



**EXPLORING SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES OF PARENTAL
INVOLVEMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS SITUATED IN LOW-
INCOME COMMUNITIES**

BY

KERISHKA GOVENDER

**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the academic requirements for the degree of
Master of Education in the Discipline of Educational Leadership Management and
Policy**

College of Humanities, School of Education

Edgewood Campus

Supervisor: Dr. B.N.C.K. MKHIZE

December 2021

DECLARATION

I, Kerishka Govender, declare that:

(i) the research reported in this dissertation (**Exploring school principals' experiences of parental involvement in primary schools situated in low-income communities.**), except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.

(ii) This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

(iii) This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs, or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.

(iv) This dissertation does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:

a) Their words have been re-written, but the general information attributed to them has been acknowledged.

b) Where their exact words have been used, their writing has been placed within quotation marks, and referenced.

(v) The work described in this dissertation was carried out in the School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2016 under the supervision of **Dr BNCK Mkhize** (Supervisor).

and

(vi) The Ethical Clearance Ref no 2/4/8/1707 was granted prior to undertaking the fieldwork.

Signature

31 March 2022

Date

STATEMENT BY SUPERVISOR

This dissertation is submitted with/without my approval.

DR BNCK MKHIZE

31 March 2022

APPROVAL LETTER FROM UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL



18 April 2021

Miss Kerishka Govender (214559225)
School Of Education
Edgewood campus

Dear Miss Govender,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00002625/2021

Project title: Exploring school principals experiences of parental involvement in primary schools situated in low-income communities.

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 06 April 2021 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) 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 discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 18 April 2022.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, **Mr. Sadhasivan Govender**. Thank you, daddy, for teaching me the value of education. I will continue making you proud and raising our family's name in your honour.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I want to thank my father, **Mr. Sadhasivan Govender** for always pushing me to strive for greatness, and my mother, **Mrs. Anusha Govender** for her guidance throughout this journey. You both have raised me to be the woman I am today. My every achievement belongs to you.

My sincerest gratitude goes to my loving fiancé and pillar of strength, **Paroshen Pillay** for his role in supporting and encouraging me to keep on going through every step of this journey. You stood by me like a rock, giving me the strength to face every day, taking care of me when I neglected myself, and pushing me to continue even when the end seemed so far away, and I felt giving up. No amount of words will express the gratitude I have in my heart. I would never be, where I am today without you by my side.

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To my supervisor, **Dr. Mkhize**, thank you for your guidance through this study.

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ABSTRACT

This study is a qualitative case study that took place in three schools within the township of Phoenix. This study explored how primary school principals working in low-income communities experienced parental involvement. Purposive and convenience sampling were used to select three primary school principals with varying years of experience working in the low-income community. Data was generated through semi-structured interviews and document review and analysed thematically.

Findings from this study have indicated that South African schools in low-income communities are still challenged by socio-economic factors that negatively influence parental involvement. The amount of parental involvement in schools is dependent on the leadership attitude and the strategies in place to promote and sustain parental involvement. These findings indicate that even though socio-economic factors cannot be eradicated in low-income communities, there can still be an improvement to parental involvement based on the schools' strategies and the school leaders' attitude towards parental involvement.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

This study explored principals' experiences of parental involvement in supporting their children's education in primary schools situated in lower-income communities. It sought to understand, through the experiences of primary school principals, the strategies that work in low-income areas to promote the involvement of parents in their children's education. Parents play a significant role in supporting their children's educational journey (Amponsah, Milledzi, Ampofo & Gyambrah, 2018; Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Ikechukwu, 2017; Lemmer, 2017). However, anecdotal evidence based on my informal observations and empirical evidence from literature (Jafarov, 2015; Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013; Munje & Mncube, 2018) indicates that schools often assume that parents are familiar with how to engage with teachers and respond to the various tasks associated with supporting their children's education. The danger/risk of such a blanket assumption is that it can lead to the systematic exclusion of those parents who are unsure of how to be involved in their child's education.

Evidence from studies (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Jafarov, 2015; Poole, 2017) shows that parents who had negative experiences in their school life may feel threatened in involving themselves with school matters of their children. In most cases, these parents come from low-income communities (Myende & Nhlumayo, 2020; Poole, 2017). Additionally, research has shown that principals who have lived through negative experiences of parental involvement have a poor attitude towards parental involvement (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020).

This chapter is an orientation to the study, and therefore, it sets the scene for the discussion of key issues undergirding the study. It provides the background to the study and makes a formal statement of the problem. Other important items such as the purpose and the rationale for the study; the significance of the study; the three research objectives and three research questions that guided the study are also provided. Furthermore, this chapter provides the clarification of key terms and limitations of the study. The chapter concludes by outlining the layout of the study which spells out what each chapter of the dissertation entails.

1.2 Background of the study

Parental involvement in schools has a significant impact on learners, schools, and parents themselves. Research has shown that learners strive academically and have a better attitude towards learning when their parents participate in their educational journey (Maluleke, 2014; Ikechukwu, 2017). Maluleke (2014) states that by being involved in their children's education, parents gain the satisfaction of contributing to their child's education and future. Additionally, parents will gain a better understanding of the school curriculum and their child's learning activities, and they spend more time with their children, allowing them to communicate better (Maluleke, 2014). Teachers experience improved communication with parents, thus gaining a deeper understanding of their family dynamic and any difficulties the learner might be facing. The school, in turn, benefits by gaining the support of parents (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). Unfortunately, despite all the benefits of parental involvement for all the stakeholders concerned, the government during apartheid time struggled to have parents involved in their children's education in the low-income sector of South African society.

The challenges outlined in the section above spilt to the new era of democracy and the government had to tackle them as part of its transformation agenda (Pampallis, 1998). Post-apartheid educational reforms in South Africa sought to provide parents with formal power in education through the South African Schools Act (SASA), No 84 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996). This Act sought to provide a platform for parents to collaborate with the school to ensure that the school is governed in the best interest of all the stakeholders and educational transformation is enhanced. The SASA also allows for a bond to be forged between the school and parents, hence promoting parental involvement in schools (Mncube, 2009). In a further attempt to promote the involvement of parents in South African education, the Policy on the South African Standard for Principalship (PSASP) of 2015 drew attention to the duties and responsibilities of principals. The PSASP highlights that it is the responsibility of the principal of a school to integrate parents into the school environment as outlined in the policy (Republic of South Africa, 2015). However, principals are not given explicit guidelines on how to promote and sustain parental involvement in their schools (Maphoke, 2017).

In an effort to provide a solution, the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) introduced a suggestive framework to guide school and parent community engagement in 2016. This framework was produced in collaboration with the Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng,

Northwest, Eastern Cape, and Mpumalanga provincial education departments, teacher unions, and various NECT sponsors. Such a framework seems to be based on and is consistent with Epstein's (1995) model for parental involvement which states that parents can be involved in education through parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. However, the implementation of this framework seems to be lacking broad application as it is not a nationally implemented policy. Nevertheless, it is a suggestive framework for parental involvement (NECT, 2016). Due to this lack of universal application nationally, it may cause fragmentation in terms of how schools promote and sustain parental involvement as the formulation of policies to promote and sustain parental involvement becomes the responsibility of the individual school.

Despite the policies and guidelines that are in place to increase the involvement of parents in South African schools, research indicates that parental involvement remains relatively low in schools situated in low-income communities (Msila, 2009; Poole, 2017; Singh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2004). Poole (2017) asserts that parents, particularly from low-income communities, have a difficult relationship with the educational system. This seemingly influences the level of involvement of parents at schools and poses a challenge as 60% of South African schools are situated in low-income communities (Department of Basic Education, 2019). Parental involvement is highly beneficial as it leads to improved learner behaviour (Duan, Guan & Bu, 2018). On the contrary, poor parental involvement leads to learners having stagnated educational growth (Roy & Giraldo-Garcia, 2018), and ultimately, stagnating individual growth of the learner. This poses the need to understand parental involvement in education, especially in low-income communities.

1.3 Statement of the problem

The significance of parental involvement in a child's education, and the school, is a known phenomenon in literature (Amponsah, Milledzi, Ampofo & Gyambrah, 2018; Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Ikechukwu, 2017; Lemmer, 2017). With the importance of parental involvement in mind, the Department of Basic Education in South Africa introduced policies in an attempt to promote parental involvement in education. However, poor parental involvement still poses a challenge in South African public schools, particularly schools situated in low-income communities (Myende & Nhlumayo, 2020; Okeke, 2014).

The level of support that a learner receives at home directly impacts his/her academic success. Research has shown that learners with greater parental support often perform better academically than learners who receive no parental support (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Segoe & Bisschop, 2019). Ramanlingam and Maniam (2020) declare that education is a gift of the social and economic improvement and enhancement of individuals based on their efforts. The academic success of a learner opens avenues for them allowing them to improve their current low-socioeconomic status, consequently changing their lives and their communities. If this issue remains unattended, it will eventually lead to socio-economic implications, as the poor will remain poor while the rich will get richer.

Principals play a critical role in fostering parental involvement at schools as their leadership practices can work to either promote or impede parental involvement (Myende, 2019; NECT, 2016; Yulianti, Denessen, Droop & Veerman, 2020). However, there is evidence that shows that principals working in low-income communities experience parental involvement differently compared to those working in high- or middle-income communities (Batista, 2009). This is because parents living in low-income communities often experience the barriers to parental involvement that are unique to their communities, consequently this shapes principals' experiences of parental involvement uniquely to their context. Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020) note that principals' attitudes towards parental involvement are shaped by their experiences of parental involvement. The attitude towards parental involvement held by the principal is modelled in the school's culture and impacts leadership practices (Cruse, 2021; Yulianti, Denessen & Droop, 2020), ultimately influencing parental involvement in schools.

Lara and Saracosti (2019) note that most parental involvement research has taken place in developed countries, producing generalisable findings that do not fit in the context of developing countries, consequently leaving a gap in the literature. Expressing a similar view, Poole (2017) highlights the limited research conducted about parental involvement in South Africa, which is a developing country. Upon researching the topic of parental involvement, I have noted that there is limited research that particularly highlights the experiences of principals on parental involvement in low-income communities. To address the gap in knowledge and gain a deeper understanding of parental involvement in low-income communities, this study sought to explore school principals' experiences of parental involvement in primary schools situated in low-income communities. Furthermore, the study sought to obtain an understanding of what principals perceive as factors which inhibit parental

involvement, and the strategies they implement to encourage and sustain parental involvement at their schools.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to bring to light how primary school principals working in low-income communities experience parental involvement. The study further examined what principals leading primary schools situated in low-income communities perceive as factors that contribute towards the hindrance of parental involvement and what strategies these schools have in place to promote the involvement of parents.

1.5 The rationale for the study

The rationale to conduct this study comes from personal experience as a primary school teacher in a low-income community and my observations about the challenges of parental involvement at that school. Anecdotal evidence based on my informal observations indicates that the majority of parents are reluctant to be involved in school matters or matters regarding their child's education or are simply uninterested. During discussions with colleagues from neighbouring schools, it was revealed that the challenge of parental involvement is also prevalent at their schools.

However, whilst this may be the reality of parental involvement at the particular school I work in, and at many other schools in the area, this is not the overall reality for all schools in the area as some colleagues report that parents show a keen interest in school and educational matters with regards to their children. Hence, I was eager to conduct this study to understand some of the factors that contribute to the varied nature of parental involvement in schools situated in low-income communities. This was done by exploring the concept of parental involvement through the eyes of primary school principals. Furthermore, this study examined the methods used to encourage and sustain parental involvement in different schools, situated in low-income communities.

Research by Duan, Guan, and Bu (2018) has shown that parental involvement is poor in low-income communities due to the socioeconomic status of these parents. However, research by Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) counters this argument by stating that parental involvement in low-income communities can be successful through proactive leadership approaches. Therefore, this study sought to address this gap in literature.

It is understood in the literature that the principal is a manager of the school as he/she are key determinants of the culture fostered in a school (Lee & Louis, 2019; Department of Basic Education, 2015). Furthermore, principals play an integral role in influencing the manner in which the culture of parental involvement is fostered and managed in schools. With this in mind, this study sought to explore the nature of parental involvement in low-income communities and to examine how principals seek to encourage and maintain parental involvement at their schools.

1.6 Significance of the study

This study sought to understand what principals in low-income communities perceived as contributors to parental involvement and the measures these principals put in place to promote and sustain parental involvement at their schools. Based on the amount of parental involvement experienced in each school, the effectiveness of these measures would be examined to understand what works to promote and sustain parental involvement in schools situated in low-income communities. Therefore, this study intended to bring to light the reality of parental involvement in low-income communities through the perceptions of primary school principals. Such insights can be useful for school principals and policymakers alike in terms of understanding what works in promoting and sustaining parental involvement in schools situated in low-income communities.

1.7 Objectives of the study

1. To understand how principals experience parental involvement in primary schools situated in low-income communities.
2. To examine what principals perceive as contributors towards poor parental involvement in primary schools situated in low-income communities.
3. To explore the strategies implemented by principals to promote and sustain the involvement of parents in schools situated in low-income communities.

1.8 Research questions

1. How do principals experience parental involvement in primary schools situated in low-income communities?

2. What do principals perceive as contributors towards poor parental involvement in primary schools situated in low-income communities?
3. What are the strategies implemented by principals to promote and sustain the involvement of parents in primary schools situated in low-income communities?

1.9 Limitations of this study

I am an employee in one of the schools selected for the study. Since the participant used in this study is familiar with me, it may affect the data. To counteract this limitation, I will introduce two other schools into the study. Methods used to yield findings may not be generalisable to another context due to the design and the size of the sample. Therefore, to counteract this, I made efforts to provide readers with detailed and rich descriptions of the entire process of data generation and analysis so that this study may be easily replicated in a larger context, should another researcher wish to do so.

1.10 Definition of key terms used in the study

In order to fully comprehend the study, it is important to understand the applied meaning of three terms, namely, parent, parental involvement, and low-income community.

1.10.1 Parent

The term 'parent' is a broad term as it is not just limited to the biological nature of the relationship between a parent and a child but rather it refers to a person who undertakes the responsibility of caring for the child. According to the South African Schools Act, a parent is defined as:

1. A biological or adoptive parent of the learner.
2. A legal guardian or custodian of a learner; or
3. A person who undertakes the obligation to function as a parent of a learner for the purpose of the learner's education at school.

Furthermore, a child that has assumed the role of a primary caregiver of another child or children, in the absence of a biological parent or a parental figure, will also fall under the

category of a parent (Republic of South Africa, 1996). For the purpose of this study, the use of the term ‘parent’ will be referred to all the aforementioned definitions of a parent.

1.10.2 Parental involvement

The term ‘parental involvement’ can be understood in three ways. Firstly, it can be parents showing support in their children’s education. Secondly, it can be parents actively participating in the school sphere, and thirdly, it can be a combination of parents supporting their child’s education and participating in school initiatives (Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013). This term is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.

1.10.3 Low-income community

A low-income community may also be regarded as a township settlement (Matshabane, 2016). It is characterised by low-income households, poor infrastructure, a high unemployment rate, overpopulation, inadequate availability of health facilities, transport, and educational resources (Cant, 2017; Matshabane, 2016). Low-income communities are synonymous with rural communities.

1.11 Outline of the chapters

Chapter One briefly introduces the study. This chapter discusses the background, the statement of the problem, and the purpose of the study. Furthermore, it provides a rationale and the significance of the study. The objectives and research questions are outlined, and the key terms used in this study are clarified.

Chapter Two comprises a literature review and an explanation of the theoretical framework underpinning this study. The chapter begins with the literature review, which looks at various meanings scholars have of parental involvement. It also examines the significance of parental involvement in a child’s education and within the school. Furthermore, it explores the barriers that inhibit parental involvement, and it looks at strategies and methods to promote parental involvement in education. Additionally, it examines the role that principals have in promoting parental involvement. The second part of this chapter discusses Epstein’s (1995) Model for parental involvement as a theoretical framework underpinning the study. The chapter concludes with a chapter summary.

Chapter Three presents and discusses the research design and methodology that was used in this study. The chapter begins with a discussion of the research paradigm, the research design, and the research methodology used to conduct the study to achieve the research objectives and the research questions. This chapter further explains the sampling technique used, the data generation methods used to generate data, and the data analysis methods used. After the discussion of the analysis methods or techniques, the chapter discusses in detail, the measures that were taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. A discussion of ethical considerations follows before the chapter concludes with a chapter summary.

Chapter Four presents a detailed discussion of findings, and these are discussed thematically. The study themes are derived from the data generation methods used during the presentation and discussion of the case study which was discussed in Chapter Three.

Chapter Five presents the conclusions and recommendations based on the conclusions. Before the conclusions are reshared, a summary of the whole study is presented.

1.12 Chapter summary

Chapter One introduced the study and also the first chapter of this dissertation. This chapter outlined the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the rationale, the significance, the focus, the objectives, and the critical questions guiding this study. Furthermore, the key concepts used in this study were defined and the structure of the study was outlined. The next chapter deals with the literature review.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the national and international literature on parental involvement in education. To begin the chapter, parental involvement is conceptualised. Secondly, the chapter examines the significance of parental involvement in a child's educational journey and towards school upliftment. The negative effects of parental involvement in education and the implications of poor parental involvement are also discussed. This chapter further examines the state of parental involvement in South African schools and highlights the barriers inhibiting parental involvement in education. In addition, this chapter explores the crucial role played by the school principals in promoting and sustaining parental involvement in schools. In doing this, the literature is synthesised and analysed in order to offer a constructive critique. The chapter presents a review of literature to create a critical reflective review of associated literature and identify gaps in knowledge as well as areas where further research may be required. The chapter also identifies relations, contradictions, gaps, and inconsistencies in the literature. The latter part of the chapter ends with a discussion of the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

2.2 Conceptualising parental involvement

Parental involvement in education can be conceptualised, in a multitude of ways. Earlier research by Vandergrift and Greene (1992) states that there are two segments to parental involvement which work conjointly to build up the concept of parental involvement. The first segment is the level of commitment that parents show to support the learner. This includes actions such as encouraging the learner to perform to the best of their ability or being sympathetic and understanding towards the learner. The other segment of parental involvement refers to the level of parental activity and active participation displayed by the parent. These activities are usually observable and include actions such as assisting the learner with their homework and reading to the learner (Vandergrift & Greene, 1992).

