret	31	F	Grade 12
uBaba Martin	45	M	Grade 10
uMama Thandi	58	F	No formal schooling (illiterate)
uMama Thembi	48	F	No formal schooling (illiterate)
uBaba Jeff	52	M	Grade 10
Sis Lelile	30	F	Grade 4 (semi- literate)

Information extracted from the biographical details of the participants.

The above table shows that of eight participants in the study, three female participants did not have any formal schooling while the others had various levels of formal schooling. The state of illiteracy of the three female participants arose from the past inequalities in the provision of education in the country under the apartheid government.

The responses that now follow highlight the way the participants perceived the role of literacy on parental involvement at this school.

The participants in the FGD concurred with uMama Princess when she said that it helps when parents can read and write. She outlined the benefits below.

Facilitator: What is your view if the parent could read and write?

uMama Princess: It will help a great deal (others participants nod their heads).

Facilitator: Please tell me why?

uMama Princess: Parents can help children with homework. Teach them to read and write and to enjoy reading.

uMama Princess’ responses underscored the benefits derived from parents having the ability to read and write. Her responses suggest that literate parents are better equipped to promote reading and to assist their children with homework.

Notice that the responses below reveal that the parents' ability to read and write contributes to an increased sense of efficacy in helping their children with reading and writing.

Interviewer: Do you think that the parent's level of literacy has a bearing on the child's schooling?

uBaba Jeff: I think it does. I can sit and read with them and help them with their homework.

uBaba Martin's response to the same question was as follows.

Interviewer: Do you think that the parent's level of literacy has a bearing on the child's schooling?

uBaba Martin: I can sit and read with them. First I play with them and then get them to read and do their homework. They can then read the hymn books that we use in church.

The responses below exemplify a better relationship between parent and the school when parents are literate. Notice the responses from the three literate participants at the in-depth interviews.

Interviewer: How does reading influence the relationship between the school and the parents?

uBaba Martin: They will be able to read and understand letters from the school. Therefore they will know what is going on at school and know about school meetings.

Notice uMama Princess's response to the same question.

Interviewer: How does reading influence the relationship between the school and the parents?

uMama Princess: Will make it easy for teacher at school if all parents help children to read at home. Tell them the importance of reading. It also makes communication easy. They can understand the letters from the school.

Sis Margaret responded as follows.

Interviewer: How does reading influence the relationship between the school and the parents?

Sis Margaret: It helps parents to read letters from school and to know all the requirements for schooling. When the school call for the parent, they send letters home. We must read them to know about the meeting.

The responses below show that the participants' ability to read and write made them feel at ease when teaching their children at home. This had a positive effect on them and encouraged parental involvement.

Interviewer: Please tell me about the benefits of the parent being literate.

uMama Princess: I can help my child with its homework. I teach her to read and write and I enjoy reading with her. I teach her to understand what she writes down.

uBaba Jeff responded as follows:

uBaba Jeff: I check on the kinds of work my child is doing at school. I then give each child in the home a reading role to play.

His method of giving his children reading roles was an interesting way in motivating children to read. It was good method, since it focused on the work that his child had done at school for the day.

The participants' expressions above reveal examples of family literacy that is useful in promoting literacy in the home. Land (2012) maintains that family literacy encourages parents to read with their children, play literacy-related game and guide their children in the choices and decisions that they face.

The responses elicited from these literate participants suggest that parent literacy enhanced their ability to teach their children literacy at home. They coped better with the literacy demands placed upon them by the school. Their involvement supports the notion presented in Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) that the parents' personal sense of efficacy arise from their own belief that they have the necessary skills and

knowledge to make a success of their children's schooling.

Next, I present responses elicited from two of the illiterate participant on how they coped with literacy in her home.

Interviewer: Please tell me about your level of literacy.

uMama Thandi: None. I did not go to school. I can't read and write. When my neighbour read the newspaper they tell me the news. They sometimes teach me to read from the newspaper because I like to learn to read and write.

Interviewer: How much help can you give your children with their homework?

uMama Thandi: Not much. The only thing I do is, after they eat, I get the child to sit with her books and we wait for my neighbour. She is a good lady who teaches them well.

Interviewer: Please tell me how you encourage reading at home.

uMama Thandi: Our neighbour helps my child with home work. When she got time she teaches my child to read from the newspaper and old story books.

A glimpse into uMama Thandi's situation revealed that illiteracy impeded both the mother and her child's ability to handle the literacy demands expected of them by the school. However, as noted in the case of the literate participants, they were at an advantage in encouraging literacy development in the home.

Now notice the responses from uMama Thembi that follow.

Interviewer: Please tell me about your level of literacy.

uMama Thembi: I am not literate.

Interviewer: How much help can you give your children with their homework?

uMama Thembi: I can't help my child. My daughter who passed Grade 12 teaches her after school.

Interviewer: Please tell me how you encourage reading at home.

uMama Thembi: I ask my eldest daughter to bring all the neighbours children together and read stories for them. I sometimes sit with them. We also read from the store adverts about things they sell.

In spite of their state of being illiterate, both these participants maintained a positive attitude by seeking the assistance of others in promoting literacy in the home.

Also relevant to the lives of poor rural people is the issue of the social uses of literacy discussed in Prinsloo and Breier (1996). The social uses of literacy involve the acquisition and application of literacy and numeracy skills obtained through people's daily engagement in social and cultural activities. Stroup (2001) explain that people learn from the daily activities such as reading, writing and calculation that are required for effective functioning within their community.

In the study I also obtained the views of parents on how they learn informally from each other while participating in various social activities, and how this has benefitted them in maintaining their responsibilities towards their children's schooling and other responsibilities.

The responses below elicited during the FGD's show the different ways in which the participants have been learning things informally through their participation in social activities.

