

TITLE: PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION IN
THE VHEMBE DISTRICT: LIMPOPO

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DECLARATION

I Maluleke G S declare that * A STUDY OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION IN VHEMBE DISTRICT; LIMPOPO* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE 

DATE 15-12-2014

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my father (JUZA JULIUS BVUMA) and my mother (MTHAVINI RHANGANI BVUMA). Again, I dedicate it to my lovely husband J K MALULEKE and our two lovely sons MAKUNGU and AMUKELANI. Lastly, to my brother GEORGE and sister JOYCE.



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ABSTRACT

This research is undertaken in Vhembe region in Limpopo Province. Many researchers, on the subject of 'parent involvement', have conducted in-depth research; this means parental involvement is not a new term. According to St John and Griffith (1997:48-52), there are important benefits that teachers, learners and parents derive from parents' participation in school programmes and activities such as healthy communication, generation of interest and building positive self-esteem and confidence, to mention but a few while their children attending school during pre-primary, primary and secondary level. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether parents in Vhembe District involved themselves in the education of their children.

The population of a study included three schools in Vhembe, six parents from each sampled schools, six teachers from sampled schools and each principal from sampled schools. The purposeful sampling technique was used to select the participants. The findings are briefly that:

- Few parents indicated their appreciation of parental involvement by suggesting ways in which they could become involved, it was clear that a developmental programme should be introduced to motivate parental involvement;
- It also came to the attention of the researcher that most of the parents did not attend school meetings because of lack of proper communication;
- Parents were silent about the monitoring and supervision of their children's work while they are at home, which can result in better academic performance. Parents should have high expectations for their children's future and academic achievement.
- It emerged from the interviews that many factors present barriers to parental involvement; like parents' limited education, economic status, lack of a school policy, poor communication and teachers' attitude towards parents.

Recommendations

- From the conclusions drawn above, it is recommended that parental involvement workshops be organised for school managers, school teachers and parents.
 - To improve parents' attendance of school meetings, teachers should provide them with an opportunity to communicate their expectations and concerns.
 - In relation to parents' role in their children's education, parents should be motivated to ensure that their children accomplish their goals.
 - Parents should be empowered with skills of self-confidence, so that they will realise that their children have potential.
 - Schools should encourage parents to play an important role as partners in their children's education.
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CHAPTER ONE: PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

When schools, parents, children and other stakeholders come together and build a good relationship where they will support each other in order to achieve a common goal, namely effective teaching and learning, then children can succeed in school. Parents' involvement in schools helps parents to discover their potential, which they can use for the benefit of their children. Consistent findings have emerged from various researchers (Christenso & Sheridan, 2001; Desforgers & Aberto, 2003; Epstein, 1995a, 1987) regarding parental involvement in schools, such as the fact that it improves student academic achievement, student attendance of school, and student behaviour at school, as well as leading to increased community support for schools, including human, financial and material resources (Dekker et al, 1996:154).

Parental involvement in their children's education appears to be a constant in children's academic achievement and social adjustment. Although many parents may not be certain how to help their children with assignments, guidance and support, they can be actively involved in home learning activities, as well as having an opportunity to teach, be a role model, and guide their children (Dekker et al., 1996:57). According to Keane (2007:11), parental involvement improves the chances of children's success at school. A recent report conducted by the National School Public Relation Association (2005:44) showed that enhanced parental involvement leads to better academic performance, better school attendance, and improved behaviour of children at home and in school. The South African School Act (Act 84 of 1996) gives all stakeholders the mandate to participate in the governance and management of the school. In this Act, the mandate presents principals, teachers, parents, learners and all community members with the harmonious task of changing traditionally authoritarian institutions into democratic centres where everyone participate actively in the decision making process (Mosoge & Van der Westhuizen, 1997:196).

In terms of the South African School Act (Act 84 of 1996), the word 'parent' can be defined as the parent or guardian of a learner, the person legally entitled to custody of a learner, or

the person who undertakes to fulfil the obligations of a parent with regard to the learner's education at school. According to Dekker and Eleanor (1993:153), parental involvement is an all-embracing term that is used to describe a wide variety of activities that range from occasional attendance at school functions to intensive efforts to help parents become better teachers of their children.

According to Vandergrift and Greene (1992:57), there are two key elements that works together to arrive at the concept of parental involvement. One of these is a level of commitment to parental support, which includes encouraging the student, being sympathetic, reasoning and understanding. The other element is the level of parental activity and participation, such as doing something that is observable. Parents are the primary educators of their children. In terms of the South African School Act (Act 84 of 1996), the term 'school' refers to a public or independent school which enrolls learners from grade R to grade 12. Parents are not certain about how to play a more active role in their child's education. Collaboration between the schools and parents is unsatisfactory, as both blame each other - parents blame the school for not involving them when the implementation of curriculum 2005 started, while the schools blame parents for moving far away from the school, and for not attending meetings to which they are invited.

According to the principles of family law, parents are obliged to maintain, protect and care for their children. They were required to accept responsibility for the physical and emotional needs of their children and to raise their children in such a way that they can adapt to society and participate successfully in its activities. Parents are obliged to protect the fundamental rights of their child to education, food, clothing, shelter, and health care. Parents should understand the needs and goals of the school, and their involvement can range from occasional attendance of school functions to membership of parent-teacher organisations and school governing bodies. A parent who sees the school as an instrument for the achievement of his or her children is usually significantly involved in schools (Van Der Westhuizen, 2002:24). In most cases, we find that cultural sensitivity is extremely relevant to the assumptions made about the home.