LaBahn (1995) extends the aforementioned definition of parental involvement by defining it as the parent's commitment and level of participation towards both the school and the learner. In support of the above definition, Sheldon (2002) states that parental involvement can be

defined in two aspects by the level of parental involvement displayed at home and the level of parental involvement displayed at schools. Hornby and Blackwell (2018) define these two aspects as home-based parental involvement and school-based parental involvement. Home-based parental involvement activities are things done by parents to support their child's learning at home such as listening to the child read, and school-based parental involvement activities are things done by parents to support their school and the child's learning at school. These types of activities include things such as attending parents' meetings or the volunteering of time and services towards the school.

From a different standpoint, Şad (2012) goes on to define parental involvement as the conscious effort that a parent makes to play an active role in their child's learning. Expanding this definition, Castro et al. (2015) state that parental involvement refers to the active participation of the parent in all facets of their child's social, emotional, and academic development. Drawing from these views, the term 'parental involvement' can be defined in three ways. Firstly, it can be perceived as parents showing support and commitment towards their child's education; secondly, it can be perceived as parents actively participating in the school sphere; thirdly, it can be perceived as a combination of parents supporting their child's education and participating in school-based initiatives.

2.3 The significance of parental involvement in a child's education

Parents are deemed to be one of the most significant influences of a child's education and development due to the tremendous role that they play in a child's life (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Magwa & Mugari, 2017; Ntekane, 2018). Roy and Giraldo-Garcia (2018) assert that parental support leads to the educational growth of a child, additionally, parental involvement supports the social and emotional development of a child. Supporting this claim, research by Jaiswal and Choudhuri (2018) further highlights the influence that parental involvement has on a child's attitude towards education. Literature has increasingly highlighted the positive correlation between improved academic achievement and high parental involvement (Caño et al., 2016; Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Epstein, 1995; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Lara & Saracostti, 2019; Lemmer, 2007; Maarman & Lamont-Mbawuli, 2017; Magwa & Mugari, 2017; Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013; Myende & Nhlumayo, 2020; Sajeena, 2018; Segoe & Bisschoff, 2019; Yulianti, Eddie, Radboud & Droop, 2018).

The level of support that a child receives from their parents directly impacts their academic success. Research by Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) and Segoe and Bisschof (2019) shows that children who have parents that are actively involved in their education and perform home-based parental involvement activities such as assisting their child with their homework, reading to their child, or hiring private tutors to assist their child, often perform better academically, and have better attitudes towards learning than children who receive no parental support. Sajeena (2018) elaborates, that children who receive high levels of support and encouragement from their parents are likely to manage stressful situations more efficiently and perform better academically, thus greatly impacting their academic outcomes and overall development.

It is significant to highlight that a child's learning initially begins at home through parental involvement. Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) assert that parents support and guide a child's learning process by creating an environment that is conducive to learning, teaching the child age-appropriate skills and practices, and building a positive attitude about education. The attitude a learner holds about education, impacts their behaviour towards learning, ultimately influencing their academic outcomes.

While literature progressively highlights the significance of parental involvement through home-based parental involvement activities, it is important to point out that, this alone is not enough to support a child's educational journey and improve their academic achievement. Parents need to work in close collaboration with the schools to ensure improved academic outcomes (Caño et al., 2016; Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Epstein, 1985; Lara & Saracostti, 2019; Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013; Maluleke, 2014; Sajeena, 2018).

2.4 Negative effects of parental involvement

While parental involvement does have a myriad of positive benefits, the over-involvement of parents in a learner's education may have an adverse effect on the learner's academic achievement and development (Tabaeian, 2016; Wong, Wing Ho, Wong, Tung, Chow, Rao, Chan & Ip, 2018). According to Cano et al. (2016), learners accomplish more when their parents anticipate more from them. However, these anticipations may put undue pressure on the learner to perform academically (Chowa, Masa & Tucker, 2013). Research by Ghatol (2017) notes that fulfilling parental academic expectations is a source of anxiety and stress amongst learners. Supporting this claim, research conducted by Jayanthi, Balakrishnan, Ching, Latiff and Nasirudeenhi (2014) indicates that high parent expectations were a large source of

academic stress among the learners, consequently, leading to a poor learning experience and negative educational outcomes.

According to Fernández-Alonso, Álvarez-Díaz, Woitschach, Suárez-Álvarez and Cuesta (2017), “*Not all home-based involvement has positive effects*” (p.454). A parenting style that is authoritarian, controlling, and invasive when it comes to academics will diminish a learner’s self-autonomy and responsibility towards self-learning (Fernández-Alonso et al., 2017; Rauf & Ahmed, 2017). This will in turn discourage self-learning and self-efficacy and may lead the learner to be dependent on parental guidance to learn. Self-autonomy and self-efficacy are considered to be the keys to academic achievement as it heightens a learner’s ability to regulate their behaviour towards self-learning (Fernández-Alonso et al., 2017; Masud, Ahmad, Jan & Jamil, 2016) without self-autonomy and self-efficacy, academic achievement will be greatly hindered.

Research by Pinquart (2016) indicates that an authoritarian parenting style which is characterized by a high level of parental supervision and stringent attitude towards parenting or a permissive parenting style, which is characterised by a low level of parental supervision and a passive attitude towards parenting (Rauf & Ahmed, 2017), led to lower academic achievement. Rauf and Ahmed (2017) support this by stating that an authoritative style of parents leads to better academic achievement when compared to an authoritarian or permissive parenting style. To combat the negative effects of home-based parental involvement, schools should offer parental training to guide parents, parenting style (Fernández-Alonso et al., 2017; Maarman & Lamont-Mbawuli, 2017).

Increased parental involvement may also negatively impact educators and schools. Ng and Yuen (2015) state that some teachers may be hesitant to give up their power to parents and will not easily release power and authority to parents. In a study conducted by Ng and Yuen in 2015, it was shown that schools may actively and consciously seek to reduce parental involvement in school affairs, as they find parental involvement to be intrusive. According to Arar, Nasra and Alshafi (2018), educators/members of management may feel that an increase in parental involvement is threatening towards their professional status, and therefore, may be reluctant towards any parental involvement in the school sphere.

2.5 The need for parent involvement in schools

Educators and parents both play a critical role in a learner's educational journey. The educational responsibility and success of a learner extend beyond the walls of the classroom. When both parties work in collaboration it positively impacts the learners' educational journey and the school (Caño et al., 2016; Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Sajeena, 2018). Parents gain satisfaction when they feel as if they can actively contribute towards their child's educational success (Maluleke, 2014). Arar, Nasra and Alshafi (2018) assert that when parents become aware of their child's educational goals, they are more willing to become actively involved in helping their child achieve their educational goals. This allows parents to better support, communicate and bond with their children, aiding their academic, social, and emotional development (Castro et al., 2015; Chetty, 2017). Through established two-way communication networks between the school/ teachers and parents, a partnership will be built on mutual support. In turn, all parties involved in this arrangement will benefit positively (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017).

A study conducted by Park, Stone and Holloway in 2017, showed that increased parental involvement in schools led to increased parent participation in the school environment through volunteering and fundraising activities. Additionally, parents often pulled together community resources to use towards the betterment of the school's operation. This further emphasises the need for parental involvement in schools. Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) assert that schools need to build a partnership with parents, encouraging parents to accept mutual responsibility for their child's educational success and play an active role in their child's education and school. The fruitfulness of this partnership will guide learners towards educational success, assist parents in developing needed parental skills, encourage community networking, supplement educators teaching efforts, and improve the school climate and school-based initiatives, positively impacting all concerned with the school (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017).

In a study conducted by Munje and Mncube in 2018, educators frequently called attention to the valuable role that parents play in determining their child's educational success. Furthermore, educators have expressed their need for support from parents to improve learners' academic outcomes. However, research conducted by Aslan (2016) contradicts Munje and Mncube (2018) findings, revealing that educators negatively viewed parental involvement in schools, due to the negative experiences faced in their relationship with parents. This data revealed that while teachers recognise the need for parental involvement as a crucial part of a

child's academic success, educators require more training in building and maintaining relationships with parents. According to Segoe and Bisschof (2019), and Fernández-Alonso et al. (2017), parental involvement is the largest non-teaching factor that contributes towards academic achievement; therefore, it is a vital component of academic success. Hence schools need to actively build and maintain the home-school partnership to ensure the fruitfulness of all parties in education (Segoe & Bisschof, 2019).

The degree of parental involvement that a school experiences is largely affected by the school itself. If schools efficiently and consistently communicate and involve parents in their child's learning process and school decision-making processes, parents will be more willing to involve themselves in their child's education and the school itself (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Myende & Nhlumayo, 2020). Furthermore, by building and maintaining this partnership between the school and parents, schools can better elicit resources from the community for school improvement initiatives and learner support.

2.6 Implications of poor parental involvement

Literature around parental involvement has heavily focused on the positive impact that parental involvement has on a learner's academic achievement, and less on the impact that parental involvement has on the socio-emotional and cognitive development of a learner (Badri, Qubaisi, Rashedi & Yang, 2014; Nokali, Bachman & Votruba-Drzal, 2010). Lara and Saracostti (2019), as well as Moroni, Nicoletti and Tominey (2019), highlight the important role that parents play in the development of a child's socio-emotional and cognitive development, through their involvement in their child's learning and their interactions with the child. Moroni, Nicoletti and Tominey (2019) state that socio-emotional skills are learned at an early age in a child's life and these skills persist onto adulthood and have implications on the labour market, health system, and crime rate.

Paul, Rashmi and Srivastava (2021) add that poor parental involvement in education plays a role in the high school dropout rates faced in many developing and developed countries, which in turn has negative economic repercussions for the country. Research by Paul, Rashmi and Srivastava (2021) showed that learners who have received poor parental support in the primary stages of learning were more likely to experience lower educational outcomes or experience the repetition of a grade or drop out of school, in their teen years. To add, Lara and Saracostti (2019) state that the amount of parental involvement a child experiences in their educational

journey is correlated with their attachment to schooling. Poor parental involvement will ultimately lead to the learner having a poor attitude and attachment towards their schooling. Overall poor parental involvement leads to negative implications for the learner, the economy, and the country.

2.7 Parental involvement in South African Schools

Prior to the 1994 democratic elections, parental involvement in South African education was minimal to none (Blake & Mestry, 2019; Shezi, 2012). However, post-apartheid educational reforms sought to address this issue through the formulation of policy. One of the most significant policies introduced to assimilate parents into schools is the South African Schools Act (SASA) 84 of 1996. SASA is a nationally implemented policy, which recognises the importance of parental involvement in education. SASA acknowledges parents as equal partners towards their child's success and seeks to empower and capacitate parents by allowing them to legally be a part of the school governance and management (Manilal, 2014; Republic of South Africa, 1996) Additionally, the SASA attempts to forge a bond between the school and the parents, allowing parents to feel a sense of ownership and accountability over decision-making processes and give parents a sense of responsibility for their child's education (Chetty, 2017; Maluleke, 2014).

In 2005, the Department of Education in South Africa released Rights and Responsibilities of Parents, Learners, and Public Schools: Public School Policy Guide, to inform educational stakeholders of their rights and responsibilities in public schooling. Furthermore, this policy sought to establish and guide the relationship between parents and public schools.

The National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) worked in collaboration with the Limpopo, Gauteng, Northwest, Mpumalanga, and Kwa Zulu-Natal provincial education departments as well as other relevant educational stakeholders to formulate the School - Parent - Community Engagement Framework (2016). The aforementioned policy is a suggestive framework to guide parental involvement in education. However, this framework has not been formally implemented. At a local level, principals are tasked with the responsibility of promoting parental involvement at their schools through the various methods stated in the Policy on the South African Standard for Principals (Department of Basic Education, 2015).

While the South African education system does have policies in place to guide parental involvement in education, poor parental involvement in schools still poses a challenge (Mukuna & Aloka, 2020) particularly in low-income communities (Villiers, Steyn, Draper, Hill, Dalais, Fourie, Lombard, Barkhuizen & Lambert, 2015; Myende & Nhlumayo, 2020).

Contributing to poor parental involvement is a policy-implementation gap that is faced in many South African schools. The policy on the South African Standard for Principalship is clear on a principals duty to involve and collaborate with parents in schools. However, Maluleke (2014) argues that many principals are still reluctant to involve parents within the school sphere because they are unwilling to share their power. This, in turn, inhibits parental involvement in education, in line with the research conducted by Arar, Nasra and Alshafi (2018) which highlights principals' unwillingness to share their autonomy. South African educators have clearly articulated their need for parental support in education in a study conducted by Munje and Mncub, in 2018. However, research shows that many parents are reluctant to involve themselves in their child's education or overcome the barriers that inhibit them from becoming actively involved in their child's schools and educational journey (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Maluleke, 2014; Mestry & Plessis, 2019; Munje & Mncub, 2018; Myende & Nhlumayo, 2020; Poole, 2017). This factors into the poor parental involvement seen in South African schools presently.

Sajeena (2018) argues that most schools do not understand what parental involvement means. This is largely because parental involvement in education is not an explicitly defined concept, leaving it open to one's own interpretation of the concept. Some schools may interpret parental involvement as a parent's duty of supporting and guiding their child in the completion of homework activities while other schools may interpret parental involvement as the duty of parents to attend parent-teacher meetings (Tabaeian, 2016). This differing interpretation of the concept of parental involvement in education may lead to a division in how schools are promoting parental involvement.

Adding to the fragmentation of parental involvement in South African schools, a study conducted by Michael, Wolhunter and van Wyk in 2012, showed that the majority of South African parents did not completely understand the concept of parental involvement, in particular, those parents who belong to low-income communities. This attributes to poor parental involvement in education as parents may be hesitant to involve themselves in activities

that they do not understand (Maluleke, 2014; Poole, 2017). According to Myende and Nhlumayo (2020), South African rural schools face a multitude of challenges in the building of parent-teacher relationships, with each failed initiative creating a further divide in parental involvement across South African schools.

Myende and Nhlumayo (2020) argue that the practices that schools adopted to facilitate parental involvement may work against the promotion of parental involvement in schools, even if parents are interested in being involved within the school. Such practices may contribute to the state of poor parental involvement in rural areas. South Africa's dark legacy of apartheid brought forth the much-needed educational reform that we see in South African education today. While a great deal has been done to improve parental involvement in South African education, schools still have a long way to go to fully incorporate parents into education and enhance parental involvement in education. As Matshe (2014) rightfully points out “*Parental involvement in the school setting is a sensitive issue which must be handled with care.*” (p.94).

2.8 Barriers inhibiting parental involvement

A barrier to parental involvement is understood as an obstacle or obstruction to parental involvement. Parents in low-income communities often experience a unique set of barriers to parental involvement compared to parents in middle- or high-income families (Wang, Deng & Yang, 2016). The next section of the literature review discusses the barriers to parental involvement impacting low-income communities. These barriers are a lack of policy framework to support parental involvement in schools, poor parent-teacher relationships, family structure, parents’ level of education, physical barriers, and language barriers to parental involvement.

2.8.1 Lack of policy framework to support parental involvement in schools

Malatji, Mavuso and Stephen (2018) assert that parental involvement needs to be guided by policy frameworks. Policies are used to govern and guide decisions, behaviors, actions of members, and daily operations within a school. Successful school policies encourage teamwork, ensure that inclusive and fair practices are adopted within the school (Sheras & Bradshaw, 2016). Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020) highlight the imperative role that a policy plays in the facilitation of parental involvement in education consequently, a lack of policy

framework to support parental involvement hinders the amount of parental involvement experienced in schools.

Yulianti et al. (2019) note that parental involvement in education and the need to create positive home-school partnerships have become a recent focal point for policymakers. However, contrary to Yulianti et al. (2019), research by Hornby and Blackwell (2018) showed that several schools lack a written policy to guide the facilitation of parental involvement at school. This in turn, negatively impacts parental involvement at those schools and acts as a barrier to parental involvement in education. Park and Holloway (2017) note that many schools that implement policies to encourage parental involvement focus on parental involvement within the school. However, these policies isolate parental involvement at home, thus, neglecting activities focused on improving learner achievement and focusing on activities that are aimed at benefiting the school. These types of parental involvement activities in schools are not always suitable for parental involvement in low-income communities. Consequently, these policies work against parental involvement.

Humphrey-Taylor (2015) states that forming policies is not enough to promote parental involvement in schools. For policies need to be effective, it needs to be context-suited and properly implemented. Myende and Nhlumayo (2020) assert that policies on parental involvement must be tailored towards the community's needs. While there is no nationally implemented policy explicitly speaking to parental involvement, most schools that have developed their own parental involvement policy fail to successfully implement it. Research by Munje and Mncube (2018) highlights the current policy and practice gap in terms of school-parent relationships faced in South African schools. To bridge this gap and formulate an effective parental involvement policy, schools need to work in collaboration with the parents from the community to gain support from parents in enacting the policy, ensuring its success.

To further bridge the current policy-practice gap, Segoe and Bisschoff (2019) suggest that schools must make an effort to translate their policy documents into all official languages so that they are easily understood by parents, helping them become clear of their role in education. Myende and Nhlumayo (2020) note that it is unfortunate that there is no policy provision for parental involvement in South African schools. therefore, this acts as a barrier to parental involvement as schools are unaware of how to successfully assimilate parental involvement into education. Kigobe, Ghesquière, Ng'Umbi and Leeuwen (2019) suggest that governments

need to introduce a policy to provide schools with frameworks and guidelines to effectively build and maintain the home-school parentship. This will assist in counteracting this barrier to parental involvement in education.

2.8.2 Poor parent-teacher relationships

Poor teacher-parent relationships negatively impact the amount experienced in education as parents and teachers are unable or unwilling to work in collaboration for the betterment of the learners. According to Arar, Nasra and Alshafi (2018), some teachers may still view parents as an external body and some teachers and/or members of management may feel that parental involvement threatens their professional status hence, parental involvement might be met with resistance in some classrooms/schools.