Facilitator: Please tell me of the ways in which you learn from things you do in your daily life. Give me some of these activities.

uGogo Busi: We attend *stokvels* [informal savings] meetings, society meetings, burial clubs, sit and pray together. At these meetings we learn to count, speak in public and to respect others.

Sis Margaret: You always benefit from these meetings. Even at a meeting such as this one. There are always things you pick up. You always learn from other people how to speak and how to respond.

Sis Lelile: Being members of these social groups is good. Like women prayer groups teach you behaviour, how to speak to others, how to comfort others who are mourning.

Response from the participants during the in-depth interview also alluded to informal learning.

Interviewer: Please tell me how you learnt to read and write.

Sis Lelile: I only did low grades in school where I learnt to read and write in isiZulu. But I keep learning from other ladies when we have our church meetings. They teach me to read pattern for dressmaking and are now teaching me to speak in English.

The social use of literacy is a branch of adult learning. Prinsloo and Breier (1996) explain that learning is not based on technical skills learnt through a formal school setting, but through the social practices that are embedded in specific contexts of their daily lives. For instance, like uGogo Busi, folks engage in *stokvels* which involves economic activities such as saving/borrowing money and capital-generating activities that teach people literacy, numeracy, and interpretive skills.

Furthermore, the benefits that accrue from the social uses of literacy were exemplified uGogo Busi, the old-age pensioner and one of the illiterate participants in the study.

Note her response during the in-depth interview:

Interviewer: Please tell me how you learnt to read and write.

uGogo Busi: I am a member of the *Stokvel* for many years. There I learn many things such as to count things in my mind and write small things down. I also learnt a lot when I served on the SGB, things like communication. I can speak in public.

These findings demonstrate that the social use of literacy is one of the ways in which the participants equipped themselves with skills to manage their livelihoods and cope with responsibilities towards their children's schooling. Lamont and Lareau (1988) explain that these internalised skills and values such as socialising, communicating,

behaviour and leadership that were accumulated over a period of time are examples of the cultural capital that poor rural people possess. Although acquiring these skills has its intrinsic worth, it does not replace the value of formal literacy that enhances the parents' ability to meet the demands of formal schooling.

Data presented above indicate key areas that parent literacy play in parental involvement at the school, namely, it empowers the parent, enhances their ability to teach their children and the promotion of family literacy programme.

Although the illiterate parents could not assist their children with literacy and homework, they gave a positive account of themselves by recruiting help from an older sibling and a neighbour.

Finally, this section has shown that the social use of literacy has a role to play in the lives of poor rural parents.

4.5.5 Conclusion

By and large, the level of parental involvement at this rural school was relatively high in comparison to other rural schools in the country. According to Mbokodi (2008) and Bojuwoye (2009), in South African schools a common trend is that parents are reluctant to participate in their children's schooling.

In this chapter, parental involvement was categorised into school-based involvement (meetings and school activities) and home-based involvement (homework and reading). At home the parents attempted to assist or obtain assistance from others (as in the case of the illiterate participants) to help their children with their homework and reading.

While the assumptions and expectations that arose from the use of the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model (1995) served their purpose in informing this study on the nature of parental involvement at the school, the findings challenged certain aspects of the variables from this model. For instance, the model, which was developed in a Western middle-class milieu, is challenged by the fact that it is possible for poor and illiterate parents, who lack direct educational experiences, to display a high efficacy in helping their children succeed at school.

Finally, the findings in this study also highlighted that parental participation led to informal learning. As echoed in Lave (1988), the poor rural parents in the study developed practical solutions based, not on what they would have learnt formally but on practical, collective experience informed by informal learning. Their participation reflected a collective learning process that facilitated parental involvement in schooling activities. Community learning through participation is one of the key concepts to adult education.

The next chapter presents the conclusion of this study. It gives a summary of the key findings in relation to the research questions, recommendations, limitations, contribution to scholarship and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the main findings that answer the key research questions of the study. It also discusses recommendations that arose from this research, limitations to the study, contribution to existing scholarship, suggestions for future research of this nature and concluding remarks.

The summaries of findings that follow provide insight into the nature of parental involvement at the rural primary school. It is noteworthy that the findings at this school contradict the report of a growing trend of non-participation of parents in South African schools in recent years (Lemmer, 2007; Mbokodi, 2008; Mncube, 2009).

5.2 Summary of key findings in relation to the research questions

5.2.1 How are the parents of learners at the rural primary school involved in their children's schooling?

This study considered two 'spaces' through which rural parents at Intaba Umbukiso Primary School were involved in their children's schooling. At school level the parents gave a high level of support to school governance, parent-teacher meeting and activities organised by the school. At home level, they tried very hard to assist their children with their schoolwork and reading while facing many challenges (such as socio-economic problems, lack of resources and understanding the new curriculum). Also, at home level the parents who were literate managed to assist their children with their homework and reading while the illiterate parents experienced difficulty in helping their children with homework and reading.

Irrespective of the participants' level of literacy, it was evident that they placed a high value on their children's schooling. Their efficacy was aroused by their determination to make a success of their children's schooling through strong communal and community values.

5.2.2 What factors enhance parental involvement at the school?

The study participants attributed the high level of attendance at parent-teacher meetings and school activities to the kind and respectful manner in which they were received by the principal and staff. Secondly, their children's quest for learning instilled in them a desire to play an active role in their children's schooling. Finally, the participants who were literate found it much easier to engage with the school and to help their children with their homework and reading.

5.2.3 What factors inhibit parental involvement at the school?

The participants' perception revealed several factors that inhibited rural parents from giving full attention to their children's schoolwork. Firstly, the participants who were illiterate found it difficult to assist their children with their homework. Secondly, the participants could not understand the methodology of the OBE curriculum and they were unfamiliar with the new subjects taught in OBE. Thirdly, due to their low socio-economic status, they did not have the resources to improve the learning conditions in the home. Finally, the participants had to deal with livelihood issues such as the lack housing, electricity and piped water which sapped their time and energy.