1.2 EXPLANATION OF CONCEPTS AND RELATED TERMS

Parental involvement- this refers to the participation of parents in a wide range of school-based and home-based activities in order to improve their children's education.

Parent- the researcher will define the word "parents" as part of the research topic. Parent is not just a term to describe a person who has the legal rights of a mother or a father. Browner & Gordon (2009:161) define the term 'parent' as one which has expanded and broadened to include not only those individuals who are raising their own biological children, but also those who are raising the children of their family members.

Vhembe District- According to Ndou (2011:11), the Vhembe district is one of the five Department of Education districts in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. It is located in the North of the Limpopo Province near the Limpopo River, which borders Zimbabwe and South Africa.

School- Du Plooy, Gressel and Oberholzer (1987:164) define a school as an institution entrusted exclusively with education. It should take on only those social purposes that can be converted easily and naturally into educational goals and activities.

Van der Westhuizen (1996:405) refers to a school as a place of tuition and learning, an open system established to meet the educational and training needs of the community at large. A school is not an independent or isolated entity - it operates in a social context, usually in a local community.

1.3 FORMULATION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

There is a significant shortage of parental involvement at pre-primary, primary and secondary schools in the Vhembe District, which may be negatively affecting children's academic progress. Children whose parents do not participate in their schooling do not benefit as much academically and socially as those children whose parents do participate (Christenson, 1995; Epstein, 1987; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Powell, 1989; USDE, 2005). Children are continuing to absent themselves from school and drop out. Rumberger et al. (1990:63) found that parents of students who dropped out rarely attended their children's school functions or assisted their children with completing their homework.

In addition, these parents were the least likely to punish their children for achieving poor grades. The South African School Act 84 of 1996 provides for parental involvement because it states that “parents are obliged to bring their children to school from the first school day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of four and half”. Today, parents are regarded as equal partners in education and it is strongly acknowledged that parents should be involved in schools, as their contribution is of significant benefit (Schoenfeld, 2002:64).

1.3.1. Main research question

1.3.1.1 To what extent are parents involved in the education of their children in the Vhembe district?

1.3.2 Sub-questions

1.3.2.1 What strategies should school managers use to involve parents in schools in the Vhembe district?

1.3.2.2 What are parents’ attitudes towards the education of their children in schools in the Vhembe district?

1.3.2.3 What role do parents play in the education of their children in schools in the Vhembe district?

1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY

- To determine the extent to which parents in the Vhembe district are involved in the education of their children.

1.4.1 Objectives of the study

- To equip school managers with skills for designing strategies that will assist in involving parents in the education of their children in the Vhembe district.
- To determine the attitude of Vhembe parents towards the education of their children.
- To determine the roles and duties of Vhembe parents in the education of their children.

1.5 PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study may benefit school managers seeking to enhance parental involvement in the education of their children. Parents will also benefit because they will have a better understanding of the importance of their involvement in the education of their children.

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature on new developments in the field of comparative education suggests, among other things, a greater role for parental involvement. Parental involvement and support also have a profound influence on the culture of learning and teaching (Eccles and Herold, 1998:11). The school itself cannot alone rekindle the culture of learning and teaching, and therefore needs the help of parents. According to the U.S Department of Education (2000) research findings, "Children's success in reading comprehension is directly related to the availability of reading materials in the home children need positive encouragement in the form of praise and reward effect". Most parents claim that they are unable to provide the kind of education that children need because of high educational expectations. In this regard, the literature emphasises that developmental programmes for parental involvement and motivation should be emphasised.

Christie (2008:211) indicates that the drop-out-rate for black children is much higher than that for white children. Far more whites go to university than blacks. According to Clausen (as cited by Solomon, 1976: 288), "transmitting knowledge norms and values along with the orientation and motivational underpinnings that this requires, and recruiting or channelling people into programs of preparation for social position allocated on the basis of achievement" of the opinion that of illiterate, schools should develop programmes that reduce the distance between the two. These programmes will empower parents and reframe their attitudes. If their attitudes improve, the learners (children) will also do the same when it comes to their children's education. By addressing the problem, children will be less likely to drop out of school early, and "parents have a duty to protect the children against any activities that will either take up too much of the time that should be devoted to study and homework or will distract them from communication on their school work"(Le roux, 1994: 192).

Effective teaching and learning in school can only take place if the teacher, learner and parent involve themselves in the process, especially the parent, who is the main investor in the process. Christie (2008:211) indicates that the dropout rate for black children is much higher than the dropout rate for white children. As previously mentioned, the South African School Act no. 84 of 1996 provides for parental involvement in schools. Harris (1992:131) and Van Schalkwyk (1990) have revealed that "parent involvement has a significant effect on the quality of the learners, experience of teaching and learning in the school and also on their results. Without cooperation between the parent and the educator the child cannot be sufficient educated. The parent and the educator each have a special and important role to play in the education of the child". When schools, families and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school for longer, and like school more.