According to Munje and Mncube (2018), some teachers may not understand the value of parental involvement in education, due to poor teacher training. Therefore, they can be hesitant to engage with parents. In support of this agreement, Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020) suggest that the hesitation could be caused by inadequate teacher training on issues of parental involvement as part of formal teacher education training qualifications, suggesting that initial teacher education programmes are unable to equip future teachers with skills needed to effectively engage with parents. Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020) further add that parental involvement can be a dreadful experience for teachers if they are not adequately prepared, guided, and trained for it.

In the study conducted by Munje and Mncube (2018) teachers often expressed that they felt as if parents deliberately sought to distance themselves from educational matters because they did not value education or they did not want to burden themselves with the responsibility of being involved in their child's education. In a study conducted by Said, Ahmad, Tahir, Ahmad and Hassan (2013) findings revealed that parents felt that it is the sole responsibility of the teacher to educate their child, therefore, rejected any attempts made by teachers to involve the parent in their child's education. This poor attitude from parents discourages teachers from attempting to forge bonds with parents and involving them in their child's education (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020).

Research has shown that teachers and parents both play a part in contributing towards strained teacher-parent relationships (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020; Arar, Nasra & Alshafi, 2018;

Munje & Mncube, 2018). The unwillingness of both parties to work in collaboration negatively impacts the learners and the amount of parental involvement experienced in the school. Consequently, poorly forged and maintained bond between parents and teachers acts as a barrier inhibiting parental involvement in education.

2.8.3 Family structure

According to Berkowitz, Astor, Pineda, De Pedro, Weiss and Benbenishty (2017), the structure of a family impacts the amount of parental involvement experienced in schools; as children who live with both their parents often experience more parental support than learners living with single parents or with a stepparent. Furthermore, Berkowitz et al. (2017) go on to explain that parents who have split up or divorced may be unable to adequately support their child's learning as they are only able to spend a reduced amount of time with their children.

Research by Munje and Mncube (2018) points out that many learners in South Africa do not live with both their parents, but rather they live with one biological parent, extended family members, or grandparents, who do not give value to their education or are unable to provide support to learners due to their poor educational backgrounds or time constraints. In these cases, teachers often assume the role of parents, supporting the learners' educational needs and emotional wellbeing because they are unable to receive full parental support from home.

South African researchers, Lobi and Kheswa (2017) explored the issue of the increasing problem of child-headed homes in South Africa due to factors such as the death of parents, sexual and emotional abuse, inadequate social support, and so forth. Learners in the care of a child-headed home, experience little to no parental involvement in their education. In their research, Lobi and Kheswa (2017) have found that females in child-headed households are more likely to become school dropouts compared to learners who live with authoritative figures such as parents or relatives, due to a lack of parental support. Consequently, it can be deduced that the family dynamics of a learner affect the learners' relationship with schooling, additionally, poor family dynamics may lead to poor parental involvement in schools (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Munje & Mncube, 2018).

2.8.4 Job dynamics

Research has shown that the job dynamics of parents may act as a barrier to parental involvement in education, particularly in low-income communities (Maluleke, 2014; Munje &

Mncube, 2018; Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Parents in low-income communities are generally less educated compared to parents in high-income areas therefore, they commonly do menial work or laborious work (Plessis & Mestry, 2019). These types of time and energy-consuming jobs find parents working longer hours and more days. This limits the amount of time they have available to assist their children with homework activities (Munje & Mncube, 2018; Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Furthermore, it limits the amount of time that they have available to partake within the school sphere. Exploring parental involvement in Limpopo, research conducted by Maluleke (2014) noted that parents in low-income communities often have to work more than one job to cope with the financial burdens brought on by supporting the family. Consequently, their work schedules sometimes prevent parents from attending parent meetings and other school events.

Economic constraints faced by the Department of Basic Education in South Africa, affect the amount of funding received by schools, therefore, many schools situated in low-income communities lack physical and human resources. Consequently, schools are forced to rely on parents to partake in fundraising activities and volunteer their services towards the school (Plessis & Mestry, 2019). The jobs commonly held by parents in low-income communities often do not allow parents the luxury to be involved in their child's school as often as expected. Li and Fischer (2017) indicate that unemployment is a dominant feature in low-income communities. Plessis and Mestry (2019) state that in order for these families to survive, parents often subject their children to child labour practices. This steals learners away from the classroom and home-based learning activities. It also works against parental involvement in education as most parents prioritise survival over education.

2.8.5 Parents' level of education

The level of education possessed by parents significantly impacts their involvement in schools (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Kigobe et al., 2019; Maluleke, 2014; Munje & Mncube, 2018; Myende & Nhlumayo, 2020). Plessis & Mestry, 2019; Poole, 2017;). Myende and Nhlumayo (2020) and Plessis and Mestry (2019) state that parents situated in low-income areas of South Africa have low levels of education or have received no formal education. This impacts their involvement in schools as they feel that they can offer little value in education, due to their own educational level. Matshe (2014) asserts that parents with poor educational levels often

shy away from assuming responsibility within the school, typically when it comes to the duties of school governing body members.

Elevated levels of illiteracy in low-income areas affect communication between parents and the schools. Munje and Mncube (2018), as well as Myende and Nhlumayo (2020), show that communication from the school to parents still largely takes place through traditional forms of communication such as letters or notices. This poses a problem as parents from low-income community's struggle to read and comprehend this form of communication consequently, this acts as a barrier towards parental involvement. This barrier can only be overcome if schools change the way they communicate to cater to the various educational levels within the community (Myende & Nhlumayo, 2020). South African researchers in parental involvement Munje and Mncube (2018) and Poole (2017) found that in their studies that the educational level of parents affects their ability to assist learners with their homework. Many parents are unsure of how they can help their children due to their poor educational levels (Munje & Mncube, 2018). This acts as a barrier because it inhibits parents from engaging with their child, furthermore, it limits the parent's involvement in the education of their child.

Many parents with lower educational levels do not attach much value towards education (Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Research by Myende and Nhlumayo (2020) conducted in a rural township in South Africa, shows that many parents do not see the need for education because they are illiterate themselves or have poor educational levels, therefore, they do not see the need for involvement in their child's education. Hornby and Blackwell (2018) note that parents' past experiences with the educational system affect their current attitudes towards education. Parents who had a negative experience in their schooling years often have a poor attitude towards education. This impacts how they involve themselves in their child's education.

2.8.6 Physical barriers to parental involvement

According to Berkowitz et al. (2017), transportation problems negatively affect parental involvement in low-income communities. Parents from low-income communities often send their children to schools outside their communities with the belief that they will be receiving a better education (Hunter, 2017). These schools are often far away from their communities, which means parents and learners must travel a distance before arriving at the school. High travelling costs and long distances make it difficult for parents to travel to and from the schools, consequently, this acts as a barrier inhibiting parental involvement in schools. Research

conducted in South Africa by Hunter (2017) reveals that many South African learners who are attending school outside of their disadvantaged communities, often do not live with both parents. This affects how the parent(s) interact with the school and their child's education (Malone, 2017).

2.8.7 Language barriers as a factor

Baker, Wise, Kelley and Skiba (2016), as well as Averill, Metson, and Bailey (2019) state that the language barrier is a contributing factor when it comes to poor home-school communication. Parents who do not understand the language of communication are unable to adequately be involved therefore, they are indirectly excluded from being involved in the education of their children. A study on the barriers to parental involvement, in the United Kingdom conducted by Hornby and Blackwell (2018) concurred with this statement as schools that had participated in the study highlighted language barriers as a barrier to parental involvement in their schools. A study conducted in New Zealand by Averill, Metson, and Bailey in 2019, reveals the detrimental effect that language barriers have on parental involvement by stating that the language barrier holds enormous potential to hinder the establishment and maintenance of effective two-way communication between teachers/the school and parents, and the process of shared decision making between the school and home. Furthermore, it may also hinder learning at home. South Africa is a multi-lingual country that has 11 official languages, therefore, language barriers frequently become a factor that affects communication amongst citizens.

Research to identify the barriers to family engagement conducted by Baker et al. (2016) suggests that parents who face language barriers should be identified. Newsletters should be translated in their mother tongues and sent out to the identified group of parents, furthermore, schools should make use of translators during parent meetings to allow for improved communication and shared understanding between the school/teachers and parents.

2.9 A principal's role in promoting and sustaining parental involvement in schools.

The role that principals need to play in promoting and sustaining parental involvement in schools has been widely discussed in literature; it has been clearly outlined in literature that school principals have to lead the way in the promotion and sustainment of parental involvement (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020; Bipath & Moyo, 2016; Jung & Sheldon, 2020;

Myende & Nhlumayo, 2020; Republic of South Africa, 2015). A successful school principal encourages and inspires parental involvement in schools (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020). According to Myende and Nhlumayo (2020), a principal should function as a catalyst for the enhancement of parental involvement at schools in order for parental involvement to be successful at schools, noting that poor leadership on the part of the principal may impede parental involvement in schools.

Principals are tasked with the job of creating and managing the school culture (Bipath & Moyo, 2016). This is a vital task, as the culture of a school culture plays a significant role in determining the level of parental involvement at the school. Jung and Sheldon (2020) state that it is the responsibility of the principal to cultivate engagements and collaborations between the members of the school and parents. These scholars further note that it is the actions of the principals that determine the school culture that shapes the goals and behaviours of the stakeholders at the school (Bipath & Moyo, 2016; Jung & Sheldon, 2020).

Jung and Sheldon (2020) note that the practices and actions of principals play a central role in building the school culture. Schools need to provide a welcoming climate towards parents and one of mutual respect. Furthermore, schools should try to reach out to the parents and the community to build collaborative and positive school-home relationships (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). Jung and Sheldon (2020) argue that a principal's leadership beliefs and practices may also influence the way teachers interact with parents and teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement. If a principal's actions, practices, and attitude show a strong commitment towards the inclusion of parents in the school, teachers often match this commitment in their behaviour and actions.

Principals as school leaders have the responsibility to seek a variety of ways to solicit parental involvement in education. This is often done by reaching out to parents and seeking their involvement in school activities and decision making or by providing parents with tools and methods which they can use to support their children in the home (Torre & Murphy, 2016). Torre and Murphy (2016) state that parental involvement in schools is not a natural phenomenon, however, it arises from a shared, context-specific vision, which is promoted by the school principal. Additionally, principals need to lead parents through a process of socialisation and integration to promote and sustain parental involvement in schools.

Cetin and Taskin (2016) highlight the deficiencies of parental involvement in education in low-income communities, they believe that parental involvement in schools can be promoted and sustained through the use of informative meetings. According to Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020), meetings are an effective tool to build the foundation for effective two-way communication between members of the school and parents, ultimately leading towards improved parental involvement in school and learner success.

In South African schools, principals are tasked with the duty of facilitating parent meetings (Republic of South Africa, 2015). Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020) suggest that principals could organise meetings with parents and teachers, whereby, both parties can meet to work towards solutions to reduce barriers of parental involvement. Furthermore, these meetings can be used as a platform to solve any misconceptions that parents and teachers might hold. To add, Cetin and Taskin (2016) state that these meetings must be used as a platform to communicate to the parents their vital role held in their child's academic success.

The South African Standard for Principalship (Republic of South Africa, 2015) highlights the principals' role in policy development and implementation. To sustain and maintain parental involvement, principals should develop and implement policies that guide the facilitation of parental involvement in school. Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020) state that school policies may work to encourage parents to become more actively involved in their child's education, resulting in a change of parental attitudes towards parental involvement. Epstein and Sheldon (2016) state that the role of policy in promoting and sustaining parental involvement is a necessary part of improving parental involvement, however, this is not enough.

Schools should design and implement school-based partnership programmes such as parent workshops (Bailey, 2017) which encourage and support parental involvement at schools. School-based partnership programmes require principals to formulate a customised policy and conduct practices conducive to parental involvement and evaluate progress in parental involvement. Additionally, the implementation of school-based partnership programmes assists in the creation of a welcoming school climate, this allows for successful parental involvement at schools (Epstein & Sheldon, 2016). Torre and Murphy (2016) recommend that principals frequently seek and heed the advice and wishes of parents to cultivate parental involvement at their schools. This gives parents a sense of power and control of the running of the school, promoting parental involvement.

2.10 Theoretical framework

This study is underpinned by Epstein's (1995) model for parental involvement. Epstein (1995) proposed six types of parental involvement in education. These are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community.



Figure 1: Epstein (1995) six types of parental involvement

2.10.1 Parenting

According to Epstein's (1995) model for parental involvement, the first type of parental involvement is parenting. Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) state that, unlike teachers who have a

limited amount of influence on their learners, parents have a life-long commitment towards their children. For successful parenting and improved learner achievement to take place, parents need to encourage learning and provide learners with a peaceful environment, which is conducive to learning (Caño et al., 2016).

Research has shown that programmes that are focused on improving parental involvement in education have positive implications for the learner and the school (Lara & Saracostti, 2019). Lara and Saracostti (2019) suggest that schools should strive to create activities to support this type of parental involvement. These activities include parent education courses, parental training programmes, family support programmes to assist families with health, nutrition, and other such and courses or programmes (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas & Voorhis, 2002).

2.10.2 Communicating

The second type of parental involvement identified in Epstein's (1995) model for parental involvement is communication. Communication is a crucial component in building trusting and lasting relationships (Gu, 2017). Schools can increase parental involvement by establishing a channel of two-way communication between the school and parents. This is an effective way to involve parents in their child's education and within the school sphere (Epstein et al., 2002). Schools should regularly update parents on school matters and in matters of their child's development, ensuring that parents participate in every step of their child's education (Epstein et al., 2002). By doing this, parents will have a sense of ownership towards their child's education, initiating further involvement with the school and their child's education.

Schools could use traditional forms of communication such as holding regular meetings and issuing newsletters and notices to communicate with parents (Epstein et al., 2002). Schools could also use social platforms such as WhatsApp groups and Facebook pages or other forms of digital communication services such as emails, to engage with parents (Powers & Green, 2016). Research by Thompson, Mazer and Grady (2015) and Kuusimäki, Uusitalo-Malmivaara and Tirri (2019) shows that modern-day parents prefer using e-mails as a platform for communication, as well as more modern forms of communication such as texts and social media platforms for school-home communication.

It is important to note that while this form of communication might be suitable for parents in the developed countries and some parts of developing countries, it may not be an effective form of communication for parents in low-income communities, as parents from rural communities may have limited access to communication technology (Mestry & Plessis, 2019; Seretse, Chukwuere, Lubbe & Klopper, 2018). From a different perspective, Myende and Nhlumayo (2020) argue that there has been an increase of people who have mobile phones in South African in low-income areas and some parents in rural areas have escaped the social divide caused by inequality. Therefore, schools should relook their perception on using technology as a form of communication for parental engagement.

Countering the views expressed by Myende and Nhlumayo (2020), Dube (2020) brings to light the technology divide faced in low-income South African communities, by highlighting how poor network coverage and high data costs impact those living in low-income communities. Sharing similar views as Dube (2020), Seretse et al. (2018) highlights the harsh reality of the digital divide faced in South African rural areas, by stating that many people living in rural areas often need to travel to urban areas to gain access to technological devices and internet connection. Before deciding on a form of communication for parental engagement, schools in collaboration with parents, need to identify which is the most suitable form of communication for the parents in their community. When communicating with parents, schools/teachers should bear in mind the language and literacy barrier which often affects parents in low-income communities (Myende & Nhlumayo, 2020). Schools need to find creative ways to overcome these barriers in order to effectively communicate with parents. Baker et al. (2016) suggest the use of translators to further assist in overcoming this barrier.

2.10.3. Volunteering

Volunteering is the third type of parental involvement identified in Epstein's (1995) model for parental involvement. Volunteering gives parents the opportunity to be involved in their child's school (Matthews, McPherson-Berg, Quinton, Rotunda & Morote, 2017). In terms of volunteering, schools should create opportunities to encourage parents to volunteer at school, whereby parents can share their time, talents, and resources to assist/support the school and/or its members (Epstein et al., 2018). Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) state that there are three basic ways in which parents can volunteer at schools. First, they may volunteer in the classroom by helping teachers as tutors or assistants. Second, they may volunteer for the school by creating

fundraising events for the school or promoting a school in the community. Third, parents may volunteer as a member of an audience by attending and participating in school events.

2.10.4 Learning at home

The fourth type of parental involvement identified in Epstein's (1995) model for parental involvement, is learning at home. This type of parental involvement is not a new phenomenon as parents are regarded as a child's first teacher. However, when it comes to supporting a child's learning at home, literature has shown that parents need guidance on how to support their child's learning at home (Caño et al., 2016; Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 2002; Epstein et al., 2018; Ramanlingam & Maniam, 2020). Schools and teachers play a pivotal role in helping parents build their parental knowledge to guide learning at home, therefore they should uptake the responsibility of providing this guidance to parents, to ensure learner improvement and success (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 2018; Ramanlingam & Maniam, 2020).

Schools and teachers can initiate and encourage this type of parental involvement by providing parents with information and ideas on how to help their child at home, with homework and other curriculum-related activities (Ramanlingam & Maniam, 2020). This can be achieved by using workshops and the creation of family-orientated learning activities (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). The COVID-19 pandemic has seen many learners around the world, resort to learning at home. This transition from school learning to home learning has increased the amount of learning at home activities that learners do, and the amount of parental involvement needed to facilitate these activities (Bhengu, 2021; Brown, Riele, Shelley & Woodroffe, 2020; Putri, Purwanto, Pramono, Asbari, Wijayanti & Hyun, 2020).

This transition between school and at home learning posed a significant challenge to parents and educational intuitions who relied immensely on the face-to-face mode of learning, creating tensions between home-school partnerships (Putri et al., 2020). Research by Putri et al. (2020) pointed out that schools were not able to efficiently manage to adapt to this new mode of teaching and learning and parents were not equipped with skills to facilitate home learning. This highlights the need for schools and parents to work collaboratively to improve at-home learning, for the benefit of the learners, and to ensure academic success.