5.2.4 What role does the level of the parents' literacy play in their involvement at the school?

This study has shown that parents who were literate fared better in teaching their children literacy at home. They managed with the literacy demands placed upon them by the school and in helping their children with their homework. Furthermore, they understood the notices received from the school which kept them informed and up to date with school requirements. Literacy empowered them to promote learning in the home and to ensure that their children make a success of their schooling.

On the other hand illiterate parents found it difficult to assist their children with homework and reading and had implement measures to offset this deficiency. They relied on neighbours and older sibling to assist their children with their homework and to teach literacy in their homes.

The social use of literacy was also discussed in this section. It revealed that informal learning that arose from daily activities equipped the participants with internalised skills that helped them cope with livelihoods issues.

5.3 Recommendations

Arising out of these research findings, the following recommendations will prove useful on the subject of parental involvement at this school and at other schools in general.

5.3.1 Intaba Umbukiso Primary School is a model for parental participation

As discussed earlier in this chapter, studies show that today there is growing trend of non-participation of parents in South African schools (Lemmer, 2007; Mbokodi, 2008; Mbokodi, 2008). Hence, a need exists to identify and foreground schools that contradict this trend. Since the findings have shown an exemplary level of parental participation at Intaba Umbukiso Primary School, this school should be seen as a model for parental participation.

Furthermore, this case has shown that parental involvement in their children's schooling activities lead to parental participation which created space for informal learning. This led to improved efficacy for parents of a low socio-economic status to support other opportunities of involvement.

5.3.2 Promotion of adult literacy at the school

The findings revealed that illiteracy and unemployment were some of the major factors that inhibited parents from assisting their children with their schoolwork. Since only 24 adult learners (according to Teacher A, 2011) were enrolled at the ABET centre, the situation can be improved if more adults are encouraged to study adult literacy at the ABET centre. Furthermore, schools in the community should encourage a mass exposure to adult literacy campaigns (such as Kha Ri Gude that is being run countrywide). By getting parents involved in the various literacy programmes will equip them to promote literacy in the home.

5.3.3 Increase the parents' understanding of the school curricula

The parents did not clearly understand of the methodology and new subjects in OBE. This impeded their ability in helping their children with homework and assignments. The school should ensure that the parent body is not only informed about the curriculum, but made to understand its implications in teaching and learning.

5.3.4 Improving parent capacity to deal with homework

The findings in the study showed that illiterate participants experienced difficulty in giving personal assistance to their children with their homework and assignments. As discussed in 5.3.2, the school could do much more to improve the situation. The school could organise a school based homework groups facilitated by literate parents' or unemployed youth in the neighbourhood. Furthermore, the school should broaden the scope of its existing adult literacy programme by encouraging greater levels of parental participation. This will equip parents to provide a meaningful environment for literacy development through family literacy programmes as echoed in Land (2012).

5.3.5 Adoption of a parent advisory body

The formation of a parent advisory body can serve a useful purpose in helping parents understand and deal with nutrition, health, illiteracy, social development and other issues that relate to parental participation in their children's schooling. The principal and educators together with the SGB members can recruit voluntary assistance from people qualified or knowledgeable in these fields, from the community or areas outside the community, to serve on this body. This body must operate under the ambit of the SGB of the school.

Furthermore, the parent advisory body can set up a parent resource room to provide parents with free copies of the local newspaper, health pamphlets, HIV & AIDS pamphlets, curriculum news, etc. The room can also display posters on literacy, health, nutrition and the name and contact details of important role-players in the community (e.g. the ward councillor and social development members). The general parent population of the school should be made aware of this arrangement and encouraged to make full use of this body.

5.4 Limitations

In research choices are made about factors such as the research design, site and sampling technique. However, these options often do not work according to the original plan. This implies that research will bear certain limitations. Good quality research declares these limitations, thus making the reader familiar with them.

In view of the foregoing, it is imperative that I declare the limitations experienced in this study.

As an English home language speaking person, in most cases I had to analyse data that was presented by isiZulu speaking participants. In such instances, before analysing the data I relied on the interpretation of the data. However, such data could be inadvertently flavoured by the interpreter's own beliefs and expectations. Hence, data of this nature must be treated with caution.

Secondly, the principal was involved in the selection of the participants. Hence, I recorded the perceptions of participants whom the school's principal saw fit to participate in the study. The limitation is that the sample chosen by the principal might be biased in favour of the school.

Thirdly, the timing of my visits was a problem for the participants. Since the interviews were conducted during school hours, most of them had to leave their household chores and daily routine to make time to attend the interview sessions. Also, two female participants took time off from their work to attend the interviews. Attending the interviews under these conditions may have distracted the participants from giving their full attention to the study. Thus volunteering may have resulted in inadequate or distorted data being provided.

By comparing and contrasting data extracted from the documents and observation notes, I attempted to maintain accuracy in presenting data in the findings.

5.5 Contribution to scholarship

In spite of the harsh realities (such as poverty, illiteracy and lack of resources) experienced by these poor rural parents, this school has developed a trend of encouraging higher levels of participation in school based activities (such as parent-teacher meetings and *Ilima*). Furthermore, the study has shown that unemployment and poverty did not deter these parents from playing supportive roles in their children's schooling.

5.6 Suggestions for further research

After conducting this study and doing extensive reading of literature based on the topic of parental involvement in their children's schooling, I believe that there is still room for further research in this field.

Research based on the topics below would contribute immensely to improving the quality of education in the country:

- Community based literacy.
- Conduct the same study but include parents, teachers and learners.
- Conduct the same study but compare urban, semi-rural and rural schools.
- The effectiveness of SGBs at rural schools in South Africa.
- The provision of ABET in rural communities of South Africa.
- Understanding the changing trends in South Africa's education system - keeping parents informed.
- Revisiting homework strategies in South African schools.
- Rethinking parent-school relationship in poor rural communities.
- Initiating parent advisory councils at rural schools.