The literature review indicates that parents need to be discouraged from believing that they are not capable and that they should be capacitated in terms of exemption from school fees, as stipulated in the South African School Act no. 84 of 1996.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology used by the researcher for this study is the qualitative research approach, since this will help the researcher to interact with the participants in real-life settings, where they can express their views and perceptions (Des Vos, 2002: 80). The qualitative research method is first concerned with understanding social phenomena from participants' perspective, by analysing many contexts of participants and by narrating participants' understanding of their situations and events (Schumacher, 2001: 166). According to Mouton (2003:56), research methodology focuses on the process and types of tools and procedures to be used by the researcher.

1.7.1. Data collection

According to Stake (2010:90), in qualitative research, data collection includes observation, interviews, photographs, texting, documentary review and gathering of artefacts. In this study, the researcher will use interviews to collect data from the sampled participants. Individual, group, semi-structured and structured interviews will be conducted.

1.7.2. Sampling

Leedy and Omrod (2001:150) define sampling as the process of selecting a smaller sample from the larger population group, in order to estimate or predict the prevalence of an unknown piece of information or situation within the larger group. According to Babbie (2005:163), the sampling process is purposive, with the aim of generating “insight and depth understanding” (Patton, 2002:230) in relation to the population of interest. This sample will not enable the researcher to claim that what is true for the convenience sample is also true for the population (Punch, 1998:48).

1.8 Delimitation of the study

The researcher determined that no study on parental involvement in the Vhembe District had t been done yet. This study focused on the three levels of schooling, namely pre-primary, senior primary and secondary schools. The schools targeted to form part of this study are located in Mpheni and Makhado municipalities in the Limpopo Province. They form part of the schools that fall under the Vhembe District. These schools all serve the rural community.

1.9 CHAPTER DIVISION

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This chapter will focus on the introduction and background to the research topic, statement of the problem, research questions, aims of the study , literature review, research design and research methodology (sampling procedures , research instruments), as well as providing a definition of key terms.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Relevant sources on the research topic will be chosen and reviewed in this chapter, including books, articles, and policy documents, such as the South African School Act 84 of 1996 and the Constitution of South Africa. This chapter will review the definitions of parental involvement, as well as exploring the historical background to this issue and the aims of the research. According to Squelch and Lemmer (1994:93) and Dekker (1993:155),

parental involvement refers to the participation of parents in a wide range of school-based and home-based activities, in order to improve their children's education.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the researcher will discuss the data collection process that was followed in this study, which used qualitative research methodology. The two research instruments that were used in this study to collect will be reviewed, namely focus group discussions and structured interviews.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The results of the study will be analysed in this chapter by focusing on the post-test rather than the pre-test, due to the fact that the post-test includes a larger population. In addition, the background to parents' involvement, as well as their educational level and socioeconomic status, will be considered as factors in this analysis. The reliability and validity of the test results will be measured using the instruments that are relevant to the study.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, the researcher will summarise the main findings of the study and make recommendations to improve parental involvement in their children's education in the future.

1.10. CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an introduction to the issue of parental involvement, and included an explanation of key concepts, the problem statement, research questions, and aims of the study. A preliminary literature review was also provided, as well as discussing the research methodology used in the study, purpose and significance of the study, delimitation of the study, and division of chapters.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement is an important issue that positively influences children's education. More and more schools are aware of the importance of parental involvement and are encouraging families to become more involved. Due to this recent trend, it has become essential to understand what is meant by parental involvement and in what ways it has an influence on children's education. This review of the literature will examine parental involvement from the following perspectives: nature of parental involvement, positive effects of parental involvement, barriers, strategies to enhance parental involvement, and common characteristics of parental involvement programmes

2.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

Research on parental involvement in their children's education has been done in some areas, but not yet in the Vhembe District of Limpopo. From the history of education, we have learned that throughout the world, parents have been informally involved in the education of their children (Berger, 1983:3). Children were taught rules and regulations, both as a family member and for society as a whole. Berger (1983:4) adds that children were also educated about the various processes they needed to follow in order to get their food. Parents have been always been called the primary educators because they are involved in the education of their children from birth. Baloyi (2006:13) indicates that children learn from their parents and are reminded that they will one day be adults.

Today, we have formal education, where school districts focus on implementing strategies to promote parent, family and community involvement (National Centre for School Engagement, 2004). The Family Strengthening Policy Center (2004) indicates that states can develop a state-wide network to support teachers' preparation for parental involvement, and also provide technical assistance to local districts and schools on how to get parents involved. School districts must have a written policy for administrative support and training for staff, parents and community members on parental involvement programmes.

The community should be able to, in collaboration with state education agencies and school districts, promote widespread and effective parental involvement policies and practices. Although the success of school-family partnerships is difficult to measure, it is important to note that the benefits to children and their educational success depend on hard work, which is required to sustain school-family partnerships (Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders & Simon, 1997:99).

Sylvia (2004:32) indicates that in line with the mandates of NCLB, the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) has developed state-wide standards which establish expectations for all New Mexico public schools. These standards require every district in New Mexico to develop an Education Plan for Student Success (EPSS) — a long-range strategic plan to promote children's success and continuous school improvement.