2.10.5 Decision making

Decision-making is the fifth type of parental involvement according to Epstein's (1995) model for parental involvement. This type of parental involvement is achieved by allowing parents to have a say in decision-making processes (Epstein et al., 2002). Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) assert that shared-decision making is an essential part of a successful home-school partnership. Goshin and Mertsalova (2018) go on to say that, by decentralising decision-making powers and allowing parents the opportunity to be a part of decision-making processes, they will become empowered and develop a sense of ownership over the school, consequently, influencing their involvement within the school.

In South Africa, parents are allowed autonomy in the school decision-making processes through the establishment of School Governing Bodies (SGB's), whereby parents elect representatives to include their voice in school decision-making processes (Mncube, 2009). The school governing body is tasked with designing and implementing school policies, the management of school finances, and providing the school with the necessary support to ensure effective teaching and learning takes place. (Buys, Plessis & Mestry, 2020). In South African schools, parents on the governing body have powers limited to governance issues. These powers do not extend to matters relating to the curriculum. Research by Yulianti et al. (2018) found that parental involvement in curriculum-related decision-making negatively impacted learner achievement. Therefore, schools should be wary as to how much of parental involvement in decision-making will be accepted before including parental input on all matters relating to the school.

Research by Goshin and Mertsalova (2018) found that parents situated in low-income communities tended to shy away from decision-making at schools. These could be for several factors including parents' level of education, level of literacy, their attitude towards the school, and so forth (Matshe, 2014; Myende & Nhlumayo, 2020). Schools need to be aware of the barriers inhibiting parents from being involved in the school decision-making process and actively work to help reduce and overcome these barriers.

2.10.6 Collaborating with the community

The sixth and the last type of parental involvement identified in Epstein's (1995) model for parental involvement is collaborating with the community. Epstein et al. (2002) state that schools should identify and integrate resources and services from the community. By seeking resources and services from members of the community, the school gradually becomes part of the community, thereby supporting the school's initiatives (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). One way a school can collaborate with the community and gain community support is through community outreach programmes. Matthews et al. (2017) assert that community outreach programmes are an essential part of building school-community relationships. These community outreach programmes should target the community that the school is situated in to encourage community buy-in of the school's vision and mission.

2.11 The justification of using Epstein's (1995) model for parental involvement in the current study

Epstein's model for parental involvement draws focus to what schools can do to improve and enhance parental involvement in education, ultimately, leading to school improvement and improved learner outcomes (Epstein, 2019). This study was undertaken to shed light on the perceived contributors to parental involvement in schools situated in low-income communities and explore the strategies that are used to improve parental involvement these schools. In order to fully explore the aforementioned concepts, it is necessary to explore what is already said in the literature. Consequently, this study uses Epstein's model for parental involvement as a base to understand the contributors to parental involvement and the strategies schools can use to enhance parental involvement. However, while Epstein's model for parental involvement is a useful tool to guide the enactment of parental involvement Kim (2018) warns that it may not be suitable in developing countries as the barriers to parental involvement may differ. Principals need to be cautious when applying this model without adjustments, as it needs to be adapted to suit the context, in which it is applied.

2.12 Chapter summary

This chapter explored the diverse ways literature has conceptualised parental involvement. Furthermore, the significant role that parental involvement plays in a learner's life and at a school was explored and discussed. Additionally, this chapter examined the negative effects of

parental involvement in education, the implications of poor parental involvement in education, the state of parental involvement in South African schools, the barriers inhibiting parental involvement in education, and the crucial role held by principals in promotion and sustainment parental involvement in schools. The second part of this chapter discussed the theory that underpinned this study, and that theory is known as Epstein's (1995) model for parental involvement.

The literature reviewed has shown that a successful home-school partnership has a myriad of positive effects on the school and the learner. Parental involvement plays a significant role in the development of a child, the child's relationship with education, and academic success. Furthermore, the literature showed that parental involvement allows for the improvement of school facilities and the attainment of school resources and school goals, ultimately leading to school improvement. The Department of Basic Education, policymakers, principals, and teachers need to recognise the value that parents hold in education and actively try to improve the state of parental involvement in education. The barriers to parental involvement identified need to be further analysed and understood, hence, the need for the current study. The next chapter is dedicated to a discussion of research design and methodological issues pertinent to this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter comprised of a review, of relevant literature which sought to understand the meaning of parental involvement, the significance of parental involvement, and the barriers that inhibit parental involvement. Furthermore, the role that principals play in promoting parental involvement and the strategies used to promote parental involvement in education

were also discussed. The latter part of the chapter discussed Epstein's (1995) model for parental involvement as a theoretical framework to analyse and understand how principals promoted or could promote parental involvement in low-income communities.

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology used to explore the experiences of primary school principals situated in low-income communities. This chapter begins by introducing the research paradigm, research approach, and research design adopted as the most appropriate to achieve the objectives of the study. The methodology and the research population used in this study is then discussed before moving on to discuss the sampling instrumentation and data generation methods used in the study. This chapter also discusses how data was analysed, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical issues are then discussed. Finally, this chapter concludes with a chapter summary.

3.2 Research paradigm

This study is located within an interpretivist research paradigm. A paradigm is a set of shared beliefs, that guides the interpretation of research data (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), the interpretivist paradigm places emphasis on how human beings make meaning of the phenomena in their environment. Rehman and Alharthi (2016) explain that the goal of interpretive research is not to discover universal truths and value-free knowledge but rather to try to understand the interpretations of individuals and the social phenomena that they interact with. This paradigm is suitable for this study as the aim of this study is to gain an understanding of how primary school principals experience the social phenomena of parental involvement, in low-income communities. This paradigm acknowledges that different participants may have different meanings and understandings about how parental involvement can be enhanced and sustained.

3.3 Research approach

This study used a qualitative research approach. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), a qualitative research approach uses naturalistic approaches to research intended to understand the phenomena in its real-world setting. In this approach, the researcher does not manipulate the phenomenon of interest instead the researcher allows the phenomenon of interest to unfold naturally (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018; Golafshani, 2003; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). According to Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls and Ormston (2013), the aims and

objectives of the qualitative research are directed at providing an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world of research participants by learning about the sense they make of their social and material circumstances, their experiences, and perspectives.

This research approach was deemed suitable for this study and provided me as a researcher with a better understanding of how principals experience parental involvement in their own context. A qualitative research approach emphasises the discovery of the kinds of things that make a difference in social life; hence, an emphasis is placed on *qualitas* rather than *quantitas* (Erickson, 2012). A qualitative research approach is more concerned with understanding the meanings of social phenomena and focuses on the links among a larger number of attributes across relatively few cases (Tuli, 2010). Therefore, the qualitative research approach was best suited for this study as it allowed me to share in the understandings, experiences, and perceptions of principals about parental involvement in low-income communities.

3.4 Research design

A case study was used to explore the phenomena of parental involvement, through interrogating the experiences of primary school principals leading schools in low-income communities. Gerring (2004) states that a case study can be defined as an intensive study of a single unit, in order to understand a larger class of (similar) units that are spatially bounded. Creswell and Poth (2016) argue that a case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system. According to Baxter and Jack (2008), a qualitative case study methodology provides the researcher with the tools needed to study complex phenomena within their bound context. In addition, Rashid, Warraich, Rashid, Sabir and Waseem (2019) state that a case study is a methodology used by researchers to conduct an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon in a specific context. This case study is geographically bound in the Phoenix township of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), and Cohen, Manson and Morrison (2018), a case study is a suitable methodology to use when trying to understand a single phenomenon since it is a form of empirical inquiry, which seeks to understand and study phenomena within their own, specific, real-world contexts. Furthermore, a case study provides close-up, detailed rich descriptions on the phenomena studied while portraying the real thoughts and feelings experienced by participants in the study (Cohen et al., 2018; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Drawing from the above discussion, the case study design was the most suitable choice for this

study. The aim of this study was an in-depth exploration of parental involvement, within the geographically bound system of the Phoenix township. It was a case of principals' experiences of parental involvement in primary schools situated in a low-income area in Phoenix township.

3.5 Selection of participants and research sites

This small-scale study drew data from three principals leading primary schools in the Phoenix township, and both purposive sampling and convenience sampling were used in selecting the schools. The two sampling techniques are discussed below.

3.5.1 Purposive sampling

According to Cohen et al. (2018), purposive sampling is a technique commonly used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich participants. This method of sampling requires the researcher(s) to identify and deliberately select participants or groups of participants that are knowledgeable/experienced or concerned with a phenomenon of interest (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2015). Since this study sought to explore the experiences of primary school principals, the sample population consisted of three primary school principals leading schools situated in a low-income area in Phoenix township. Some of the selection criteria included the following: the schools had to be primary schools and had to be located in a low-income community.

3.5.2 Convenient sampling

Convenient sampling also called opportunity sampling or accidental sampling was used to select three primary schools that are closer to where I live and work. Convenience sampling is a method of sampling whereby the researcher(s) chooses participants who are easily accessible in terms of geographical proximity, availability, and willingness to participate in the study (Cohen et al., 2018; Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). This method of sampling is a practical way of selecting participants and obtaining data, as it is affordable and easier to obtain data since the subjects are readily available (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). This study sought to explore the experiences of primary school principals in schools that are geographically situated in low-income communities. In addition, this study is a self-funded study therefore to avoid high costs, schools closer to where I reside, and work was preferred and sampled for participation.

3.6 Research sites setting

This study reviewed parental involvement in three primary schools situated in the Phoenix township. The Phoenix township is situated north of Durban, in KwaZulu-Natal. It has a large Indian population hence it is commonly referred to as an Indian township (Census, 2011). While the Phoenix township is rapidly developing, many families living in Phoenix receive little to no weekly/monthly income (Murugan, 2013). For this reason, the Phoenix township is characterised as a low-income community.

3.7 Data generation methods

This study generated data primarily through the use of semi-structured interviews and document review was used as a secondary data generation method. Cohen et al. (2018) state that the use of multi-sources of data allows researchers to better understand the phenomena being investigated, while also allowing for multiple facets of the phenomena to be revealed and understood.

3.7.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are a cost-effective data generation method that allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena being studied. Semi-structured interviews consist of closed and opened ended questions (Adams, 2015). It is an effective tool used to gain a deepened perspective on the phenomena being studied and to discover the independent thoughts of each participant on topics that participants might not be too keen on addressing if they were sitting with peers in a focus group (Adams, 2015; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

Semi-structured interviews provide the interviewer with a degree of control over the interview process. It allows the researcher to prepare questions/themes beforehand thus guiding the conversation, gaining more in-depth information from the interviewee. Furthermore, it gives the interviewee the freedom to express their feelings as subjectively as they wish. This encourages two-way communication between the interviewer and the interviewee (Cohen et al., 2018). Semi-structured interviews were a suitable data generation tool to fully understand the experiences of principals. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews allowed the interviewee to gain clarity and perspective on the questions that they did not understand, and it allowed the

interviewer to seek clarity on questions that were partially answered or answered ambiguously (Cohen et al., 2018), further enhancing the data that was produced.

3.7.2 Documents review

According to Bowen (2009), document review is a systematic procedure used to review and evaluate documents. This data generation method requires the researcher to examine and interpret data to gain a deeper meaning and understanding of the phenomena studied. Document review is a cost-efficient and time-efficient way of obtaining data. Documents come in a variety of forms and are often easily accessible, depending on the nature of the documents. Additionally, documents are a reliable form of data. Furthermore, documents are a non-reactive resource, meaning that they can be reviewed several times and remain unchanged by the researcher's influence or the research process (Bowen, 2009).

In this study, minutes of meetings held in the schools, government, and school policies relating to parental involvement were analysed. These documents helped me to paint a picture on how parental involvement was perceived and promoted at the sampled schools. This method of data generation was also used to assess the trustworthiness of the data received during the interview process.

3.8 Data analysis

All research has to be analysed so that it can make sense, and a variety of techniques can be used to do the analysis of data. In the context of this study, data was analysed using a thematic approach to data analysis. To do this, the researcher collects all the data first before reviewing the data collected and identifying common themes which emerge from the data/ the theoretical/conceptual framework. Once those common themes have been identified, the researcher then sorts the data according to those themes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). According to Nowell, Norris and Moules (2017), thematic analysis is a useful method for examining the varying perspectives of research participants, as it highlights both the similarities and differences of the participant's perspective. Kiger and Varpio (2020) state that thematic data analysis is the most suitable form of qualitative data analysis for novice researchers. According to Ravindran (2019), qualitative data can be thematically analysed in four steps, and these are (a) The data is prepared (b)The researcher begins reading and reflecting on the findings (c) The

data is coded and categorised, and finally (d) Themes are developed from the findings and/or the theoretical/conceptual framework.

According to Ravindran (2019), to initiate the first step of the data analysis process a researcher should transcribe and edit the interviews once the interview process has concluded. In the context of this study, I transcribed the interviews from the recordings after I had concluded the interviews. Once I had finished transcriptions, I provided the participants with a copy of the transcriptions to verify the accuracy of the data. It was important for me to proceed with the analysis having confidence that the narratives contained in the transcripts has been confirmed by each participant for accuracy, and thus was trustworthy. I then sorted through the school documents and began preparing the data for analysis by completing the document analysis table as found in Annexure B.

The second step requires the researcher to read the transcriptions and gain an understanding of the participant's perspective (Ravindran, 2019). In keeping with this step, I read all the transcripts repeatedly so that I could immerse myself in the content of the interviews. As I was reading, I also reflected on the contents of the interview transcriptions in an attempt to further understand the participant's experience on the phenomenon of focus, while jotting down some similarities and differences in the experiences reflected in the content. I then read the data analysis table to try to understand what policies and methods schools have in place to maintain and sustain parental involvement and further understand in what ways are these policies and methods similar or different to the other schools sampled in this study.

Through the reading of the interview transcripts, data analysis table and using the theoretical framework underpinning this study as a guide, I developed some recurring codes of meaning. According to Ravindran (2019), coding can be defined as labels given to phrases or sentences found in the data, and categorising is the act of grouping together similar codes. To perform the third step of this process, I sorted through all the data and began coding and categorising the data. To perform the last step in the data analysis process categories were grouped to form themes (Ravindran, 2019). The data was then sorted systematically into the themes identified. The number and the names of the themes that emerged are presented at the beginning of Chapter Four.

3.9 Issues of trustworthiness

It is always acknowledged that the findings of a research should be believable, hence, the trustworthiness of the findings is important. Trustworthiness is an indispensable part of qualitative research (Daniel, 2019). It is a method used by researchers to persuade themselves and readers that their research findings are worthy of attention (Nowell et al., 2017). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness in a study can be achieved through the use of the four criteria, namely, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Below I briefly explain what scholars say about trustworthiness and how it was achieved in this study.

3.9.1 Credibility

According to Korstjens and Moser (2017), credibility refers to the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings. To ensure credibility in a study, the researcher has to present the actual meaning of the participant beliefs such that is convincing and believable to do this the researcher can employ strategies such as data or method triangulation, peer-debriefing, and member checking (Adams & Blackman, 2016; Korstjens & Moser, 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams, & Blackman, 2016). Method triangulation is achieved by using multiple methods of data generation to triangulate data (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). This study used semi-structured interviews and documents review to achieve method triangulation. Other scholars have moved away from using the term ‘triangulation’ in qualitative research, and prefer the term crystallisation (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Member checking is a process whereby, the researcher confirms the data received by the participant, by giving the participant access to the data recorded to confirm the accuracy of the data generated (Cohen et al., 2018).

In the context of this study, I used a variety of techniques to enhance the credibility of the study. The first technique was to ensure that what the participants shared with me was expressed voluntarily. In other words, no form of coercion was used to elicit their views. Secondly, I made sure that I do not only rely on what the participants said, but also that some of the content of the interviews were corroborated by the records kept in the schools. Besides documents reviews, I also ensured that member checking was done during the process of the interviews. In addition, I ensured that I provided the participants in the study with a scripted version of the interview, for the participants to confirm the accuracy of the data generated. This was done to ensure that I did not misrepresent what the participants had told me. Accuracy of

the interpretation of the content is important, and member checking enhances this aspect of credibility.

3.9.2 Transferability

Transferability is the second criterion that can be used to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings. Transferability can be described as the degree to which the results from a study can be generalised or transferred to another setting (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). In qualitative research, results cannot be generalised but the findings in a particular setting may offer valuable lessons or a deeper understanding of the phenomena in a similar setting (Daniel, 2019). Transferability can be reached when a researcher provides readers with ‘thick’ descriptions of the findings (Cohen et al., 2018). To further strengthen transferability, the researcher can provide readers with a rich and detailed description of the research setting, culture, the selection, and the characteristics of the participants, and of how the data was generated and analysed (Moon et al., 2016). To achieve transferability of this study, I made sure that I provided readers with a rich description of the research setting, how the participants were selected and how data was generated and analysed, therefore enhancing trustworthiness.

3.9.3 Dependability

The third criterion to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings is dependability. Dependability can be described as the consistency and the reliability of the findings over time (Korstjens & Moser, 2017; Moon et al., 2016). Dependability can be reached when a researcher keeps an extensive audit trail or a reflexive journal, with details of all changes and observations of the data over the research period (Cohen et al., 2018; Daniel, 2019; Moon et al., 2016;). This is an integral part of qualitative research as it is needed that the quality of research done is continuously evaluated, thus leading to increased confidence in the research findings (Moon et al., 2016).

3.9.4 Confirmability

The fourth and last criterion to ensure trustworthiness is confirmability, which is meant to ensure that the principle of neutrality is upheld. Confirmability is concerned with establishing that the data and interpretations from findings are derived from the data and not the preferences of the researcher (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). Therefore, the conclusions that are drawn from results should be presented in a manner whereby it can be easily followed and replicated, and

not misrepresented according to the preferences of the researcher (Moon et al, 2016). Like transferability, a researcher can also achieve confirmability through a reflexive journal or an extensive audit trail (Cohen et al., 2018; Moon et al., 2016). In a bid to prevent potential bias in the study, the researcher can keep a reflexive journal, where they report and reflect on their steps taken through the study and ensure that their finding reflects the experiences of the participants (Moon et al., 2016).