5.7 Concluding remarks

My initial concern about the declining rate of parental involvement at my school led me to undertake a study of this nature. This study increased my understanding of the reasons for parents showing varying degrees of interest in their children's schooling.

It has broadened my view of the way in which poor rural people view education. Finally, the study has shown that parents who value education and see it as a means of improving their livelihood display a commitment towards their children's education.

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12 August 2011

Dr. P Rule (24843)
School of Education and Development

Dear Dr. Rule

PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/0709/011M
PROJECT TITLE: Reading research project: A three-year action research study

In response to your application dated 5 August 2011, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

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

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

Yours faithfully

.....
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE



Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

APPENDIX B



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mohung@ukzn.ac.za

4 August 2011

Mr KS Rajin (8523322)
School of Education and Development
Faculty of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Rajin

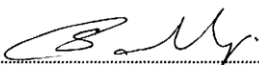
PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/0682/011M
PROJECT TITLE: An investigation into the nature of parental involvement at a rural combined school

In response to your application dated 2 August 2011, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

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

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

Yours faithfully


.....
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

cc. Supervisor: Mr Z Hlela
cc. Ms T Mnisi, Faculty Research Office, Edgewood Campus

Letter of Consent

Dear Research Participant,

I am a student registered for M.Ed. in Adult education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. My research study focuses on an investigation into the nature of parental involvement at a rural primary school where your child/ward is schooling. My supervisor is Mr Zamo Hlela from the Centre of Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, and he may be contacted at the following number: 033-2605849; or in writing at: Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Private Bag X01, Scottsville, 3209, South Africa.

I would like to request that you participate in an interview and/or focus group in this study as your views are important for me to understand why parents do or do not get involved in school activities, and how this takes place. If you agree, I will arrange a time and place that is suitable for you. The duration of the interview/focus group will not exceed one hour. There will be no payment for this but I will cover the cost of refreshments.

Your name will not be used in my final report. Your identity will be protected through the use of pseudonyms. Your participation will be voluntary and you will not suffer any disadvantage if you decide not to participate. You will also be free to withdraw from the research at any time. The data from the research will be stored at the University of KwaZulu-Natal for five years and thereafter incinerated, and the research report will be kept in the library.

If you agree to participate, please fill in the declaration below.

Many Thanks

Krishna Sivalingam Rajin

DECLARATION

I, _____ (full names of participant), hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, should I wish to do so.

Signature of Participant

Date

Letter of Consent in isiZulu

Mzali Othandekayo

Nqingumfundi obhalisele ukufunda iziqu ze (M. Ed)kwimfundo yabadala e University yakwaZulu-Natal. Uphenyo Iwami luqonde ukuthola ulwazi nzulo ngokuzibandakanya kwabazali emfundweni yabantwana babo ezikoleni ezihlangene ezisemaphandleni.

Umphathi(supervisor) wami uMnu. Zamo Hlela ophuma kwi Centre of Adult Education khona e University of KwaZulu-Natal, angathinteka kule nombolo: 033-2605849; noma angabhalelwa kuleli kheli Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Private Bag X01, Scottsville,3209, South Africa.

Bengicela ukuthi ube yingxenye yale nhlobo (interview) noma yethimba eliqondene naloluphenyo ngoba imibono yakho ibalulekile kimina ukuze ngiqonde kabanzi ukuthi kungani abazali bezibandakanya kuthi abanye bangazihluphi nhlobo ngezinto ezenziwa ezikoleni. Uma uvuma, ngizohlela isikhathi nendawo ezolungela wena. Ingxoxo ngeke yeqe kwihora elilodwa. Akukho nkokhelo eyoba khona, kodwa-ke ukudla neziphuzo ziyonikezelwa mahhala.

Igama lakho ngeke lisetshenziswe kumbiko wami wokucina kuyosetshenziswa amagama okuzakhela ukuvikela ubuwena. Ukuba yingxenge yalolu phenyo kusothandweni Iwakho, akukho okubi okuyokuvelela uma ungasathandi futhi ukhululekile ukuyeko noma nini. Lonke ulwazi oluyoqoqwa ophenyweni luyogcinwa e University of KwaZulu- Natal iminyaka emihlanu bese luyashiswa. Umbiko wona uyogcinwa kumtapo wolwazi.

Uma uvuma ukuba yingxenge, ngicela ugcalise lesi si bophezelo esilandelayo.

Ngiyabonga

Krishna Sivalingam Rajin

Isibophezelo

Mina _____ (amagama aphelele) ngiyavuma ukuthi ngiyayiqonda yonke imigomo yalo somqulu nobunjalo balolu phenyofuthi ngiyazibophezela ukuba yingxenye yalo.