In a study conducted by Trewby (in Siririka, 2007:27), it was found that parents with limited or no education may have the will to help their children, but are constrained because they are convinced that they are incapacitated by their limited school education to help their children with their learning. Lemmer and Van Wyk (2004:261) and Phendla (2004:167) confirm this situation with regard to another developing country, namely South Africa. On the other hand, in developed countries such as Japan and the United States of America, parents generally participate confidently in their children's education because they are sufficiently educated to help their children with their schooling (Holloway et al., 2008:2).

Lack of parental involvement in the Vhembe district of Limpopo in the three public schools manifests itself in various ways. Parents of pre-school aged children only send them to school during the last quarter of the year, and some parents do not even send their children to school. Many senior primary and secondary school children are moving around Elim complex, a place which they call "Shihundleni" (hidden place), as well as Sweet Waters, where they drink alcohol during school hours. Traditionally, lack of parental involvement has been dominant among black parents because of their illiteracy and ignorance (Ndlazi, 2005:66). Parents in this area are affected by socio-economic factors, whereby they leave their children alone on school days to go to work and return home over weekends. Most parents are working on farms, while others are working in the town of Makhado as domestic workers or in the Gauteng Province, and others are gambling. Ndlazi (1998:58)

argues that “the government indirectly encourages non-parental involvement by Acts of Parliament like the Planning and Utilization of Resources Act of 1967. This Act, coupled with Border Industries and Apartheid Policies and other Acts, made it possible for parents not to be involved in the education of their children”. The researcher agrees with her because during that period, parents started to be afraid of disciplining their children and shrank away from exercising control in the education of their children.

2.3 THE MEANING OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

According to Vandergrift and Greene (2001: 57), there are two key elements that make up the concept of parental involvement. One of them is a level of commitment to parental support. This includes things such as encouraging the student, being sympathetic, reasoning and understanding. The other element is a level of parental activity and participation, such as doing something that is observable. “This combination of level of commitment and active participation is what makes an involved parent” (La Bahn, 1995:62).

The term ‘parental involvement’ is not a new term - it has been studied by numerous researchers. Defining parental involvement in their children’s education may vary in respect of the area or community in which the researcher lives. Myeko (2000:12) refers to parental involvement as a process through which parents meaningfully participate in the various educational activities of their children. Nye et al (2006:1) define parental involvement as “the effective engagement with their child outside of the day in an activity which centers on enhancing academic performance”. They emphasise activities out of the school, such as trips to the zoo where the child is learning something, or when parents play games with their children.

Dekker and Lemmer (1993:153) define parental involvement as an all-embracing term that is used to describe a wide variety of activities that range from occasional attendance at school functions to intensive effort to help parents become better teachers of their children. Parental involvement activities have also been represented as existing along a single continuum that extends from home-based activities to school-based activities, and finally to home-school collaboration (Shores, 1998:79). At one end of the continuum are at-home activities, such as reviewing report cards, ensuring school attendance, and monitoring

homework. Shores' (2004: 13) use of the phrase "limited capacity for involvement" implies that some parents do not have the ability, resources or time for more involvement, and that these activities are not as important for children's success. In the middle are traditional at-school activities, such as attending parent-teacher conferences and volunteering. At the other end are more collaborative at-school activities, such as planning classroom activities with teachers and participating in policy-making activities. These activities give parents more power and influence over how the school is run.

According to this viewpoint, the researcher explores parental involvement as the interrelationship between parents, teachers, learners and the community at large, in order to motivate, support, encourage and participate more actively in school activities, including curriculum support, extra-mural activities, helping children with homework, and supporting parents by creating a positive home school environment. Parental involvement in their children's education is a shared responsibility, in which the school and other community agencies and organisations are committed to becoming involved in meaningful ways, and parents are committed to actively supporting their children's learning and development (Ngwenya, 2010:17).

Finally, Epstein (1995:123) provides a more complex definition of parental involvement. Epstein and her colleagues are working to develop an empirically validated, multidimensional description of parental involvement (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Epstein, 1986; Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Epstein (1995:127) integrates her six types of parental involvement into a categorical model of parental involvement, which has been commended for being well-defined and comprehensive (Georgiou, 1997; Kohl et al., 2000). Epstein's six types of parental involvement incorporate school-based involvement, home-based involvement and home-school communication.

Epstein's (1995:128) first type of parental involvement is parenting. Parents can support their children's school success by providing a home environment that fosters readiness to learn, by rearing children in positive ways, providing them with healthcare and nutritious meals, and ensuring regular school attendance (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Eccles & Harold, 1996; Epstein, 1984, 1987a; Moles, 1993). This type is analogous to Grolnick and Slowiaczek's (1994:43) model of personal resources. Parents' resources not only include the

behavioral resources described by Epstein's first type, but also personal resources, such as parents' positive attitude, caring, and expectations regarding the school and learning. Dollahite et al. (1998:15) added to this by identifying seven areas of parental involvement. Home-school communication is Epstein's (1995:15) second type of parental involvement. Parent-teacher conferences are the most typical form of communication between home and school (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Shores, 1998). These conferences provide an opportunity for parents and teachers to discuss students' progress and problems, and allow parents to inform teachers of family experiences that may support learning.