To achieve dependability and confirmability in this study, I kept a detailed audit trail, explicitly describing the research steps taken from the start of a research project to the development and reporting of the findings. In addition, at the end of writing up the findings section, I had a discussion with each participant, and I shared the key findings from our previous conversations with the participants. I explained what my interpretations about what they had told me and they had the opportunity to confirm my interpretations or refute them and give clarity where I may have misunderstood them. This is another layer in the journey of confirmability.

3.10 Ethical issues

It is conventional knowledge amongst researchers that all research must be conducted in an ethical manner. The University of KwaZulu-Natal has its own set of rules that guide all academic staff and students when conducting research. All researchers need to apply for ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee within the College Research office before conducting fieldwork. In compliance with such regulations, I applied for ethical clearance to the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The ethical clearance application form asks many questions relating to various aspects of ethics in research. The Ethics Committee had to be satisfied that the design and implementation of the study did not breach any ethical protocols, and I was granted an ethical clearance certificate, which is presented at beginning of this dissertation. I also sought permission from the Head of Department of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education as the main gatekeeper in charge of all public schools in the province, and I was granted permission to conduct research in KwaZulu-Natal DoE institutions. Proof of this is presented in Appendix A and B.

Qualitative data generation brings its own set of ethical issues due to the personal nature of the data generated and the data generation process (Mertens, 2018). To maintain ethical standards in this study, I ensured that I followed all ethical procedures. For instance, I ensured that I gave all the participants sufficient information about the study, including explaining how the

interviews would take place. I also assured them that their identity would be kept private throughout the study.

The participants were made aware that their contribution to this study was voluntary and they would not receive any monetary compensation for participating in the study. Furthermore, participants were notified that they could withdraw from the study at any time they wished to do so. After I had explained every aspect of the study, I gave them informed consent forms to sign. Such signage of the declaration of informed consent was actually, the culmination of a lengthy process of gaining access to the research sites. I had first requested permission from all the participants to participate in the study. I also acknowledged that they were gatekeepers in their own right and as such they had to give me permission to conduct the study in their schools.

3.11 Coding of schools and participants

Dooly, Moore and Vallejo (2017) state that in order to follow ethical guidelines, researchers need to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the participants. According to Arifin (2018), this can be achieved by hiding the true identity of participants in the study. In research, pseudonyms are commonly used to give a false identity to participants in an attempt to protect their anonymity (Allen & Wiles, 2016). In order to protect the identity of the participants and the schools who participated in this study, I made use of pseudonyms. Schools and the corresponding school principals were coded as followed:

Name of the principal	Name of the school
Alpha Primary School	Mr. Govender
Beta Primary School	Mr. Pillay
Delta Primary School	Mr. Singh

Table 1: Coding of participants

3.12 My experiences conducting fieldwork

I have faced many challenges out in the field. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was difficult to access the participants as principals were already faced with immense pressure to find new ways of managing and leading their schools. Although they had initially agreed to participate in the study, they were no longer enthusiastic about participating in this research project. Their prior commitments to partake in this research had shifted its meaning, it now seemed more like participation was an additional responsibility to managing their schools and the pandemic. This was evident in their evasion of committing to setting up dates and times to be interviewed and the handing over of school documents for review. Nevertheless, I was patient, acknowledging the fact that their participation was voluntary and that they had their autonomy which allowed them to pull out of the research project whenever they wished to do so.

During the interview process, some participants were reserved, and the discussion did not flow as smoothly as I had initially thought. Nevertheless, I ensured that through probing and follow-up questions, I got the information that would illuminate their understandings and meanings. Schools were hesitant to provide me with documents. Upon reviewing the documents, I realised that many schools did not have relevant policies in place. In one school, the policy documents and meeting minutes were dated from 2016 as the school had no recent policies or minutes to give me.

3.13 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented a detailed discussion of the research design and methodology adopted for this study. I began the discussion with a justification of the research paradigm, the research approach or design, research methodology, and research population, sampling instrumentation, and data generation methods used in the study. Towards the end of the chapter, issues of ensuring trustworthiness and ethical considerations were discussed. The next chapter presents the analysis of data and the discussion of findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the research design and methodology which underpinned and guided the research process and analysis of this study. This chapter presents the data emerging from semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The findings emerging from data are then discussed and presented thematically. The findings of this chapter and discussion of the findings are aimed at addressing the research questions posed at the beginning of this study. To remind the reader, the research questions guiding this study are:

1. How do principals experience parental involvement in primary schools situated in low-income communities?
2. What do principals perceive as contributors to parental involvement in primary schools situated in low-income communities?
3. What are the strategies implemented by principals to promote the involvement of parents in primary schools situated in low-income communities?

Since this study wished to bring to light school principals' experiences of parental involvement in primary schools situated in low-income communities, *verbatim* quotes are used throughout this chapter to convey the actual voices of the participants in this study.

4.2 Profiling of participants

Mr Govender

Mr Govender is the Principal of Alpha Primary School. Mr Govender has been at Alpha Primary for 25 years. Mr Govender has been a principal at Alpha Primary for 7 years. Prior to this, he previously held the role of a Departmental Head in the same school for 14 years.

Mr Pillay

Mr Pillay is the Principal of Beta Primary School Mr. Pillay has been at Beta Primary for 33 years. Mr. Pillay has been a principal at Beta Primary for 6 years. Prior to this, he held the rank of a Departmental Head at the same school for 7 years.

Mr. Singh

Mr. Singh is the Principal of Delta Primary School. Mr. Singh has been at Delta Primary for 8 years. He has only held the position as the Principal of Delta Primary School for 1 year now. Prior to this, he held the rank of Departmental Head at the same school for 4 years.

4.3 Profiling of schools

All the selected primary schools are situated in the Phoenix township, which is regarded as a low-income area.

Alpha Primary School

Alpha Primary is an English medium school, which has a roll of 323 learners. The staff consists of 8 state-employed teachers, 1 SGB employed teacher, 2 secretaries and 2 School Management Team (SMT) members. It is a Quantile 4 school. The majority of learners who attend the school are from the area. Ninety-six percent (96%) of the school's population is Indian learners, and 4% of the school's population are African learners. The school reported that it had no coloured learners or white learners attending the school. The majority of the African learners do not stay in the community and reside in other surrounding low-income areas. Alpha Primary is a small school situated in a tight-knit community. Alpha Primary has been victim to theft and vandalism countless times over the past few years. Parental involvement and community involvement at Alpha Primary School is relatively low but desperately needed given the incidents of crime and vandalism in the school.

Beta Primary School

Beta Primary School is an English medium, Quantile 4 school. The school has a roll of 908 learners. The staff consists of 25 state-employed teachers, 3 SGB employed teachers, 2 secretaries and 5 SMT members. Learners attending the school reside in a variety of areas, both in and around the Phoenix township. The school has a large Indian population making up 81% of the school's population, and only 0.5 % of the school's population are coloured learners and 18.5 % of the school's population consists of African learners and there are no white learners at the school. The school is well-furnished and well-established in the community. Beta Primary has good parental involvement at the school.

Delta Primary School

Delta Primary is a relatively small school, well recognised for its successful ABET programmes. Delta Primary is an English medium school, which has a roll of 319 learners. It

is a Quantile 5 school. The staff consists of 8 state-employed teachers, 2 SGB employed teachers, 2 secretaries and 2 SMT members. A vast majority of learners reside in the Phoenix township with just handful of learners coming from surrounding townships, and 95 % of the school’s population consists of Indian learners, 0.3% of the school's population consists of coloured learners, while African learners account for 4.7% of the school's population and there are no white learners at the school. Delta Primary experiences poor parental involvement at the school.

4.4 The presentation of data and the discussion of finding

The presentation of the data and the discussion of findings are thematically presented into the following main themes and sub-themes

Main themes	Sub-themes
Principals’ experiences of parental involvement in primary schools situated in low-income communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principals’ understanding of parental involvement • Principals’ perspectives of the parental involvement in schools situated in low-income communities • Primary school principals’ positive experiences of parental involvement, in low-income communities • Primary school principals’ negative experiences of parental involvement, in low-income communities
The factors contributing towards poor parental involvement in primary schools situated in low-income communities, as perceived by the principals’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The COVID-19 pandemic as a factor • The mode of communication between the school and parents • Initial teacher education as a factor • Socio-economic status of parents as a factor • Lack of national policy for parental involvement as a barrier

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language barriers as a factor impacting parental involvement • Bitter relationships between parents and teachers as a barrier
The strategies implemented by principals to promote the involvement of parents in primary schools situated in low-income communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant communication with parents as a strategy • Use of school implemented policies as a strategy for enhancing parental involvement • Welcoming environment as a strategy to enhance parental involvement

Table 2: Themes and subthemes emerging from the data

4.4.1 Principals’ experience of parental involvement in primary schools situated in low-income communities

This theme brings to light how parental involvement is experienced by principals leading primary schools in low-income communities. To introduce the theme, the principals’ conceptualisation of the term parental involvement is highlighted. This is done to show what their understandings of parental involvement are before shedding more light on their experiences of parental involvement. The culture of parental involvement in each of the school’s selected in the study is presented and discussed. The latter part of this theme presents the positive and the negative experiences of parental involvement, experienced by principals leading primary schools in low-income communities.

4.4.1.1 Principals’ understanding of parental involvement

The principals in this study shared a similar understanding of parental involvement in education, which focused it on the obligation that a parent has to be involved in their child’s education and how actively involved a parent is in the educational development of the learner. Mr Pillay for instance described parental involvement in education as the responsibility of the parent to educate their child and be involved in their educational process. In this regard Mr Pillay said:

Parental involvement is an obligation on the part of parents to help educate their children. It is about how actively involved are parents in their child's education, at school, and at home, and at the various educational forums that make decisions that concern their children at school.

Mr Govender shared similar sentiments that parental involvement focuses on the extent to which the parents participate in the education of their children. He said:

Parental involvement is how involved parents are in the education of learners. The education of learners is not the sole responsibility of the school and its educators, but it is also a responsibility of parents because parents also play an important role in the education of the children.

According to Mr Singh, parental involvement in education is described as the willingness of parents to collaborate with educators for the improvement of their child's academic outcomes.

Mr Singh said:

Parental involvement in education is when the parent and the educators work together in order to improve their child's academic performance.

The responses from the principals indicate that principals based their understanding of parental involvement, on how actively involved a parent is in the educational development of their child. This is in line with Şad (2012), and Makgopa and Mokhele (2013) who define parental involvement in terms of parents supporting their child's education and participating in school initiatives. Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020) contend that the term parental involvement in education is inclusive of home-based and school-based parental involvement. The principals' views did not capture the holistic conceptualisation of parental involvement, which includes both home-based and school-based parental involvement, and parental involvement in a learner's social and emotional development (Castro et al., 2015; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). These findings are in line with research by Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020) which shed light on the incomplete understanding of the concept of parental involvement held by school principals. In order to effectively encourage and sustain parental involvement, principals as school leaders need to comprehend the concept of what parental involvement ought to entail in a holistic manner (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020).

4.4.1.2 Principals' perspectives of the parental involvement in schools situated in low-income communities

Participants were asked to describe the current culture of parental involvement at their schools. This question sought to elicit information about the culture of parental involvement in schools situated in low-income communities and how this culture positively or negatively impacted principals' experiences of parental involvement at their respective schools. The participants were unanimous that parental involvement in their schools was poor. Mr Govender sadly explained that the school experiences a poor culture of parental involvement wherein parents seemed to be reluctant to be involved with the school for whatever reasons. Mr Govender said:

Parental involvement is very poor. I think parents are a bit reluctant to be involved with the school for whatever beliefs or reasons.

When asked to describe the culture of parental involvement at Delta Primary, Mr Singh explained that the majority of parents in the school were not cooperative and were not involved in the school. Mr Singh said:

Basically, it is quite minimal in that we don't get full cooperation. There are a few parents that help and go out of their way to assist the school in every way that they can, but the majority of the parents are not actually involved in the school.

When asked about the culture of parental involvement at Beta Primary School, Mr Pillay proudly declared that there is a positive culture of parental involvement held at the school. Mr Pillay said:

We have a positive culture of parental involvement at this school. The school encourages maximum participation and involvement by parents. We welcome parents being involved in the education of their children, we see that we cannot, as a school, successfully complete all educational tasks, by ourselves and acknowledge that as a school, we need to get the parents involved in the teaching and learning processes. Therefore, the school welcomes whatever involvement we can get from the parent. That's the attitude we have and share.

Mr Govender and Mr Singh were aware that their current culture of parental involvement was poor. Mr. Govender had previously made several attempts to do away with the current culture

of poor parental involvement at Alpha Primary during the course of his career, however, none of his attempts have been successful. When asked what has been done to improve this poor culture of parental involvement at Alpha Primary School, Mr Govender said:

I have tried many things throughout the years to change this culture, but parents just don't seem to be interested. Whatever parental involvement we get at the school is welcomed but other than that, we just have to take what we get.

Mr Singh has accepted the current culture of poor parental involvement at Delta Primary School, and he chose to focus his attention on the parents who wanted to be involved at the school rather than the parents, who did not. When asked about what has been done to improve this poor culture of parental involvement at Delta Primary school, Mr Singh responded:

We (the school) mainly focus on the support we get from the parents who are involved rather than the parents who don't make an attempt to be involved in the school and their child's education.

It is emerging from the discussion above that Beta Primary School experienced a positive culture of parental involvement wherein parents were fully participating and involved in the school. A different picture is seen at Alpha and Delta Primary Schools. It is emerging that the beliefs and attitudes held by the principals in this study played a significant role in shaping the culture of parental involvement held at the school. If a principal holds a negative attitude towards parental involvement, they will be reluctant to involve parents in their school, this will be reflected in the culture of parental involvement in the school. The opposite is also true; if a principal holds a positive attitude towards parental involvement, they will be welcoming towards more parental involvement in their schools, thus, positively influencing the culture of parental involvement at their school. According to Bipath and Moyo (2016), the principal of a school is tasked with the job of creating and managing the school culture, they are also expected to change it or to break it down when it proves inconducive towards the educational outcomes.

According to Cruse (2021), the attitude held by the school leader is modelled in the culture displayed at the school, therefore, the poor attitudes towards improving the culture of parental involvement displayed by the above participants, explains why the poor culture of parental involvement at Alpha Primary and Delta Primary is held and maintained. Mr Pillay's overall positive attitude towards parental involvement plays a significant role in shaping the positive culture of parental involvement held at Beta Primary.

This finding has been reflected in research conducted by Yulianti, Denessen, Droop, and Veerman in 2020, who found that the attitudes and the leadership practices of school leaders play a leading role in encouraging and maintaining the relationship between schools and parents. This consequently influences the culture of parental involvement. The positive culture of parental involvement held at Beta Primary School is largely attributed to the welcoming and inviting climate maintained at the school towards parental involvement. These findings are in line with research by Yulianti, Denessen, Droop, and Veerman (2020) which has shown that parents who feel welcomed by the school tend to be more involved in the school and their child's education.

According to Light and Razak (2020), culture constructs leadership experiences. These experiences work to shape your attitudes and beliefs. Mr Govender and Mr Singh have a negative attitude towards parental involvement which is reflected in the culture of parental involvement at their school. Mr Pillay has a positive attitude towards parental involvement which is reflected in the positive culture of parental involvement held at Beta Primary. The differences in attitudes account for the varying experiences of parental involvement, experienced by the participants, which will be addressed in the next sub-theme.

4.4.1.3 Primary school principals' positive experiences of parental involvement in low-income communities

In the many years working in primary schools situated within low-income communities, the participants of this study have lived through many experiences of parental involvement. When participants were asked to share some of the positive experiences dealing with parental involvement in their role as principals, data showed that all participants shared a similar positive experience, which related to parents and the community coming together to build up and support the school in its endeavours. For instance, Mr Govender related his positive experiences to the efforts of parents to volunteer their services to support Alpha Primary School in fundraising activities and assist the learners of the school. Mr Govender said:

Parents have come forward and really rendered their assistance to the school and to the children. Especially when events took place, they were highly successful fundraising events took place and lots of money was raised.

Mr Singh shared similar sentiments as Mr Govender, stating that:

The positive experiences that I have had are when we had parents involved in some of our fundraising activities that the school hosted. It really made us feel good that the parents were part of the school community.

Mr Pillay associated his positive experiences of parental involvement with the efforts of the parents and the community to collaborate with the school and assist and partake in events that supported the school's improvement. Mr Pillay said:

Some of the positive experiences that I experienced from parents, would-be parents supporting the school in all its efforts to improve. When the school has its various events, like the Fun Run, the Mini-Deb's Ball, the Prom, the Family Fun Days, and other activities, we find parents and the community are fully involved in all of that. That is evident by the large participation and turnout for all these events.

All three participants highlighted positive experiences when dealing with school-based parental involvement. Duan, Guan, and Bu (2018) define school-based parental involvement as the involvement of parents in school-based activities such as collaborating with the school, initiating, and attending school fundraising initiatives, and volunteering services and resources. According to Epstein's (1995) model for parental involvement, volunteering, and collaboration with the community are two effective ways in which schools can enlist the involvement of parents in schools. As parents volunteer their resources or services to the school, they become more active within the school environment. Park, Stone and Holloway (2017) note that parents who are more actively involved within the school sphere are more likely to have greater respect for the principal and other members of the school staff. Research by Gross, Haines, Hill, Francis, Blue-Banning and Turnbull (2015) showed that collaboration between the community and the school formed a reciprocal partnership between both parties. When the school-community partnership is established, parents from the community are more likely to support the school in its endeavours.

The findings from this study further reveal that principals classify their experience of parental involvement as a positive experience when it benefits the school rather than an individual learner. This is shown as the positive experiences of parental involvement conveyed by the participants favoured experiences relating to school-based parental involvement. Findings by

Wong et al. (2018) and Duan et al. (2018) show that while school-based involvement does indirectly positively impact the learner, home-based parental involvement has a more significant impact on the learner's educational journey.