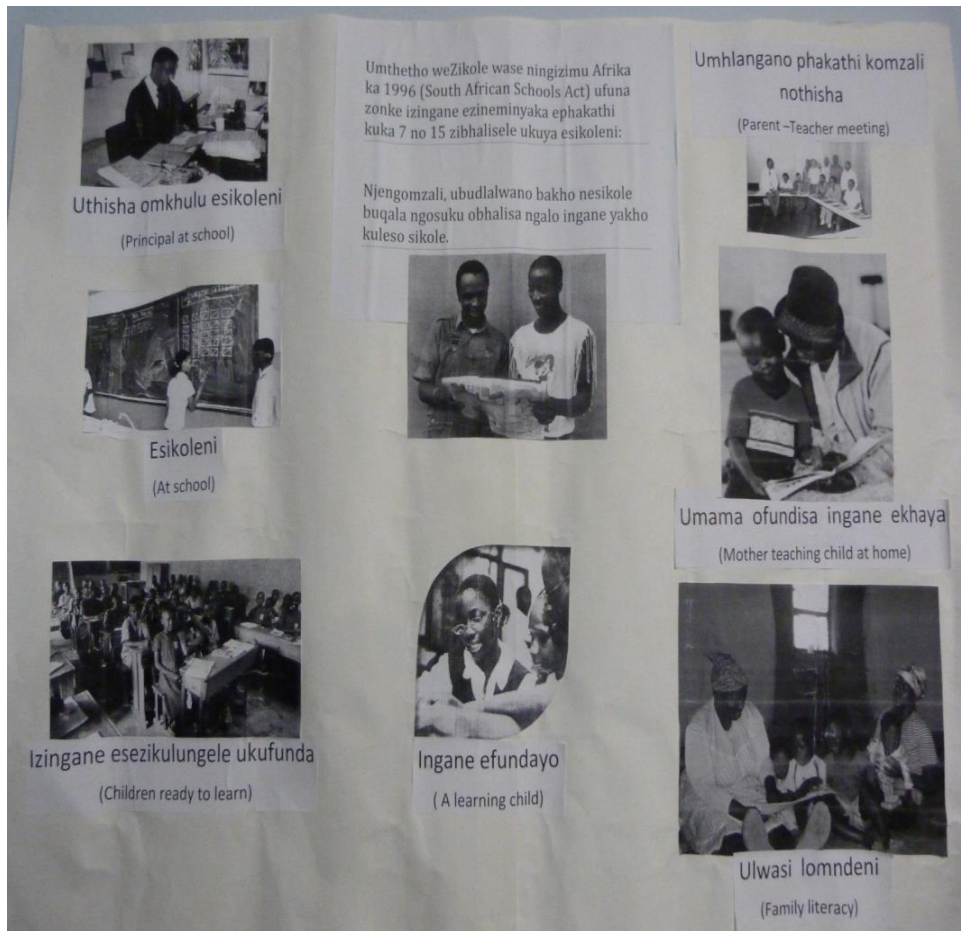
Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ngikhululekile ukushiya kulolu phenyo noma nini uma kwenzeka ngifuna.

Ukushicilela

Usuku

Focus Group Interview Schedule

The session commenced by using interest-arousing questions in relation to various situations in parent-teacher-child relationships as depicted on the chart below.



Questions related to the pictures:

1. Please tell me about the things you see in these pictures.
2. What are some of the ways in which parents have been involved with their children's learning?
3. What is your feeling about the parent-school relationship?

After creating an environment for discussion, more specific questions were directed to the participants.

Theme 1: Parental Involvement

- 1.1 Please tell me your view of the importance of sending your children to school.
- 1.2 Why is it important for parental participation in the child's schooling?
- 1.3 Please tell me what encourages parents to attend school meetings.
- 1.4 Please tell me of ways in which the school communicates with parents.
- 1.5 What is the level of support at parent meetings and school activities?
- 1.6 What do you know about the SGB? Please explain whether it is working well for the parents?

Theme 2: Factors enhancing parental involvement

- 2.1 What in your opinion is the level of parental involvement at this school? Please explain.
- 2.2 What in your opinion are factors that limit parental involvement? Please explain.
- 2.3 Please tell me about the role of the school governing body at this school?
- 2.4 Tell me whether the governing body keeps the parents informed.
- 2.5 What valuable contribution has it made for the school?

Theme 3: Parental involvement and the role of literacy

- 3.1 Please tell me about your levels of literacy.
- 3.2 When your child is given homework, do you manage to help them?
- 3.3 What can you learn by serving on the school's governing body?
- 3.4 We learn things all the time. Please tell me about ways in which you learn from things you do in their everyday life.
- 3.5 What skills do you learn when you join social groups in the community?
- 3.6 Are parents in the community literate enough to teach their children literacy skills at home? Please explain.
- 3.7 What is your view if the parent could read and write? Please tell me why?
- 3.8 What are your views and beliefs about literacy in the home?

In-depth interview schedule

(For the questionnaires inserted, the interviewer will tick boxes)

Theme 1: Parental Involvement

- 1.1 What would you say is the nature of parental involvement at this school? What is your involvement?
 1.2 How often do you visit the school and for what purpose? (In each category below, choose any one box)

Check on my child’s schooling:	<input type="checkbox"/> OFTEN	<input type="checkbox"/> SOMETIMES	<input type="checkbox"/> NOT AT ALL
Parent-Teacher meetings	<input type="checkbox"/> OFTEN	<input type="checkbox"/> SOMETIMES	<input type="checkbox"/> NOT AT ALL
ABET classes	<input type="checkbox"/> OFTEN	<input type="checkbox"/> SOMETIMES	<input type="checkbox"/> NOT AT ALL
Attend church service:	<input type="checkbox"/> OFTEN	<input type="checkbox"/> SOMETIMES	<input type="checkbox"/> NOT AT ALL
Collect water:	<input type="checkbox"/> OFTEN	<input type="checkbox"/> SOMETIMES	<input type="checkbox"/> NOT AT ALL
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> OFTEN	<input type="checkbox"/> SOMETIMES	<input type="checkbox"/> NOT AT ALL

- 1.3 How often do you check on your child’s school work? (choose a block below)
 Daily Now and then Not at all
 1.3.1 Please tell me the benefits of checking on your child’s schoolwork daily.
 1.3.2 What factors (if any) prevent you from checking on your child’s schoolwork regularly? Please explain.
 1.4 What level of help can you offer your child with his/her homework? (choose a block below)
 High Medium Low None
 1.4.1 Please explain your reason/s for choosing the above levels.
 1.4.2 How can you help to improve your child’s homework habits?
 1.5 The school expects parents to be involved in various activities. Tell me if you are involved in any of the activities listed here. (Choose yes/no)

Fund raising	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Sports	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Building maintenance	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Governing Body	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Environmental projects	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Gardening & planting	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
School Socials	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Excursions	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

- 1.5.1 If “yes” for any of above, describe the nature of your involvement in each.
 1.5.2 If “no” for any of the above, explain your reason/s for not being involved in each.
 1.6 Are you a member on the schools governing body? What roles do you serve?