Home-school notes are another effective way for teachers to communicate with parents (Becker & Epstein, 2000:56). Teachers may also send student folders home that contain work for parents to review or information about school activities (Becker & Epstein; Eccles & Harold, 1996; Epstein, 1984, 1987a; Moles, 1993). Additional communication strategies include parent observation in the classroom to see how instruction is conducted, and parents' collaboration with the teacher to plan classroom activities (Becker & Epstein; Moles). Epstein's (1995:130) third type of parental involvement is volunteering. Parents help and support schools by volunteering in classrooms, attending sporting events and concerts, and helping with fundraising activities (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Eccles & Harold, 1996; Epstein, 1984, 1987a; Moles, 1993). Moreover, while parents are at the school attending performances or sporting events, teachers can talk with them about other volunteering opportunities, their child's progress, or important school information (Epstein, 1987b). Parents' presence at school strengthens school programmes and lets children know that school plays an important role in their lives.

Hara and Burke (1998:23) define "Parental involvement as families and communities who take an active role in creating a caring educational environment". They further assert that parents who are involved with their children's education are those who consistently demonstrate good parenting skills, communicate with the school staff, volunteer their time in the school, play an active role in school-related decision-making, and regularly collaborate with the school community.

Research suggests that parental involvement appears to affect all levels of academic achievement, including children's GPA, standardised test scores and homework compliance.

Jeynes (2003:202) asserts that parental involvement positively affects the academic achievement of minority children, as well as facilitating better grades, higher test scores, regular school attendance, better social skills, improved behaviour, more positive attitudes towards school, completed homework assignments, graduation and continued education.

Furthermore, Jeynes (2003:34) examined specific components of parental involvement. He found that with minority students, aspects of parental involvement that are less visible, such as parenting style and the expectations that parents have for their child's achievement, had a greater impact on positive educational outcomes for children than some of the more visible aspects of parental involvement, such as having rules, and parent attendance and participation at school functions.

2.4 THE NATURE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Various studies have shown that active parental involvement in their children's education decreases as the children become older (Sirvani, 2007; Richardson, 2009). For instance, according to Shaver and Walls (in Henderson and Mapp, 2002:25), parents of elementary school children are more likely to be involved with their children's education than parents of children in secondary school. Senler and Sungur (2009:46) concur and their study findings suggest a significant difference in terms of self-concept, task value and parental involvement between children in primary school and those in secondary school. They also found that as the children grew older, parental involvement declined.

Other studies and reports show the same pattern. For instance, according to statistics of the National Center for Education in the United States (in Sirvani, 2007:16), parental activity and involvement decreases the older their children become. As an example, in the years 1996 and 1999, 86% of parents with children in primary schools in America had at least one meeting with their children's teacher, while only 50% of parents with children in secondary school had at least one meeting with the teacher. As has been indicated above, the nature of parental involvement in the Vhembe District of Limpopo it decline because parents are not actively involved in their children's education.

The report, a synthesis of research on parent involvement over the past decade, also found that, regardless of family income or background, children with involved parents are more likely to:

- Earn higher grades and test scores, and enrol in higher-level programmes
- Be promoted, pass their classes, and earn credits
- Attend school regularly
- Have better social skills, show improved behaviour, and adapt well to school
- Graduate and go on to post-secondary education.

Children or learners' dropout rates and absenteeism continue to be a concern. Willis (1986) suggests various reasons why children drop out from secondary school, namely: a) poverty level, b) academic performance, c) attitude towards school, d) school attendance, and e) family support. In recent years, researchers have found that parental involvement is associated with assisting children to matriculate.

High school children whose parents are actively involved with their schooling have a higher rate of matriculation than those whose parents are passively involved. Moreover, children whose parents are involved in their schooling have higher aspirations for obtaining a bachelor's degree (Miedel, 2004; Trusty, 1999). Rumberger et al. (1990:112) found that parents of students who dropped out rarely attended their children's school functions or assisted their children with completing their homework. In addition, these parents were the least likely to punish their children for making poor grades. Parental involvement is pertinent on all grade levels and with all ethnicities. An effective form of involvement is presented by Epstein's model. Epstein (2001:92) discusses how children learn and develop through three overlapping "spheres of influence:" family, school and community. These three spheres must form partnerships in order to best meet the needs of the child.

Epstein defines six types of involvement based on the relationships between the family, school and community: parenting (skills), communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. Epstein emphasises that all of these

six types of involvement need to be included in order to have successful partnerships. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995:74) original theoretical model of why parents become involved included two levels. The first level was comprised of the three factors that contribute to the decision to become involved (role-construction, self-efficacy and invitations), as described above. The second level was comprised of factors that contribute to the parents' choice of involvement activities.

Hoover-Dempsey, Sandler and colleagues have revised this model (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). The revised model combines these two levels into one level consisting of three factors: 1) Parents' motivational beliefs, including role construction and self-efficacy; 2) Perceptions of invitations from others, including invitations from the school, teacher and child; and 3) Perceived life context, including time, energy, skills and knowledge. The parents' perceived time, energy, skills and knowledge are now viewed as contributing to decisions to become involved. Moreover, the importance of life context variables within the family culture has been recognised.