4.4.1.4 Primary school principals' negative experiences of parental involvement

Principals working in low-income communities experienced parental involvement differently due to the unique contextual factors and barriers that affected parents within their communities. Principals were asked to share their negative experiences of parental to shed light on how parental involvement was experienced in low-income communities. Participants shared a convergent view that the lack of parental interest was evident in their schools. Mr Pillay shared his experiences, stating that:

We have to constantly get in touch with parents, having to constantly call them to school to attend a meeting, a one-on-one session to discuss the child's attendance, or the child's behaviour at school or the child's academic performance at school and most of the time the parent does not attend meetings and does not respond to our communication. And in that way, we find that we're not able to adequately assist the child. We find that this is our main challenge.

Mr Singh's negative experiences of parental involvement are constructed around the uncooperativeness of parents to work collaboratively with the school and poor parental attitudes towards their parental duties. Mr Singh said:

Most parents are not cooperative. Some of them are basically on fault-finding missions. In cases that you find that there's is a problem with the child itself, parents tend to support the child, even though the child is wrong, Also, when it comes to the role that parents have to play, like the payment of school fees, or filling up the forms, they're very reluctant, and they have apathy towards it. They still feel that the department must do everything for the school.

Mr Govender's negative experiences of parental involvement were found amongst those parents who did not know how to be involved in education, consequently, overstepping their mark. Mr Govender elaborated further on this issue:

Experience has taught me that we cannot get the parent to be involved in the teaching and learning of the child or the classroom. They have not been trained, and they don't know where to draw the line; they overstep the mark. For this reason, we have refrained from allowing parents to be in a classroom with learners and from allowing parents to become 'teachers' to their children.

While there were no overlapping negative experiences of the participants, all the negative experiences related to poor parenting and parents' poor attitudes towards their involvement in their child's education. Epstein (1995) explored the issue of parenting, stating that schools need to develop parenting and guide parental involvement at home and schools through the introduction of parenting workshops. Findings from this study show that parents who did not know how to be involved in their child's education negatively influenced the principals' experiences of parental involvement. Current research has largely focused on the impact that poor parental attitudes have on a child's educational experiences and educational outcomes (Li, Yang, Wang & Jia, 2020). However, the findings from this study have shown that poor parental attitudes also negatively impact principals' experiences of parental involvement.

According to Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020), negative experiences may lead to principals forming negative attitudes towards parental involvement. Supporting this assertion, Munje and Mncube (2018) highlight that those working in schools situated in disadvantaged communities, usually have a negative perception of parental involvement. The findings from this study corroborate those of the aforementioned statements, as this is seen in the negative attitudes towards parental involvement held by Mr Govender and Mr Singh.

4.4.2 Factors contributing towards poor parental involvement in primary schools situated in low-income communities, as perceived by the principals

Participants were asked to share their views on what they believe are the factors contributing towards poor parental involvement in low-income communities.

4.4.2.1 The COVID-19 pandemic as a factor

The participants revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic is one of the factors that has diminished the amount of parental involvement previously experienced at their schools. COVID-19 pandemic has been raging through South Africa since March 2020, bringing disruption to schools across the country (Spaull & Berg, 2020). The participants maintained that the

pandemic had reduced the amount of parental involvement experienced within schools as parents were too afraid to be involved and schools were forced to limit access to everybody including parents/volunteers. According to Mr Govender, the fear caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has driven parents further away from the school. He said:

Prior to the covid-19 pandemic, parents were more involved in the school, though not adequate. Now, parents are scared to come to school and expose themselves.

Mr Singh explained that activities that previously brought parents into the school had grounded to a complete halt due to this pandemic. He said:

COVID-19 has forced us to keep parents out. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, we held many activities and parents came in, assisted us in various fundraising drives. They also helped the school financially through donations, but the COVID-19 pandemic has brought all of that to a halt.

Mr Pillay explained that COVID-19 safety protocols for schools had forced Beta Primary School to limit their interactions with parents, stating that:

We are now in a COVID-19 situation that restricts interaction with parents, on a one-on-one basis. We are limited in that parents cannot visit the school as often as they used to prior to us going into the COVID-19 situation. I would say that in the current situation we are experiencing a drop in parental involvement. At parent meetings, we used to have a very good turnout of at least 80% of parents, now because of COVID-19, parents don't want to come to school.

The standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the containment and management of COVID-19 in schools and school communities issued by the Department of Basic Education in 2020, restrict parents' access to the school. This has greatly impacted parental involvement, particularly within the school's sphere as seen in the findings of this study. Furthermore, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools had been experiencing poor learner attendance due to anxiety from the COVID-19 pandemic, thus disrupting teaching and learning. Mr Govender said:

The absentee rate is high, especially now during COVID-19 because parents are too scared to send their children to school, so they are keeping their children at home. This disrupts teaching and learning at the school.

The high absenteeism rate and frequent school closures have negatively impacted teaching and learning. According to a statement released by UNICEF (2021), South African learners are up to one school year behind from where they should be. The loss in teaching time is because of the frequent closure of schools, due to COVID-19. To assist with the aforementioned issue, the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) provincial Department of Education, introduced Circular KZN of 74 of 2021. This circular advised schools in KZN to prepare home-learning packages for learners, to ensure curriculum coverage. While school-based parental involvement has been restricted, some schools like Alpha Primary School have relied heavily on home-based parental involvement to assist/guard teaching and learning. Schools were also advised through the curricular to make use of social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook groups to send learners home-learning material.

In the study, Alpha Primary was the only school that used WhatsApp to send home-learning materials to parents via WhatsApp groups. Mr Govender proudly stated:

We have been experiencing poor attendance since the start of the pandemic, so we needed to find creative ways to ensure curriculum coverage and communicate with parents. Our solution was using WhatsApp groups to send work to students for learning. We have been successfully using this method since March 2020.

When asked to comment on the success of this home-learning strategy, Mr Govender highlighted the challenges experienced home-learning. He said:

Well, we try our best to continue teaching and learning during these trying times. However, we find that the majority of our learners return to class not having done any work required of them. When teachers ask the learners, why they haven't done any work, they say things like no one was at home to help them, or their parent doesn't understand their schoolwork, or their siblings were making too much noise.

According to Epstein (1995), parenting is an important part of parental involvement. Parenting is a crucial factor in ensuring the success of home learning. Successful home learning requires a home environment conducive to learning and extensive parental supervision and guidance (Lehrl, Evangelou & Sammon, 2020). The findings from this study show that many learners living in low-income communities do not have either. This is because parents in low-income communities direct their attention more towards supporting learners' basic needs rather than supporting their child's educational needs, or they are simply unable to assist their children with their work because they simply do not understand the work. The findings from this study corroborated those found by Munje and Mncube (2018).

4.4.2.2 Mode of communication between schools and parents

The participants alluded that the mode of communication between schools and parents was also one of the factors which impacted parental involvement in schools. The participants explained that there was a shift from the traditional form of communications which included the writing of letters to parents, making phone calls to parents to more digital, online forms of communication using WhatsApp platform, e-mails, SMS, or social media platforms. Mr Pillay explained that COVID-19 has forced them to abandon their traditional ways of communication and find new ways to communicate with parents. Mr Pillay further explained that digital forms of communications were more cost-effective and more convenient and could reach a wide group of parents faster. This is what he said:

The main method that we used to use to communicate with parents was via letters. Now, due to COVID-19, we introduced WhatsApp groups; so, we just send out circulars and letters on the WhatsApp groups. These digital communication modes are cheap, convenient, and fast.

Similar sentiments were shared by Mr Govender that his school has replaced previous methods of communication with parents and have adopted digital form. According to Mr Govender, WhatsApp is a more effective and cost-efficient way to communicate with parents as evident in the excerpt below:

We normally used telephone calls, newsletters, circulars, and SMS to communicate with parents but now we just use WhatsApp group. It is faster and more cost-efficient to use

WhatsApp. Parents do not necessarily have to come to the school but are involved through communicating with them through WhatsApp.

In a bid to ensure parents are kept in the loop with school-related matters, Mr. Singh also mentioned that they have adopted WhatsApp as the strategy to communicate with the parents. He Said:

We have adopted WhatsApp to communicate with parents and we are able to communicate with them faster and quite effectively.

Epstein (1995) highlights the importance of the role of communication in encouraging parental involvement in education. Schools were advised in the SOPs (2020) to use alternate methods of communication such as newsletters, telephone, e-mails, and so forth, in order to minimise meetings with parents. The schools in the study have taken a digital approach to communication. Digital forms of communication include e-mails, SMS, social media platforms, and so forth. Willis and Exley (2018) go on to note that digital forms of communications are more cost-effective and more convenient and can reach a wide group of people faster. These sentiments were shared by the participants in this study.

Research by Myende and Nhlumayo (2020) has shown that parents in poorer communities actually prefer newer digital forms of communication compared to traditional forms of communication. Principals who adopted a social media approach to communication earn greater support from parents and the school community in general (Power & Green, 2016). Consequently, the newly adopted approach to communication indicates that it may work positively to improve both the relationship between parents and the schools and more importantly enhance parental involvement in education. Research by Dube (2020) and Seretse et al. (2018) highlight the digital divide in low-income communities compared to more affluent communities in South Africa.

It is important to take into consideration that this study took place in a low-income community. With this in mind, participants were asked to give an estimate as to how many parents have access to their schools WhatsApp groups and how well they were able to reach parents using WhatsApp. This question indicated the number of parents who had access to mobile telephone devices and internet connections despite their financial standing. All the participants in this study had indicated that they were able to reach the majority of their parents using WhatsApp.

Mr Govender stated that the majority of parents at Alpha Primary School were reachable through the school's WhatsApp groups and parents who did not have WhatsApp made arrangements with people who did to get information from the school WhatsApp groups. Mr Govender said:

We've been using WhatsApp groups right throughout this period of COVID-19, and it's been working to a large extent. We find that over 98% of learners have a parent/guardian on WhatsApp and those parents who do not have WhatsApp ask for their neighbours or other family members to be put on the group.

Mr Pillay stated that the school was able to reach most of their parents using WhatsApp as a form of communication. Mr Pillay said:

I would say nearly 99% of parents have WhatsApp already and we were able to reach almost all our parents through WhatsApp.

Sharing a similar experience as Mr Pillay, Mr Singh indicated:

About +/- 99 % of our parents are already on WhatsApp, so we are able to successfully reach the majority of our parents through WhatsApp.

Like most developing countries access to digital forms of communication poses a challenging issue (Okunola, Rowley & Johnson, 2017). According to the General Household Survey (2018), while 90% of South African households do have access to mobile telephone devices, only 60% of South African households have internet access to their mobile device. This means that it is not possible to reach a significant number of parents using social media as social media platforms require parents to have internet connection. Additionally, Spaul and Berg (2020) highlight that high data costs may negatively impact access to information while using mobile devices.

Despite the aforementioned findings, the data from this study indicate that the digital divide does not affect all low-income communities equally. Despite all three schools being situated in a low-income community, the majority of the parents did have internet access. Furthermore, the findings from this study indicate that the renewed methods of communication such as the use of social media applications like WhatsApp are an effective form of communication between the school and parents. This is especially effective when trying to navigate newer forms of communication during COVID-19. These findings are consistent with those by

Myende and Nhlumayo (2020) who suggest that schools should facilitate communication with parents in poorer areas through mobile telephone devices as many do have access to mobile technology.

4.4.2.3 Initial Teacher Education (ITE) as a factor

Participants alluded that poor ITE training impacts parental involvement in schools. Participants shared that current ITE programmes content in South Africa heavily focuses on equipping future teachers with pedagogical skills and content knowledge but were failing to provide future teachers with the skills necessary to effectively communicate and collaborate with parents. Consequently, this had an influence on the nature and extent of parental involvement experienced at their schools. Mr Pillay explained that future teachers needed to receive formal training, teaching them how to communicate and collaborate with parents. He stated:

There must be some training in terms of how educators or training educators will be developed, so that they are able to cope with this task of communicating and collaborating with parents because, invariably, they have to on a yearly basis or even as often as weekly, communicate with parents or have an interaction with parents; so, they need to have these necessary skills, as part of their training.

Mr Singh and Mr Pillay both expressed concerns about the current ITE programmes in South Africa, indicating that current ITE programmes largely focus on learning area knowledge rather than training future teachers on basic communication skills. Mr Singh stated that newer teachers were lacking teaching and communication skills due to inconsistency of requirements in ITE programmes. Mr Singh said:

Newly qualified teachers are now coming with purely academic qualifications; practical's are limited, and very little time is spent by the practising teacher at a school and institutions have different requirements. There are no proper criteria, or requirements in place to train teachers; therefore, newer teachers lack basic teaching and communication skills.

According to Mr Pillay, ITE programmes place too much emphasis on equipping future educators with content knowledge, failing to equip future teachers with other important skills needed to do their jobs effectively and efficiently. Mr Pillay said:

I think most times when teachers qualify and come out of universities, most of the focus is on the subjects that they must teach, and not really on the other skills that they need to have when they are teachers. And one of these would be the skills needed to communicate with parents.

While the participants expressed concerns about poor training for teachers, the Department of Basic Education continues to highlight the importance of communication in the education system. For instance, the Personnel Administrative Measure Document published in 2016, outlines communication and collaboration with parents as a part of the roles and responsibilities of a teacher. Consequently, if teachers are unable to effectively perform this duty, they will fail to fulfil their role and responsibility as teachers. There is an overwhelming response from the participants which reveal a need for an improvement on the current ITE programmes. Concurring with this view, an earlier Technical Report released by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and Department of Higher Education and Training in 2011, revealed that the ‘*capacity, quality, cooperation, relevance and reach of all initial teacher education programmes*’ (p.15) needs to be improved. This improvement took place through a change in the ITE policies.

Badroodien, Salmon and McDonald (2016) indicate that the changes made to the ITE policies are not significant enough to improve the ITE sector. A more recent study by Sayed in 2016, shows that despite the changes to the ITE policies, student teachers are not being equipped with the skills to cope with the stark reality of public schools in South Africa. Findings from this study reveal that despite prior changes to the ITE policies, ITE programmes are still failing to provide future teachers with the skills needed to fulfil their duties as teachers.

4.4.2.4 Socio-economic status of parents as a factor

Participants highlighted that the socio-economic status of the parents played a significant role in influencing the extent of parental involvement experienced in education. Participants suggested that the educational level held by parents negatively influenced their ability to get involved in their child’s education. Furthermore, participants claimed that the educational level

of a parent influences their employment status and their ability to find work. Additionally, participants explained that the employment status and the type of jobs the parents did, influenced their involvement in education. Mr Govender stated that the poor educational status of a parent played a significant role in a parent's ability to assist their child with their schoolwork and find work. He further revealed that parents who worked long hours did not have the time to be involved in their child's life, and that resulted in a decrease in parental involvement. Mr Govender said:

Socio-economic factors affect parent involvement in the school. Some of our parents are unemployed, some of them are uneducated which means they can't help their child with schoolwork or find good work or any work for that matter, some parents work such long hours that their child is practically raised by the domestic worker or their grandparents. And all these factors here add to the decrease in parental involvement.

Corroborating the above view, Mr Pillay added to this discussion by explaining that a parent's education level influenced the type of work that they did and their ability to assist their children with their schoolwork. Mr Pillay further went on to explain that the type of jobs held by parents may negatively influence the home environment of the child, thus resulting in poor parental involvement. He said:

The socio-economic situation with parents plays a big role in parental involvement. Some parents are uneducated; so, that means they are unable to assist their child with their schoolwork and unable to find work so they have to pick up menial jobs to earn some money, which means that there either have to work long hours or don't have set hours and must be ready to work at any time. Some of the parents work long hours or are unemployed, they don't earn a salary which results in them having other issues such as the breaking up of their marriages. So, this means that many children coming from a home where the mum and dad are separated. Therefore, children do not have the necessary support that they need to get from their parents because they don't have them around anymore. Everything just builds from their socioeconomic situation.

Sharing the same sentiments as the participants above, Mr Singh explained that a parent's level of education influenced parental involvement in their child's education and the type of jobs

worked by parents. He went on to explain that because parents were unable to find work, that influenced their income status, which ultimately influenced their relationship with the school. Mr Singh explained:

The school is in a low socio-economic community. So, there's a lot of unemployment. Parents can't find jobs because they are uneducated themselves. There's a lot of issues with social ills, like drugs, violence, domestic violence, woman abuse and child abuse. Some parents can't even pay school fees or give their children an allowance. Some parents can't read or write so they can't help their child. So, because of these issues, both the parent and the child stay away from school in that respect because they're embarrassed.

Chen, Kong, Gao and Mo (2018) reveal the socio-economic status of a family is determined by three factors, namely, the family income, the educational level of parents, and the parents' occupation. The findings from this study show that parents living in low-income communities faced unique challenges that may not be typically faced by middle-income or higher-income families based on their socio-economic status. This is in line with the findings from research conducted by Poole (2016) who asserts that parents living in low-income communities face a unique set of barriers to parental involvement based on their socio-incoming status.

The findings also showed that the poor level of education held by the parents, directly and indirectly, influenced parental involvement in education. The findings also showed that parents were unable to assist learners with educational tasks, thus, causing them to shy away or abstain from being involved in their children. Furthermore, parents who had lower levels of education were often forced to accept menial jobs or work jobs that had long hours, keeping them away from being involved in their child's education. These findings are consistent with many national and international scholars over the years (Al-Matalka, 2014; Gubbins & Otero, 2020; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Jonathan, 2012; Maluleke, 2014; Munje & Mncube, 2018; Myende & Nhlumayo, 2020; Plessis & Mestry, 2019; Poole, 2017; Thulisile, 1996).

4.4.2.5 Lack of national policy for parental involvement as a barrier

Participants emphasised the need for a formalised policy from the Department of Basic Education which provided guidelines to the principals about how to effectively promote and maintain parental involvement at their schools. According to Mr Govender, the encouragement

of parental involvement was a mammoth task. He went on to mention that a nationally implemented policy on parental involvement was needed to guide parents on how they could be involved with the schools. He explained:

Promoting parental involvement is a huge undertaking for me as a principal. To encourage parental involvement, we also need the department involved. Because when you get parents involved, we don't know how far they will go in their involvement. There's a danger that exists that, parents may overstep their mark. So, a policy should come via The Department of Basic Education simply because, like the governing bodies are told that they are involved in the administration of the school, not the professional running of the school, parents must also be told how to be involved in schools. I think that if parents are allowed without a policy in place, they will overstep their mark. And then definitely negatively impact SMT and the teachers in school and hinder how the school is run.