Theme 2: Factors enhancing or inhibit parental involvement

- 2.1 The factors below have a bearing on parental involvement in their children’s schooling. In your community, how would you rate these factors?

Social status	<input type="checkbox"/> HIGH	<input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM	<input type="checkbox"/> LOW
Level of education	<input type="checkbox"/> HIGH	<input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM	<input type="checkbox"/> LOW
Level of income	<input type="checkbox"/> HIGH	<input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM	<input type="checkbox"/> LOW
Home environment	<input type="checkbox"/> HIGH	<input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM	<input type="checkbox"/> LOW
Divorce	<input type="checkbox"/> HIGH	<input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM	<input type="checkbox"/> LOW
Alcohol/Drug abuse	<input type="checkbox"/> HIGH	<input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM	<input type="checkbox"/> LOW

- 2.1.1 If any, which of the above factor/s have a bearing on your involvement in your child's schooling?
- 2.1.2 Please tell me how the choices you made in the previous question either enhance or inhibit your involvement.
- 2.2 Attendance at parent-teacher meetings is important. What do you think are the possible reasons for non-attendance at these meetings? (Choose one or more reasons)
- Time of the meeting No Transport Tired from work
 Working overtime Infirm or Disabled Not interested
- 2.2.1 What is your reason/s for the choice/s you made?
- 2.2.2 What suggestions can you give the school to improve the situation?
- 2.2.3 Please tell me about your views on open days. Why do you attend?
- 2.2.4 What is the nature of your employment?
- 2.3 What is the availability of resources in the home? Let's talk about it. (Choose below)

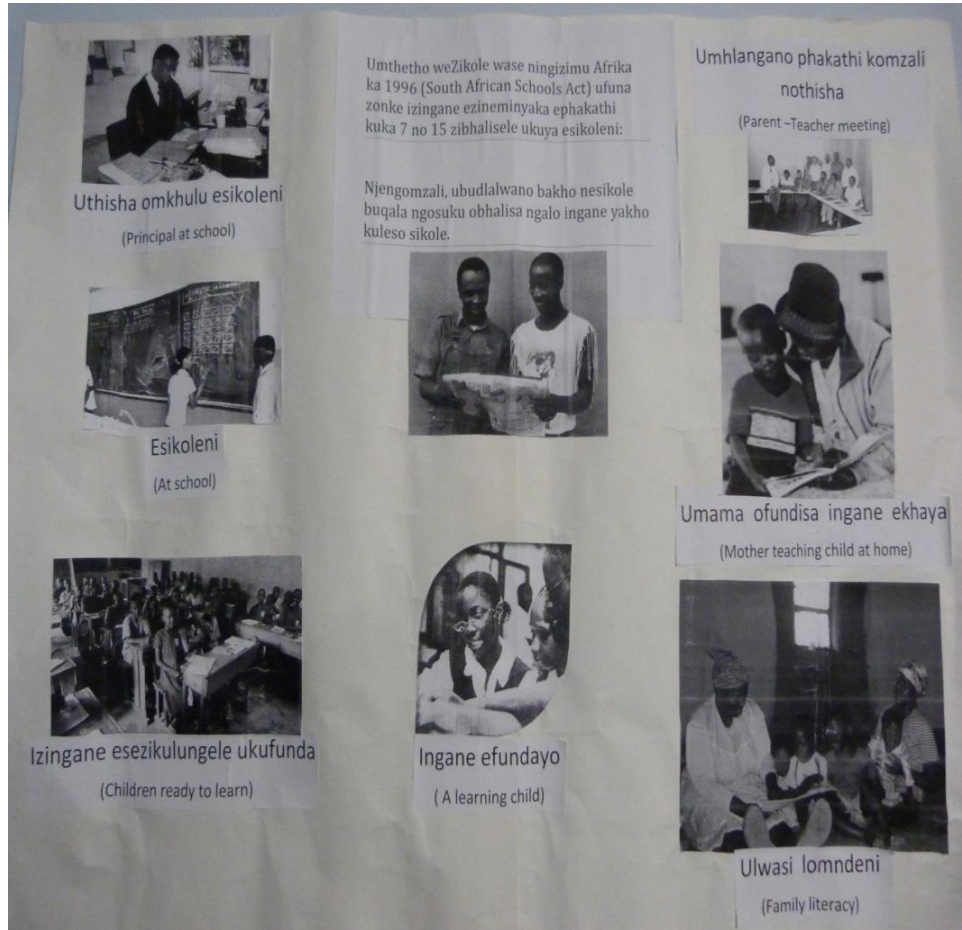
Study environment (with electricity, tables, chairs, etc.)	AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE
Textbooks and reading material	AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE
Home computer with software	AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE
Writing material	AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE
Library (community)	AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE
Youth centre (community)	AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE

- 2.3.1 Without learning resources in the home, please tell me how you manage to teach your children?

Theme 3: Role of parental involvement and literacy.

- 3.1 Please tell me about your own level of literacy. (Tick below)
- HIGH MEDIUM LOW LEVEL NONE
- 3.1.1 If you are able to, please tell me how you learnt to read and write.
- 3.1.2 Please tell me about the benefits of the parent being literate.
- 3.1.3 How much help can you give your children with their homework?
- 3.2 How would you describe the attitudes of parents toward reading in your community? (Tick below)
- POSITIVE NEGATIVE
- 3.2.1 Please tell me why you made this choice.
- 3.2.2 How will you describe your attitude toward reading?
- 3.3 How do parents in the community encourage their children to read at home?
(You can choose one or more from the first three)
- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Read with them | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Engage in a family literacy programmes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Enrol them the library | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| None of the above | <input type="checkbox"/> |
- 3.3.1 Please tell me how you encourage reading at home.
- 3.4 How does reading influence the relationship between the school and the parents? (communication, meetings attendance, etc.)