The lowest rates of parental involvement are found in economically disadvantaged, less-educated and ethnic minority families (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988; Ho, 2002; Moles, 1993). In one study, 209 third of fifth-grade children, their mothers and their 28 teachers rated the mother's involvement at school and home (Grolnick et al., 1997:75). Parent, teacher and child rating scales measured how frequently parents attended school events, such as parent-teacher conferences and activities. Parent and child rating scales described the parent's cognitive involvement with her children, such as going to the library and talking about current events. Finally, parent and child rating scales described the parent's knowledge about her children's school activities, such as knowing what they do in school and who their friends are. Results showed significantly less involvement at school and with home activities by parents of a lower socioeconomic status (SES) and single-parent mothers than by parents of a higher SES and married parents.

Another effective form of involvement presented by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995:66) includes out of school or home-based partnerships, as well as school-based activities with parents and children. They indicate that when parents become involved by

going to school events and helping with homework, children's schooling is benefited. Benefits include knowledge, skills and confidence. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995:68) original theoretical model as to why parents become involved included two levels.

The first level was comprised of the three factors that contribute to the decision to become involved (role-construction, self-efficacy and invitations), as described above. The second level was comprised of factors that contribute to the parents' choice of involvement activities.

The Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) (2006:49) believes that children must have a range of learning environments available to them, or complementary learning. Such learning environments include family, early childhood programmes, schools, out-of-school programmes and activities, libraries, museums, and other community-based institutions. HFRP believes that complementary learning will provide a link between consistent learning and development. This linkage is similar to that of Epstein's (2001:86) spheres of influence. The HFRP's linking of community and Epstein's spheres of influence are similar, in that they each incorporate community, school and family, so that these elements influence one another.

In Cotton's (2001:51) book entitled *The Schooling Practices That Matter Most*, there are signs that the most effective forms of parental involvement are those where parents work directly with their children. Programmes that show the most effective results include tutoring, doing homework with children, and reading with children. These active forms of parental involvement have had a greater impact on achievement than passive forms of involvement. Passive forms of parental involvement, however, have still been shown to improve children's achievement, so they are better than no parental involvement at all.

The book also shows another effect of parental involvement, which occurs when the parent intervenes in his or her children's education at an early stage. The earlier in a child's life the parents become involved, the greater the effects will be on the child's educational process. The effectiveness of this approach has been shown through various childhood education programmes such as Head Start. According to a study conducted by Reutzell and Cooter (1996:19), positive effects were shown to increase when choices were provided to the

parents. The schools that offered a variety of ways for parents to get involved had an increased effect on student achievement. Giving parents various methods or activities to involve them in their children's lives increased the willingness and ability of parents to become involved. This increase in parental involvement has been shown to have a consistent, positive relationship with students' achievement and development at school.

Despite the fact that the vast majority of parents surveyed in 2007 said that they felt themselves to be at least fairly involved in their child's education, some parents faced particular challenges in becoming involved. Two-thirds of the parents agreed that they would like to get more involved in their child's school life. Parents who felt less involved were also those who wanted to get more involved, particularly non-resident parents and those who abandoned full-time education at an early age. However, many parents who already felt very involved in their children's education also expressed a desire for greater involvement (especially those in non-White ethnic groups and those whose first language was not English).

2.4.1. Cultural and educational background to parental involvement

These days, the changing structure of the family affects parental involvement and children's achievement. According to Lee (1991:21), the structure of the family has undergone significant changes over the past thirty years, and as a result of this, it is clear that many children experience multiple family structures due to the transitory nature of the modern family. Students who have complete families may have problems that affect parental involvement, but according to Motsinger (1990:63), "having two parents will give a student a 200% better chance at success in school." This does not mean that students who do not have two parents cannot succeed, but they have a more difficult time and may have to work harder in order to succeed.

The cultural background affects the relationship between home and school. As indicated by Rudnitski (1992:15), "parents from racial, ethnic and cultural minorities, especially those of low socioeconomic status, tend to feel less affinity for the school than those in the mainstream middle class". This shows that schools in the United States have different values

to those of the family, as well as the inability to communicate effectively with culturally diverse families.

Furthermore, Rudnitski (1992:36) and Lontos (1991:47) write that low-income, culturally different parents have traditionally been marginalised through an inability to communicate with schools and the inflexibility of the school as an institution. This tradition has fostered feelings of inadequacy, failure and poor self-worth, which are cited as reasons for the low participation of parents from marginalised groups. It is proven in this study that these traditions of ineffective communication and cultural differences are among the factors that prevent parents from becoming involved in their children's education.

Students cannot expect parental support in their home schooling when their parents are not literate. As stated by Liu (1996:20), "Students' academic performance at school is closely related to the family literacy environment and their parents' educational levels". Children need families that can provide literacy-rich environments, which often foster readers' success in school (Edwards, 1995:72). Unfortunately, not all children can have such an environment at home because many parents have an inadequate education and are therefore unable to provide academic support for their children. This issue is most prevalent among parents whose English proficiency and educational level is low (Liu, 1996:173). Parents who dropped out of school often did so in order to support the family or care for siblings. Limited schooling impairs parental support with homework beyond the primary school level. This problem is compounded when the dominant language in the home conflicts with assignments in English (Finders and Lewis, 1994:133). If parents are not literate, they cannot assist their children with school work at home.