Due to the lack of a formally implemented parental involvement policy by the Department of Basic Education, Beta Primary School formulated and implemented its own policy for parental involvement. Mr Pillay indicated that while the school did have a policy for parental involvement, there is no way to determine if the policy is correctly formulated as there is no formal policy issued by the Department of Basic Education to guide parental involvement in schools. Mr Pillay said:

We have received no directive from the Department of Education telling schools to implement a policy for parental involvement. We as a school took it upon ourselves to create our own policy on parental involvement and we don't have any guidance to see if it is correct or not. The DBE needs to formulate a policy for parental involvement that schools can use to guide them in the creation of their own parental involvement policy.

According to Mr Singh, a nationally implemented policy on parental involvement is needed to guide parental engagements in schools. He said:

As a principal now for six years, I have not received any guidelines from the DBE speaking to parental involvement and I think there should definitely be a policy in place. The policy should be coming from the highest authorities from national down to provincial, down to districts, and then to schools. I believe it's a policy

that schools would definitely welcome. And it will definitely assist schools to engage with parents better. Resulting in better participation and communication between the school and parents

Currently, there is no nationally implemented policy in South Africa that speaks directly to enhancing and sustaining parental involvement within South African schools (Malatji, Mavuso & Stephen, 2018). The findings reveal that principals from low-income schools will welcome a departmental policy as a means of intervening and guiding them on how to enhance, facilitate and maintain parental involvement at their schools. This is in line with the findings of this study. Research conducted by Malatji, Mavuso and Stephen (2018) claimed that schools needed a policy in place to facilitate and guide the partnership between: the community, parents, and the school. However, a national policy for parental involvement may not be ideal to enhance and sustain parental involvement across all schools in South Africa. This is because each school and each community face its own unique set of issues, which requires its own uniquely formulated policy.

4.4.2.6 Language barriers as a factor impacting parental involvement

The participants identified language barriers as a factor impacting parental involvement in education. The participants suggested that language barriers created a communication barrier between the parent and the school which ultimately influences parental involvement. All the participants have revealed a break in communication when speaking to parents who speak a different language from the language of communication of the school. Mr Govender shared his challenge of communicating with non-English speaking parents, stating that information often gets lost in translation. He went on to state that non-English speaking parents excluded themselves from getting involved in education because they were not comfortable in using English as the only language of communication. He said:

Some of our learners come from outside the community and don't speak English at home. This means we can't communicate with these learners' parents properly. A lot of the time we find that messages get lost in translation and oftentimes; we find even that learners translate messages to their parents. We also see that non-English speaking parents tend to shy away from attending parents meetings; school

governing body election meetings or budget meetings because they don't understand English.

Shedding more light on the challenges of communicating with non-English speaking parents, Mr Pillay stated:

We have learners coming from black townships to our school, who can't speak English or speak very little English. The same goes for their parents. They either don't understand English or speak very little English. This makes it hard for them to help learners with their schoolwork as this is an English medium school. Also, we find it very difficult to communicate with these parents as they often can't read English and the majority of our teachers can't speak Zulu.

Mr Singh stated that is the School Governing Body members who are involved with the decision making of the language of communication and the language of teaching and learning in the school therefore the school cannot intervene to cater for non-English speaking. Mr Singh remarked:

The fact is that most African parents that send their learners to this school do not understand English, even if they do understand a little bit, we find that they cannot read English. This is a problem because the language of communication and the language of teaching and learning in English. We can't change this because the language of communication and teaching and learning is determined by the school governing body, so it is out of our hands.

Epstein (1995) highlights the importance of communication in building successful school-home partnerships. Communication is an essential component of a successful partnership. The findings from this study show that schools have a challenging time communicating with parents who are unable speak or read, the school's chosen language of communication. Consequently, this impacts parental participation within the school sphere. These findings are in line with the findings of Matshe (2014); Okeke (2014) and Poole (2016). According to Epstein (1995), involving parents in the school's decision-making process is a successful method to get parents involved in education and build a successful school-home partnership. The findings from this study show that parents who speak a different language from the language of communication of the school tended to shy away from meetings where they were able to be involved in the

decision-making processes because they did not understand the language spoken at those meetings.

These findings concurred with Poole (2016) who highlighted that due to the exclusive use of English as a medium of communication in SGB meetings, parents who do not speak English shy away from those meetings due to the language barrier. The language barrier faced by parents also impacts parental involvement within the home sphere, as parents cannot read or understand the language of teaching and learning themselves, rendering them powerless to guide their children. The findings from this study are consistent with research conducted by scholars throughout the country's democracy (Lemmer, 2007; Okeke, 2014; Poole, 2016; Singh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2004).

Evidence from data revealed that participants collectively identified the language barrier faced by parents as an obstacle to successful parental involvement. I probed the participants further to find out what they were doing at their schools to overcome this barrier. Mr Govender stated that there was no need for an intervention to assist parents in overcoming the language barrier present at Alpha Primary school, as no parent has stepped forward presenting the language of communication as an issue. Mr Govender declared:

We have multilingual educators who can help interpret and explain things to parents who are struggling to understand, however, no parent has ever stepped forward and made this an issue. So, we will just continue doing things how we always do until the need for change arises.

Mr Singh further stated that there was no need for intervention for parents who did not understand English at Delta Primary school as the school had to cater to the majority of English-speaking parents. He said:

The school does not have any other interventions for parents who can't read or understand English, because the school hasn't found itself in a situation where they need to implement other interventions. Parents are choosing to send their children to this school; we can't change the language of communication for a handful of parents because it will be unfair to the majority of parents who do speak English.

Prior to the interview, Beta Primary had no set interventions to assist parents in overcoming the language barrier. During the interview, Mr Pillay had stated that he would set in place

interventions to assist the parents who were identified as having a language barrier. Mr Pillay stated:

We don't have any set interventions, but we have teachers who can speak isiZulu; so, if a teacher is having a difficult time talking to an isiZulu-speaking parent, they just call upon their colleagues to help convey the message to the parents in their own language. When it comes to written communication, we never saw the need to translate letters for parents. However, now that you have mentioned it the school will try to identify learners whose parents don't understand English, and maybe we will translate the letters for those specific parents.

Keeping to his word, after the interview, Mr Pillay had sent the Beta Primary School's newly formulated language policy document for document review. The new policy identifies parents who face a language barrier. The parents will then receive school communication which is translated into their home language.

Language barriers to parental involvement is something that can be overcome through an initiative-taking approach as seen by Mr Pillay. Research by Ntekane (2018) suggested that initiative needs to be undertaken to translate information to the home language of the parent in order to break the language barrier. The attitudes displayed by Mr Govender and Mr Singh towards helping non-English speaking parents overcome the language barrier shows that this barrier to parental involvement will remain a barrier at their schools until these principals have a change in attitude or receive a directive from the Department of Education asking them to assist non-English speaking parents.

4.4.2.7 Bitter relationships between parents and teachers as a barrier

Participants have identified a link between poor parent-teacher relationships and poor parental involvement. According to Mr Govender, there was not much that could be done to fix poor parental involvement due to poor parent-teacher relationships at Alpha Primary School due to the limited teaching staff at the school. This is how he put it:

Sometimes parents are unhappy with the teacher; so, they don't want to get involved in school. If they're unhappy with a teacher, there's little I can do because I have a small school, and I have one class per grade. So, it's not like I have the

option of maybe switching the child to another class or switching the teacher around.

Sharing similar sentiments as Mr Govender, Mr Pillay noted that it took two willing parties to make a successful relationship, and there was not much that could be done to overcome this barrier to parental involvement. Mr Pillay explained:

Often, we find that parents don't like their child's teacher, causing the parent to make themselves uninvolved in the school or that specific teacher's subject. When it comes to relationships its tricky because it takes the willingness of two parties to make it work. Sometimes the teacher is on board with trying to mend the relationship and the parents aren't or vice versa. There's not much I can do besides stressing the importance of parental involvement at the school.

Mr Singh mentioned that there was often more tension in relationships between parents and teachers of the same sex. He explained:

From my experience what I have noticed is that some parents don't like teachers of the same sex. You'll find that the female parent gives the female teacher griefs, but she won't do that towards a male teacher. Same with men, they don't like male teachers but are okay with female teachers. This causes friction in their partnership causing parents and teachers just to stay away from each other.

According to Aslan (2016), the type of relationship shared between parents and teachers may positively or negatively influence learner outcomes. A good parent-teacher relationship leads to improved parental involvement and improved learner outcomes (Ntekane, 2018). The findings show that some parents choose to stay away from schools because of the poor relationship that exists between the teachers and themselves. Research by Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020) corroborate these findings, stating that teachers who have a negative experience with parental involvement lead to them having a negative attitude towards parents. However, a successful relationship requires effort from both parties. Findings from this study show that parents who have negative attitude towards the teachers also contributed towards the strain on the parent-teacher partnership; ultimately, leading to poor parental involvement in schools and their child's education. These findings are consistent with those of Arar, Nasra and Alshafi (2018) and Munje and Mncube (2018).

4.4.3 Strategies implemented by principals to promote the involvement of parents in primary schools situated in low-income communities

As previously highlighted, creating and managing parental involvement in schools is a part of the roles and responsibilities of a principals, therefore, principals were asked to share their views on strategies they used to promote and sustain parental involvement within their schools. This theme brings to light what is being done in schools, situated in low-income communities to encourage and maintain parental involvement. The findings from this theme indicate that all three participants used similar strategies to promote and sustain parental involvement at their schools. There were three main strategies used by the participants to promote and sustain parental involvement in their schools. These are constant communication with parents, the use of school implemented policies for parental involvement, and the creation of a welcoming and inviting environment for parents, and these are discussed below.

4.4.3.1 Frequent communication with parents as a strategy

All three participants emphasised the importance of frequently communicating with parents to encourage and maintain parental involvement in their schools. The participants believed that frequent communication with parents set the foundation to build and sustain a successful home-school relationship. All three participants used frequent communication with parents as a strategy to encourage parental involvement at their respective schools. Mr Singh highlighted the importance of communication in building a relationship and proudly mentioned all the different communication methods to relay essential information. He said:

Communication is the key to any successful relationship. We communicate with parents on a regular basis through our different channels of communication, whether it's the telephone, email, or WhatsApp. When certain important information comes in from the department, we try to make it available to our parents through the different modes of communication that we have.

Mr Govender highlighted the importance of effective communication, stating:

There has to be proper communication between the school and the parents. And teachers must be fully involved in that. Parents will understand that there is a relationship that exists between the school, the learner, the child, and them and they kept up to date. So, they become comfortable to know that they are aware of

what's happening in school, what the child is up to, and what is the school doing towards the education of the child.

According to Mr Pillay, constant communication is the main strategy used to promote and sustain parental involvement at Beta Primary. Mr Pillay explained:

I think the main strategy would be to have constant communication with the parents. And we need to communicate, we need to listen, and we need to welcome parents to be involved in the education of the child.

Participants suggest that frequent communication is a useful tool to promote and sustain parental involvement in schools. These views are supported by Epstein (1995) who claims that frequent communication between the school and the parents lays the foundation for a successful collaboration between the home and the school. Sharing similar views as those expressed by the participants, Kuusimäki, Uusitalo-Malmivaara and Tirri (2019) assert that communication is at the heart of any successful relationship. The findings further revealed that frequent communication leads to an enhancement of trust in the home-school relationship. This is in line with the findings of Gu (2017) who states that strong home-school communication enhances trust within the home-school relationship, ultimately leading to enhanced collaboration between the home and school.

The findings from this study reveal that principals did recognise the value of communication in enhancing parental involvement. However, the approach to home-school communication taking place in each school differed. As previously mentioned, all the schools have recently migrated to using WhatsApp groups as their main platform of communication. WhatsApp group settings allow administrators, one-way and two-way communication to occur. The one-way approach to communication only allows the administrator of the group to relay information to the group. The two-way approach to communication allows for a dialogue to be created between the administrators and the users. Alpha Primary and Delta Primary took on the one-way approach to communication to keep parents abreast on educational issues or developments, impacting the learner or school.

Delta Primary takes a two-way approach to communication, placing its emphasis on home-school communication on the interaction process. Mr Pillay proudly declared:

Recently in our WhatsApp programme, we found that more parents are getting involved in the education of the child. Whenever parents need more clarity on their child's work or any school-related issues, parents message the teacher directly.

Mr Singh recognised the importance of two-way home-school communication and said:

The WhatsApp group is a singular means of communication with parents. However, the school is looking into having an alternative method of communication between teacher and parent, so that parents will be able to engage with the educator in the future more freely.

Mr Govender justified his decision for only granting teachers admin power to post in their class WhatsApp groups, stating that teaching was the main responsibility of the teacher, therefore, parents should not be able to freely communicate with teachers during the school day, without making an appointment with the teacher. Mr Govender explained:

In our WhatsApp groups, only the class teacher can post on the WhatsApp groups. A staff decision was taken that even if parents message the teacher privately, they will not respond. This is because, during teaching time, teachers should not drop their responsibilities to answer to parents. If parents want to talk to the teacher, they must follow the correct channels of communication and make an appointment to see or speak to the teacher

For communication to be successful, it has to be a long-term and interactive process involving two parties (Park & Holloway, 2017). The findings revealed that each school takes a different approach to communication. This is a noteworthy point, as data reveals that in comparison to Alpha Primary and Delta Primary, Beta Primary had considerably more parental involvement at the school. These findings are in line with Epstein (1995) and Zenda (2021) who highlight the importance of two-way communication to enhance and maintain parental involvement in education.

4.4.3.2 Use of school implemented policies as a strategy for enhancing parental involvement

All participants used school implemented policies as a strategy to guide and sustain parental involvement in their respective schools. When participants were asked if there were any explicit policies speaking to parental involvement, the findings showed only 1 of the 3 schools partaking in this study had an explicit policy on parental involvement. However, data generated from interviews and document review revealed that all 3 schools did have policies indirectly speaking to parental involvement. Mr Govender stated that while there was no explicit policy for parental involvement, there were other policies at the school that talked to parental involvement. Mr Govender said:

We do not have a policy for parental involvement but we have all these other policies, that deals with parents' involvement in the school, in Code of Conduct, discipline policy, etc.

Mr Singh also indicated that there was no explicit policy for parental involvement but there were other policies that were implemented at the school which speak to issues of parental involvement at the school. Mr Singh explained:

The school does not have a specific parental involvement policy to encourage parental participation. However, in the various policies that the school currently has, whether it's to deal with the admission policy, or whether it's to deal with the sports policy or other policies in terms of learning at school, they speak about the involvement of parents. So, the participation of parents or the involvement of parents are covered in those policies and therefore, the school does not have a specific parental involvement policy.

Beta Primary was the only school partaking in the study that had a separate policy for parental involvement implemented. Mr Pillay proudly stated:

Yes, we do have a policy for parental involvement. Parents like learners need guidance on how to guide their child's educational journey; so, our policy on parental involvement acts as a guide to help guide parental involvement in their child's education. We also have other policies like our code of conduct and our homework policy that talk to parental involvement.

A policy serves as a strategic plan towards the development of parental involvement. Additionally, policies also serve as a guide to facilitate and navigate the communication and partnership between home-school (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020). Thus, making policies a significant tool towards the encouragement and sustainability of parental involvement in education. The findings reveal that the participants recognised the valuable role of policy to enhance parental involvement and schools used these policies as a strategy to involve parents within the school. Research by Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020) support the use of policy as a strategy to involve parents within the school stating that principals should introduce policies that encourage parental involvement at the school in order to improve parental involvement at the school. Malatji, Mavuso and Stephen (2018) also concur with the above views, stating that schools need to formulate a policy in place to facilitate and guide the partnership between parents and the school.

The findings from this study showed that an explicit policy for guiding parental involvement at Alpha Primary and Delta Primary school did not exist, and that the non-existence of policy did impact parental involvement at the school. This is seen in the difference of parental involvement received at Beta Primary when compared to Alpha Primary and Delta Primary. These findings are consistent with those of Zenda (2021), who indicated that the implementation of a parental involvement policy encouraged parental involvement. Literature suggests that policy is a useful tool to promote and ensure parental involvement in schools (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020; Zenda, 2021).

It is important to keep in mind that parental involvement itself is a vast concept that expands itself to many areas within education, including the school sphere, the home sphere, the learners' social and emotional development (Castro et al., 2015; Sumanasekera, Hamid, Khatibi & Azam, 2021). For this reason, school policies need to focus on all areas of parental involvement. It further became apparent upon document review that school policies need to have a multi-faceted approach to parental involvement in order to effectively enhance and sustain parental involvement. This may include having one or more policies speaking to parental involvement in education, as shown in the policies implemented within the schools of this study.

4.4.3.3 Welcoming environment as a strategy to enhance parental involvement

Participants alluded that by creating and sustaining a warm and welcoming environment towards parents, the school can positively influence the promotion and sustainability of parental involvement at their schools. Hence, the principals in this study have adopted a strategy of creating a warm and welcoming environment for parents to assist in promoting and sustaining parental involvement at their schools. Alpha Primary School sought to ensure that parents were comfortable enough to be part of the school. Mr Govender says

We make sure that we maintain a welcoming environment towards parents in this school. The teaching staff and the administrative staff in the school have been trained on how to approach parents, how to speak to parents and to be helpful. The whole goal is to make sure parents feel comfortable enough to be part of the school

Beta Primary School maintained a welcoming environment to parents, to ensure that parents could be involved as much as possible in their child's education. Mr Pillay stated:

We understand the school and the parent have joint responsibility in the educational development of the child. So, there must be this joint responsibility or participation by both parties, in the development of children. To do this we try to keep a welcoming environment so that parents as much as possible can be involved in the education of the child.