Focus Group Interview Schedule in isiZulu



Imibuzo ehlobene nezithombe:

1. Ngicela ungitshele ngezinto ozibona kulezi zithombe.
2. Yiziphi ezinye izindlela abazali abangazibandakanya ngazo ngokufunda kwozingane zabo?
3. Uzizwa kanjani ngobudlelwano besikole nabazal.

Emva kokwenza indawo yokuxoxisama, kuvele imibuzo eminimgi eqondene nabahlangamyeleli.

Theme 1: Ukuzibandakanya kwabazali

- 1.1 Ngicela ungitshele imizwa yakho ngokubaluleka kokuthumela umtwana wakho esikoleni.
- 1.2 Kubaluleke ngani ukuzibandakanya komzali ekufundeni kwengane?
- 1.3 Ngicela ungitshele ukuthi yini egqugquzela abazali ukuthi beze emhlanganweni wesikole.
- 1.4 Ngicela ungitshele izindlela ezingenziwa isikole ukuxhumana nabazali.
- 1.5 Lingakanani izinga lokubambisana emhlanganweni wabazali nezinto ezenzeka esikoleni?
- 1.6 Ngabe kukhona okwaziyo nge SGB? Ngicela uChaze, ngabe kusebenza kahle ohlangothini lwabazali?

Theme 2: Izingqinamba ezigqugquzela noma ezivimbela bona ukuthi bazibandakanye.

- 2.1 Uthini umbono wakho ngezina lokuzibandakanya kwabazali kulesisikole? Ngicela uchaze.
- 2.2 Uthini umbono wakho ngezinqinamba ezibanga ukudebesela noma ukungazibandaka nyi kwabazali? Ngicela uchaze.
- 2.3 Ngicela ungitshele ngeqhaza elibanjwe umkhandlu obhekelele ukuphathwa kwesikole lapha esikoleni.
- 2.4 Ngabe ababhekelele ukuphathwa kwesikole bayayedlulisa imiyalezo noma imibiko kubazali?
- 2.5 Yiyiphi inhlanganiso enhle okuyenzayo esikoleni?

Theme 3: Ukuzihlanganisa kwabazali kanye neqhaza lemfundo.

- 3.1 Ngicela ungitshele ngezina lemfundo yakho?
- 3.2 Umaingane yakho inikwe umsebenzi ezowenza ekhaya, ngabe uya kwazi ukuyisiza.
- 3.3 Yini ongayifunda uma ungasebenza njengomunye wababhekelele ukuphathwa kwesikole?
- 3.4 Sifunda ngaso sonke isikhathi. Ngicela ungitshele izindlela ofunda ngazo ezintweni ozenza emihleni yempilo.
- 3.5 Yimaphi amakhono owafundayo uma uhlanganyela namaqembu omphakathi?
- 3.6 Ngabe abazali emphakathini wakho bafunde ngokwanele ukuthi bangasiza abantwana babo ukufunda nokubhala ekhaya. Ngicela uchaze.
- 3.7 Ukhona yini umehluko ongaba khona, uma umzali ekwazi ukufunda nokubhala? Ukushiso yini lokho?
- 3.8 Ithini imibono nezinkolelo zakho ngokufunda nokubhala ekhaya?

In- depth interview schedule in isiZulu

Theme1: Ukuzibandakanya kwabazali

- 1.1 Ngabe sinjani isimo sokuzibandakanya kwabazali kulesisikole? Wena uzibandakanya kanjani?
- 1.2 Ngabe usivakashela kangaki isikole?Usuke uyokwenzani? (Khetha ibhokisi elingaphansi)
- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------|
| Ukubheka umsebenzi wengane yami: | Kwenzeka Njalo | Kwenzeka Ngalanga | Akwenzeki |
| Imihlangano Kathisha nomzani | Kwenzeka Njalo | Kwenzeka Ngalanga | Akwenzeki |
| Amakilasi ka ABET | Kwenzeka Njalo | Kwenzeka Ngalanga | Akwenzeki |
| Ngiyaya Esontweni: | Kwenzeka Njalo | Kwenzeka Ngalanga | Akwenzeki |
| Ngikha amansi | Kwenzeka Njalo | Kwenzeka Ngalanga | Akwenzeki |
| Okunye: | Kwenzeka Njalo | Kwenzeka Ngalanga | Akwenzeki |
- 1.3 Ngabe uwubheka kangaki umsebenzi wengane? (Khetha ibhokisi elingaphansi)
- | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Njalo | <input type="checkbox"/> Ngenzinye izinsuko | <input type="checkbox"/> Nhlobo |
|--------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
- 1.3.1 Ngicela ungisthele ngensizakalo oyitholayo ngokubheka umsebenzi wengane yakho wasekhaya.
- 1.3.2 Yiziphi izizathu ezingaku vimbela ekutheni ubheke umsebenzi wengane wesikole? Ngicela u chaze.
- 1.4 Iliphi izinga losizo ongalunikezela enganeni yakho emsebenzini wesikole. Khetha ibhokisi elingaphansi.
- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Phezulu | <input type="checkbox"/> phakathi | <input type="checkbox"/> luncane | <input type="checkbox"/> alukho |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
- 1.4.1 Ngicela uchaze isizathu ngokukhetha kokunga phezulu.
- 1.4.2 Ugayisiza kanjani ingane yakho ukukhuphulo izinga lomsebenzi wayo wesikole.
- 1.5 Isikole silindele ukuthi abazali bazibandakanye emisebenzini eyenzekayo.Ngitshele ngokwenzayo. Kulemi sebenzi ebekiwe lapha (Khetha u-yebo noma u-cha)
- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|-----------------------|--|
| Ukwenza imali | <input type="checkbox"/> YEBO <input type="checkbox"/> CHA | Ezemidlalo | <input type="checkbox"/> YEBO <input type="checkbox"/> CHA |
| Izakhiwo | <input type="checkbox"/> YEBO <input type="checkbox"/> CHA | Umkhandluwabazali SGB | <input type="checkbox"/> YEBO <input type="checkbox"/> CHA |
| Umsebenzi Ozokwenziwa Endaweni | <input type="checkbox"/> YEBO <input type="checkbox"/> CHA | Izingadi & nokutshala | <input type="checkbox"/> YEBO <input type="checkbox"/> CHA |
| Inhlalakahle Esikoleni | <input type="checkbox"/> YEBO <input type="checkbox"/> CHA | Uhambo Lokuzijabulisa | <input type="checkbox"/> YEBO <input type="checkbox"/> CHA |
- 1.5.1 Uma uthi yebo kokungen hla chaza ngoku zibandakanya kwakho ngakunye.
- 1.5.2 Uma uthi cha kulokhu okungenhla, chaza isizathu esikwenza ungazibanda kanyi.
- 1.5.3 Uya zi bandakanya ekugoqweni kwemali ngesihle nangendlela ethule?
- 1.6 Ngabe ungomunye wabomkhandlu obhekele ukuphathwa kwesikole? Iliphi iqhaza olibambile?