Ascher's (1988:16) study focused on educational barriers that affect parental involvement. Since English is not the native language of their group, parents think that their educational skills are so poor that they cannot be useful in assisting their child in school. "Involving parents from any background is no easy task and in light of cultural and educational differences, linguistic minority parents present a special challenge" (Constantino et al., 1995:19). In a study by Zelazo (1995:17), it was found that more English than Spanish-speaking parents are involved in the school as volunteers and by attending school meetings. "Parents whose educational proficiency is limited may find it difficult or intimidating to

communicate with school staff or to involve in the education of their children in school” (Violand-Sanchez, 1993:20). Lack of educational skills becomes an intimidating factor when parents and schools cannot communicate effectively.

2.4.2 Socioeconomic status and parental involvement

Socioeconomic status has been recognised as an influential factor concerning parental involvement. “The Coleman (1966:10) report, which stated that the best predictor of student achievement is the socioeconomic status of the parents, led to a flurry of investigations on student achievement”. Coleman (1993:15) stated that several researchers have found that parental qualities typically associated with socioeconomic status are positively related to parental involvement. For example, Lareau (1987:96) found that upper middle class parents were typically engaged in school activities and were influential in school decision making, while working class parents took on a more supportive role with respect to their involvement with their children’s school.

As a result of his personal experiences, reading and research, Motsinger (1990:5) asserted that “the developers of Teacher Expectation Student Achievement (TESA) workshops found that teachers do tend to give high achieving students more attention than those who lag behind”. Underachieving children feel disliked by the instructor. Parents then feel that “it is because we are poor” and resentment then grows. According to Brantliner and Guskin (1987:103), some low income parents feel that schools discourage their involvement and view them as the problem, and they believe that stereotypes of poor parents as inadequate caregivers who are uninterested in their children’s education persist among educators. Although low income families may feel unneeded or unable to be involved with their children’s school, Henderson (1988:39) states that children of low income families benefit the most when parents are involved in the schools and parents do not have to be well-educated in order to make a difference.

Working parents can still participate in parental involvement programmes, but it is harder than for those who do not have a job. Unfortunately, many parents hold down two or three jobs in order to cope with economic realities, and work schedules often prevent these parents from attending meetings and other events at the school (Onikama, 1998:7).

According to King(1990), “in the United States, more than half of the women with children under six years of age are in the labor force” (Onikama, 1998:21). How educators can effectively involve working parents in children’s education, especially in families where both parents are working, is a major issue today. As stated by Onikama (1998:21), working class parents want their children to do well, but tend to give educational responsibility to the teacher.

2.5 THE ROLE AND DUTIES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

Extensive research has shown that learners’ achievement increases when parents get involved (Harris et al., 1987). School bureaucracies and family organisations are directed, respectively, by educators and parents who can best play an important role in their children’s education by fulfilling their different goals, roles and responsibilities. Singh and Mbokodi (2004:37) found that disadvantaged black parents did not seem to understand their role as parents in the education of their children. Kaperu’s (2004:94) Namibia-based research also confirms that parents are not quite sure of their role, while Ingram (2007:114) states that some parents think that their own lack of education precludes them from participating in their children’s education. Quezada Diaz and Sanchez (2003, cited in Ingram, 2007:13) assert that language also constitutes a barrier, with parents feeling that no one will listen to them if they cannot speak English.

Normally, the educator and the parent should work hand in glove, as they are both important in the upbringing of the child, especially with regard to their education. Waller (2011:113) adopts the perspective of emphasising the coordination, cooperation and complementarity of schools and families, and encourages communication and collaboration between the two institutions. Parents know their child better than anybody else. The cultural capital theory emphasises the role of both schools and parents, through the class structures embedded in home and school life (Azzam, 2007:12). Hence, they must be fully involved in their children’s education.

Children’s learning experiences during the years before school also provide an essential foundation for the progress of learning (McGregory, 1992:100). Parents might need developmental programmes to help them understand that is their responsibility to send

their children to pre-school. Early childhood programmes can also play an important role, especially when linked to parents' developmental programmes (UNICEF, 1989:9). Parents should be the first to provide for their child's needs, such as food, shelter and uniforms, and should support the school with regular and timely donations in the form of money, so that this will not affect their children's education. They should see to it that their children get to school, as stipulated in the South African School Act No.84 of 1996.

On Target Family Involvement (2000:4) explains that research on K-12 schools has linked parental involvement to learners' outcomes, including increased achievement in test results, decrease in dropout rate, improved attendance, improved learner behaviour, improved teacher-parent relations, greater commitment to school work, and improved attitudes towards school (Gillum, 1977; Rich, Van Diem & Mallox, 1979; Comer, 1980). Parent involvement helps to promote mutual respect of children's culture, language, customs, belief, food and clothing in schools. Parent volunteering at schools helps the schools to perform well in cultural activities, as the parents will be assisting educators through the skills being demonstrated in different activities (Hoberg, 1999:97).

It is assumed that schools share responsibilities with parents for the socialisation and education of children (Chindanya, 2011:35). Parents may also provide traditional clothes for cultural dances and prepare a traditional meal for the children at school, as a part of their cultural activities, while children help in the preparation and learn. Parents also play an important role when they exchange ideas on how to care for and teach children (Smith & Print, 2003:55). They can share their own insights about the progress of their children and give children moral support. This helps the teacher to understand what happens at home, as it can have a great impact on children's education.