Delta Primary School created an environment that welcomes parents' thoughts and complaints. This is done to make parents feel that they are valued members of the school community and their child's educational journey. Mr Singh explained:

We try our best to make parents feel welcomed at this school. We make sure that the parents know that the school belongs to them. We welcome any suggestions and address any complaints from parents. I feel by doing this, parents feel valued and become more involved.

The findings from this study indicate that participants regarded the creation and maintenance of a welcoming environment towards parents as an essential tool to encourage and sustain parental involvement at their schools. These findings are consistent with those of Alinsunurin (2020) who stated that an inviting environment for parents must be an essential point amongst

all public-school principals. Further advocating for the creation of a welcoming environment to encourage and sustain parental involvement in schools, research by Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) highlights that schools can overcome the barrier of poor parental involvement through the creation of a welcoming environment, one which is built on mutual respect. Alinsunurin (2020) also adds that when parents feel welcomed to be a part of a school, they begin to take ownership of the school. Ultimately leading towards the school and learners being supported by parents in all their academic and non-academic endeavours.

4.5 Chapter summary

This chapter highlighted how primary school principals experienced parental involvement within the low-income community of Phoenix. Findings revealed that while the participants of this study, shared a similar understanding of the barriers to parental involvement and methods to promote and sustain parental involvement in schools, their attitudes, and approaches to overcome these barriers differed among the participants. This significantly impacted how they experienced parental involvement and the amount of parental involvement within their schools. Evidence emerging from the findings revealed the need for the implementation of formalised policy to guide parental involvement in schools to be released by the Department of Basic Education as findings showed that principals require guidance to successfully promote and sustain parental involvement at their schools. The next chapter presents the conclusions drawn from the findings presented in Chapter Four, and recommendations are made drawn from the conclusions made.

CHAPTER FIVE

STUDY SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a descriptive presentation of the data generated from the participants during the interviews process and document review process. The data was analysed, interpreted, and presented into themes and subthemes. This chapter presents and discusses the conclusions that were drawn from the findings discussed in Chapter Four. The chapter begins with a summary of the study. Conclusions based on the findings follow, and thereafter, recommendations based on the conclusions of the study are then presented. Like the previous chapters, this chapter concludes with a chapter summary.

5.2 Summary of the study

Chapter One introduces the whole study, and the chapter begins by presenting a background to the study. During this discussion, the importance of parental involvement in education is highlighted. It further discussed the current policy measures to address parental involvement highlighting a lack of policy that is aimed at promoting and sustaining parental involvement in South African schools. The background of the study further addressed the poor state of parental involvement, in education, particularly in low-income communities of South Africa. Other elements of the chapter that forms part of the orientation to the study, included the discussion of the purpose of this study, the critical research questions which framed the study and discussed the aim of this study, as well as the clarification of key terms needed to understand the findings presented in the study.

Chapter Two provided readers with a critical discussion around the concept of parental involvement. The chapter reviewed relevant, national, and international literature, discussing the conceptualisation of the term 'parental involvement.' The literature revealed that the concept of parental involvement refers to the participation of parents in education, within the home and the school. The chapter further discussed the barriers which inhibit parental involvement. Towards the end of the chapter, Epstein's (1995) model of parental involvement is discussed as a theoretical framework for analysing parental involvement in the education of

their children. The barriers identified show that there are both internal and external factors which inhibit parental involvement in education.

Chapter Three discussed issues of the research design and methodology which underpinned this study. The justification for various choices made about different elements of the research process was presented. This chapter provided explanations about issues of sampling techniques used, the data generation methods or techniques used in the production of data. The techniques used to analyse data and those used to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings were discussed. Chapter Four has given a detailed discussion of the data that emerged from the analysis. Verbatim quotes have been extensively used to locate the findings directly at the participants themselves. Chapter Five brings the study to a close, by presenting conclusions of the study based on the findings that were discussed in the previous chapter. Recommendations based on the conclusions are made to conclude the study.

5.3 Conclusions

The conclusions presented below are drawn from the findings of this study as presented in Chapter Four. These findings are directly linked to the aims and objectives, as well as the critical research questions presented in Chapter One of this study.

5.3.1 Principals experience parental involvement in primary schools situated in low-income communities

Findings from this study reveal that all participants shared similar positive experiences of parental involvement. Participants highlighted parental support in fund-raising endeavours as their only memorable positive experience of parental involvement. However, despite all three schools being situated within the same community, findings revealed each principal had a convergent negative experience of parental involvement. These negative experiences of parental involvement stemmed from perceived parental interference in the school, poor parental attitudes, and the parents' lack of trust in the school.

The findings have further shown that participants' experience of parental involvement may influence their attitudes towards parental involvement. Mr Govender's and Mr Singh's experiences of parental involvement left them with a bitter taste towards parental involvement. Such negative experiences have tended to influence their attitudes towards parental involvement. What these findings also show is that the experiences of the principals regarding

the negative aspects varied. While the two principals were negatively affected by the alleged parent's behaviours, the other one was not. One conclusion to make based on this finding is that some principals have failed to understand their responsibilities for promoting parental involvement. Instead of focusing on encouraging parents to play a positive role in the lives of their schools, they tended to be swayed by negative parental behaviours which needed their positive interventions instead of changing their attitudes to the wrong direction of negativity.

5.3.2 The contributors to parental involvement in primary schools situated in low-income communities as perceived by principals

The findings have shown that school principals are at the forefront of engaging with parents, therefore, to fully understand what the contributors of parental involvement are in low-income communities, it is important to highlight their view of what they perceive as contributors to parental involvement in low-income communities as they have the most experience dealing with parental involvement at schools. The findings have also indicated that the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated a problem that has already existed in the context of low-income communities. The findings have also indicated that to overcome the barriers introduced by COVID-19, the use of technological devices such as mobile telephones and the establishment of WhatsApp groups proved to be effective in terms of mitigating the negative effects of COVID-19. One key conclusion to be made with regards to the use of current technological devices is that COVID-19 has forced school principals to be creative and introduce a new way of doing things that will make life continue. In other words, COVID-19 has forced schools to do what they could have done years ago, but now, they find themselves having to bend backwards and do the right thing.

The other finding relates to the fact that the schools have not taken any tangible decision about how to communicate with those parents who are non-English speakers. To be more specific, isiZulu is the most spoken language in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Therefore, there is a need for schools to keep themselves abreast of the developments in terms of preparing their schools to cope with a scenario where more isiZulu speaking learners could be admitted to their schools, and their parents may want their language to be recognised in the school. The current scenario based on the documents reviewed shows is that a tiny minority of isiZulu speaking learners have been admitted in the participating schools. Therefore, isiZulu speaking parents make up a tiny minority of the school community. One conclusion to be made here is that the

participating principals have been lulled by the fact that an overwhelming majority of the learners are Indians and speak English as their home language. Because of that, they have made minimal arrangements to cater to the needs of the parents who are isiZulu speakers. Nothing has been done in this respect.

5.3.3 The strategies implemented by principals to promote the involvement of parents in primary schools situated in low-income communities

The findings have shown that principals are the key people responsible for influencing and promoting parental involvement at their schools (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020; Yulianti et al., 2020). School principals are also tasked with the obligation to promote parental involvement at their schools. The participants in this study have revealed that one of their methods used to promote and sustain parental involvement at their schools included frequent school-home communication. All three school principals used WhatsApp groups to communicate with parents more effectively. However, only one of the three schools in the study allowed for their WhatsApp groups to be used for two-way communication. All principals in the study chose a modern and technical approach towards communication, through the introduction of WhatsApp groups. This helped schools to efficiently communicate with parents thus promoting parental involvement in the affairs of the schools. A key conclusion to be made from this finding is that the strategies that principals adopted were effective and indicated that schools, despite the deprivations, are able to adjust according to the demands of the current times. The use of the current technology has proven to be effective and efficient in communicating with parents.

5.4 Recommendations

The findings of the study have indicated that principals played a role in promoting parental involvement in the education of their children. One of the key conclusions made is that these principals were able to adjust their leadership practices to the demands of the current realities. For instance, the arrival of COVID-19 has forced them to think out of the box in terms of finding a more effective and efficient way of communicating with parents. The second conclusion to be made is that principals can be creative in terms of being responsive to the current situation facing their schools.

A few recommendations should be made based on the findings. The first recommendation is that school principals need to reinforce their leadership in terms of always searching for what can work in times of difficulties. The second recommendation is that they need to further their understanding of their roles in a changing environment by engaging in personal leadership development through workshops or professional self-development by identifying leadership training courses that will assist principals in efficiently leading their schools. One example of the principals' lack of readiness for the future is that, currently, they have done nothing to cater to those parents who are isiZulu speakers. At the moment, they are not concerned about improving the parental involvement of parents from this language group. My recommendation, therefore, is that principals need to think carefully about how they can accommodate the needs of this category of parents should the demographic profile of the learner population change in the future.

5.5 Chapter summary

This study aimed to understand how principals' experience parental involvement in primary schools situated in low-income communities, to examine what principals perceive as contributors towards poor parental involvement in schools situated in low-income communities, and to explore the strategies implemented by principals to promote the involvement of parents in schools situated in low-income communities. The evidence, in the form of findings and conclusions, indicates that the aims and objectives of the study have been achieved. We now know how principals in the study have experienced collaborating with parents. The study has also identified some gaps in their strategies to improve parental involvement. For instance, the fact that the demographic profiles of their learner population have not changed since South Africa became a democracy has not prepared these principals to deal with a situation where more parents from non-English speaking parents were to become members of this school community. This is an area that the participants need to work on to sufficiently address parental involvement.

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APPENDIX A: PERMISSION LETTER TO THE KZN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

21 February 2021

Attention: The Head of Department (Dr E. Nzama)

Department of Basic Education

Province of KwaZulu-Natal

Private Bag X9137

Pietermaritzburg

3201

Dear Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

My name is Kerishka Goveder. I am a Masters student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Egdewood campus), specialising in the discipline of Educational Leadership, Management and Policy. To fulfil the requirements for my Masters degree, I am required to conduct research in educational institutions .Therefore I humbly seek permission to conduct research in three primary schools situated in the Pinetown district, which is under your jurisdiction. The title of my study is : **Exploring school principals' experiences of parental involvement in primary schools situated in low-income communities.**

The aim of this study is to understand :

- 1.How do principals experience parental involvement primary schools situated in low-income communities?
2. What do principals perceive as contributors to parental involvement in primary schools situated in low-income communities?
3. What are the strategies implemented by principals to promote the involvement of parents in primary schools situated in low-income communities?

To obtain information I will make sure of semi- structured interviews and documents review. participants and school that have agreed to participate in the study will be interviewed through zoom video conferencing or in person, in one-on-one interviews for approximately 30-60

minutes each. All interviews will be conducted at a time which convenient to them.. Documents reviewed from participating schools will be electronically collected and analyzed or physically collected, photocopied, and returned.

For further information, please you are welcomed to contact me using the following contact details: [REDACTED]; e-mail address: Kerishka.govender12@gmail.com.

My supervisor's details are as follows: Dr Bongani Nhlanhla Cyril Kenneth Mkhize, University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus) in the discipline of Educational Leadership Management and Policy. Tel: 031 260 2639; e-mail address: Mkhizeb3@ukzn.ac.za.

Regards

Date

[REDACTED]

16/02/2021

APPENDIX B: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN KZN DōE INSTITUTIONS



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
Tel: 033 3921063 / 033-3921051

Email: Phindile.duma@kzndoe.gov.za
Buyi.ntuli@kzndoe.gov.za

Enquiries: Phindile Duma/Buyi Ntuli

Ref.:2/4/8/1707

Miss K Govender
PO Box 283
Kindlewood Estates
MOUNT EDGECOMBE
4156


Dear Miss Govender

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DōE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"EXPLORING SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS SITUATED IN LOW- INCOME COMMUNITIES"**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 25 March 2021 to 01 August 2023.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma/Mrs Buyi Ntuli at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

PINETOWN DISTRICT


Dr. EY Nzama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 31 March 2021

GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER

APPENDIX C: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

Dear principal

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

I am **Kerishka Govender**, and I am conducting research as a requirement of the University of KwaZulu-Natal towards a Degree of **Master’s in Education**. The title of the research study is **“Exploring school principals experiences of parental involvement in primary schools situated in low-income communities”**

I would like to use your school as one of the research sites, and this letter intends to request your permission. The focus of the study is on exploring parental involvement through the eyes of primary school principals therefore I would like to request your participation in the study and request school documents relating to parental involvement (example, minutes of meetings, school, policies, etc). Should permission be granted, A zoom meeting will be scheduled to conduct the interview for dates and times that are convenient for you and school documents will be handled with care and returned once reviewed . Care will be taken that no disruption is caused during such interviews. Please also note that the participation in this study is voluntary, and the participant has the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequence. In addition, you are assured that details of the school and the participant will be kept confidential, and your identity will never be disclosed to anyone. For more information and questions about the study, you may contact the researcher or the research supervisor on the following details:

Researcher: **Kerishka Govender** [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Email: **kerishka.govender12@gmail.com** Supervisor: **Dr. Mkhize** Tel No.: **0312601398**
Email: **mkhizeb3@ukzn.ac.za**

You may also contact the Research Office : Address: **HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION Research Office, Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building Private Bag X 54001, Durban 4000, KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA**

Tel: **031 2604557**

Fax: **031 2604609**

Email: **HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za**

Thanking you in advance.

Yours in Educat[REDACTED]

APPENDIX C: REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH

Dear participant

REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH

I am *Kerishka Govender* and I am conducting a research as a requirement at the University of KwaZulu-Natal towards a Degree of Masters in Education. The title of the research is **“Exploring school principals experiences about parental involvement in primary schools situated in low-income communities.”**.

The objectives of this study are:

- 1.** To understand how Principals leading primary schools in low-income communities experience parental involvement in their schools.
- 2.** To examine what Principals in low-income communities’ schools, perceive as contributors to parental involvement in their schools.
- 3.** To examine the strategies implemented by Principals in low-income communities’ schools, to promote the involvement of parents at schools.

The study will focus on how primary school principals experience parental involvement at their schools. This letter intends to elucidate the purpose of the study and to request your participation in the study.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person but reported only as a population member opinion.
- The interview may last for about 30 minutes to a 1 hour and may be split into two parts depending on your preference.
- School documents (such as minutes of meetings, policies, etc.) relating to parental involvement will be requested.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.

undesirable consequence. I am also aware that there are neither any foreseeable direct benefits nor direct risks associated with my participation in this study. I therefore understand the contents of this letter fully and I do **GIVE CONSENT / DO NOT GIVE CONSENT** for the interviews to be digitally recorded.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX E : INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1.1 Interview Schedule (Semi-structured interview themes and questions)

Theme 1: Culture of parental involvement

- 1.What do you understand by the term ‘parental involvement’?
- 2.What is the culture of parental involvement at your school?

Theme 2: Principals experiences of parental involvement

- 1.Tell me about your positive experiences of dealing with parental involvement at your school?
- 2.What are some of the challenges you have experienced when dealing parental involvement at your school?
- 3.How do you overcome the challenges mentioned above?

Theme 3: Factors that contribute to increased/decreased parental involvement in schools

- 1.What are factors which contribute to increased/decreased parental involvement in your school?
- 2.How do these factors positively impact the school, teachers, and learners?
3. How do these factors negatively impact the school, teachers, and learners?

Theme 4: Parenting

- 1.Are there any other services that the school offers/provides exclusively for parents? (such as parent education courses, family support programmes, nutrition programmes, etc)

Theme 5: Communication between the schools and the parents

- 1.How do you communicate with parents?
- 2.Has this method proved to be effective?
- 3.How do parents communicate with teachers and you?
- 4.Has this method proved to be effective?
- 5.What is the main reason for communication between the school and parents?

6. What support structures or alternative means are made to assist parents who are unable, to read written communications/ understand the language of written or verbal communication/ attend parent meetings?

Theme 6: Volunteering

1. Does your school allow for parent volunteers?
2. Are parent volunteers used in the classroom or at school events?
3. How are parent volunteers used in the classroom or at school events?
4. Does the school make use of skills/ services that parents may possess/provide?

Theme 7: Learning at home

1. Are parents provided with a copy of the school homework policy?
Are parents guided on how to monitor homework tasks?
2. Does the school provide support for parents who want to assist their child with learning but is unsure how to proceed?

Theme 8: Decision-making

1. How are parents' involvement the school's decision- making processes?
2. Apart from the schools governing body, are parents given any other opportunity to be a part of the school's decision-making processes?

Theme 9: Collaborating with the community

1. Describe the partnership shared between the school and the community?
2. Does the school serve the community in other way other than its educating children?

Theme 10: Strategies/policies implemented to promote the involvement of parents in schools

1. What are strategies/policies used to encourage parental involvement your school?
2. What strategies/policies are used to sustain parental involvement at your school?
3. Who participates in the development of strategies/policies, to encourage and sustain parental involvement at your school?

4.How successful are the current implemented strategies/policies to encourage and sustain parental involvement at your school?

5. What is the reasoning behind your answer above?

6.Before summing up, what more would you like to share that will help me advance my study.

APPENDIX F: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS TABLE

Table guiding the process and data capturing of document analysis.

Document analysis	
Type of document (minutes of meeting or policy)	
Physical characteristics of the document (electronic document, handwritten document, typed document, etc)	
Author(s) of the document	
Date of document	
Topic of document	
What are the main points expressed in the document?	

APPENDIX G: TURNITIN CERTIFICATE

K.Govender- Dissertation on parental involvement

ORIGINALITY REPORT

7 %	7 %	2 %	0 %
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	hdl.handle.net Internet Source	2 %
2	scholarworks.waldenu.edu Internet Source	1 %
3	scholars.wlu.ca Internet Source	1 %
4	bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com Internet Source	<1 %
5	www.tandfonline.com Internet Source	<1 %
6	erepository.uonbi.ac.ke Internet Source	<1 %
7	ro.ecu.edu.au Internet Source	<1 %
8	repository.stcloudstate.edu Internet Source	<1 %
9	Anniza de Villiers, Nelia P. Steyn, Catherine E. Draper, Jillian Hill et al. "Implementation of the HealthKick intervention in primary schools"	<1 %