Theme 2: Izimo eziqhubezela phambili ukuzibandakanya kwabazali

- 2.1 Lezi zimo ezingaphansi zinomphumelo wokuzi bandakanya kwabazali ekufundeni kwezingane. Emphakathini wakho ungalinganisa kangakanani kulezizimo?

Isimo senhlalo	<input type="checkbox"/> Phezulu	<input type="checkbox"/> phakathi	<input type="checkbox"/> luncane
----------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------	----------------------------------

Izinga lemfundo	Phezulu	phakathi	luncane
Izinga lamaholo	Phezulu	phakathi	luncane
Isimo sasekhaya	Phezulu	phakathi	luncane
Ukwehlukanisa emshadweni	Phezulu	phakathi	luncane
Utshwala/Nokusetshe iziswa kwezi dakamizwa	Phezulu	phakathi	luncane

- 2.1.1 Uma kukhona, yikuphi kulokhu okungenhla okuyizingqinamba zokuthi ungakwazi ukuzibandakanya emfundweni yengane yakho?
- 2.1.2 Ngicela ungitshele yikuphi okukhethile kulemibuzo engemuva okungakugqugumezela ekutheni uzibandakanye.

2.2 Ukufika emhla nga nweni kathisha nomzali kubalulekile. Ucabanga ukuthi yiziphi izizathu ezingenza ukuthi ungafiki emhlanganweni? (Ungakhetha okungaphezu kokukodwa)

Isikhathi somhlangano	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ukweswelainto yoku hamba	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ukukhathala emva komsebenzi	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ukusebenza isikhathi esengeziwe	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ukukhu bazeka	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ukungabi nawo umudlandla	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 2.2.1 Yiziphi izizathu zaloku okukhethile
- 2.2.2 Yisiphi iseluleko ongasinika isikole ukukhuphula izinga lalesisimo.
- 2.2.3 Ngicela ungitshele imibono yakho ngezinsuku ezivulekile.
- 2.2.4 Wenza hlobo luni lomsebenzi?

2.3. Zikhona yini izinsizakufunda ekhaya? Ake sikhulume ngazo.(khetha ngezansi)

Indawo yokufundela(inogesi, amatafula, izitulo, nokunye)	kukhona	akukho
Amabhuku nezincwadi zokufunda	kukhona	akukho
Icomputer	kukhona	akukho
Izinto zokubhalela	kukhona	akukho
Umtapo wolwazi(womphakathi)	kukhona	akukho
Library(yomphakathi)	kukhona	akukho

Isizinda sentsha (sompakathi)

2.3.1 Ngaphandle kwezinsiza kufunda ekhaya, shono ukuthi ukwazi kanjani ukufundisa ingane yakho?

Theme 3: Umsebenzi wokuzibandakanya komzali nolwazi lokufunda.

3.1 Ngicela ungitshele ngobungako bolwazi lwakho lokufunda. (Khetha ngezansi)

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Phezulu | Phakathi | Luncane | Alukho |
- 3.1.1 Uma ukwazi, ngicela ungitshele ukuthi wafunda kanjani?
- 3.1.2 Ngabe yini ubuhle nomphumela obakwana uma umzali ekwazi ukufunda nokubhala?

3.1.3 Lungakanani usizo ongulunika ingane yakho?

3.2 Ungaluchaza kanjani uthando lwabazali emfundweni emphakathini wakho. (Khetha ngezansi)

Bayathanda

Abathandi

3.2.1 Ngicela ungitshela kungani ukhethe lokhu

3.2.2 Lunjani uthando lwakho ngokufunda?

3.3 Bazigquzela kanjani abazali bomphakathi wakho izingane zabo ukuthi zifunde emakhaya?
(Ungakhetha okukodwa kulokhu okuthathu)

Bafunda nazo

Umndeni u yahlanganyela ekufundeni

Bayababhalisa emtapweni wolwazi

Akukho kulokhu okungenhla

3.3.1 Ngitshela ukugquzela kanjani ukufunda ekhaya.

3.4 Ngabe ukufunda kubusiza ngani ubudlelwano besikole nabazali?
(ezingxoxweni, nokuza, emihlanganweni)

APPENDIX I

Survey Form used by the researcher to extract biographical information from the participants

Name/ igama	Age/ ubudala	Gender/ ubulili	Employment /umsebenzi	Monthly Income/ inyanga iholo	Education level/ imfundo ileveli	Parentage/ umzali	
uGogo Busi							
uMama Princess							
Sis Margaret							
uBaba Martin							
uMama Thandi							
uMama Thembi							
uBaba Jeff							
Sis Lelile							