Feinstein and Symons (1999:11) indicate that parental involvement has been identified as a predictor of a student's achievement at the age of sixteen. They argue that parental involvement shows its effects already during the early grades of children. Parental involvement in schools can promote positive health behaviour among children. For example, children who feel supported by their parents are less likely to experience emotional distress, drug abuse, attempt suicide or disengage from school or learning. In addition, schools that

promote a culture of teaching and learning among children are shown to be more successful when parents are involved.

Children do not perceive parental involvement as absolute (Taylor, 2003:19), but they wish to maintain their connection with their parents. Likewise, adolescents seek emotional intimacy with their parents and express a desire to satisfy their parents' expectations of them and have parental involvement (Paratore, 2005:26).

Day indicates that parents are the first points of reference to which children are exposed and from whom they learn the meaning and definition of religious gestures and symbols. Children's world and concepts develop from the personal relationship they have with their parents. Children, as they observe how their parents respond to their world or society and notice how their parents' perspective on life and the world brings them either joy and fulfilment or lack of satisfaction and guilt, learn how to relate to the world themselves. Rizzuto (cited in Eayrs, 1989:38) agrees with the above statement by indicating that children are taught about God through propositional and relational language. For example, if children's experience of learning to submit to authority is associated with excessive parental threats and punishment, withdrawal of love, bribery or coercion, the children will grow up with this image, expecting people to behave the same way as their parents (Eayrs, 1989:41).

Parents who cannot be trusted by their children in their daily life will not be able to teach them about their norms and values, let alone faith (Latshaw, 1998:61). Furthermore, a unity amongst parents regarding what they believe in is essential, because disunity in values and norms, even in education, teaches children that education is something that is uncertain and arguable. In order to promote education in the next generation, parental involvement should be a model of education for children. According to Latshaw (1998:60), faith is generatively "fuelled by the great parental involvement for their children wishing to see their children embroiled in chaos and non-existence without a meaning ...". Ideal or good parental involvement is characterised by aspects such as spending sufficient time on the education of children and being able to go down to their developmental level in order to talk to them about life and perceive things from the children's point of view. Latshaw (1998:63) indicates that this kind of love requires a certain amount of sacrifice on the part of the parents.

In the area of generativity of faith, the generative ethic conceptualises parenthood as generative work, rather than a social role embedded in a changing social context. 'Parents work' is a term that Dollahite et al. (1998:67) use to describe the conduct of generative parents. This conceptual ethic suggests seven areas of parent's work in which they should be involved, which are as follows:

-Ethical work, which consist of the parents' ability and responsibility to commit and continue to be an enduring presence in the lives of their children.

-Stewardship work, which consists of the parents' ability and responsibility to cooperate, concentrate and create/ dedicate material resources to their children and provide opportunities for them to achieve.

-Recreational work, which consists of the parents' ability and responsibility to cooperate with children, by relaxing and playing with children at children's developmental level.

-Spiritual work, which consists of the parents' ability to share their beliefs and confidence with their children and to counsel, guide, teach, advise and inspire them.

-Developmental work, which consists of the parents' ability to take care of and respond to the needs and wants of their children's education.

-Relational work, which consists of the parents' ability to share love, thoughts and feelings with their children and to comfort them.

-Mentoring work, which consists of the parents' ability to share ideas and stories when asked, and to contribute towards sustaining and supporting the positive behaviour of their children.

According to Minister P Marais (1993), the new dispensation in South Africa will still have to deal with the three types of schools, namely private schools, state-aided schools and schools financed by the state. Therefore, it is clear that parental involvement in the education system in South Africa will have to play an important role, and parents will have to take on far more responsibility in their children's' education. Educational managers should orientate parents, as they are the third partner in education, so that they will realise

that their responsibility for their children's education is extremely important. Zubke (1980:151) indicates that knowledge of the law of education in general is essential because in the future dispensation, responsible parenting will call more and more for a specialisation with regard to teaching matters and educational issues, which was perhaps not as necessary in the past. It is very important that parental rights be entrenched. Dekker and Lemmer (1996:172) refer to Henniger with regard to the following:

Parents have to realise that they have special social rights and responsibilities, such as the right to:-

- Their own feelings towards education
- Their own feelings about their children's place in the education system
- Authority in the home
- Meaningful communication with the child's teacher
- Be involved in planning and maintaining parents' groups

In addition to social rights and responsibilities, legislative action and legal proceedings have determined several other rights available to parents. These include the parents' right to:

- Know the school policies and programme plans
- Understand the evaluation techniques of the school as they relate to the child
- Be represented in policy-making decisions
- Have access to special services for children with special needs
- Privacy, protection and due process as defined by law (Henniger, 1987:228-229).

The school governing body, as parents' representative, should make an effort to act as mediator between the schools and the parents, in order to enhance parental involvement in schools. It should update parents with regard to school policies, so that parents know what is expected of them. The Hunter Report (1995:51) acknowledges that "parental involvement

has the right and responsibility in the education of their children". The Report entrusted parental involvement with the authority and responsibility to develop and adopt school policy in the education of their children.

Legal responsibilities are as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic (Constitution of South Africa Act 108 of 1996), specifically chapter 2 (Bill of Rights), which indicates that parents have the duty to send their children to school. Parents' responsibilities lie mainly in the care of their children (SASA 84 of 1996). As indicated in chapter 1, parents are equal partners in education, and parents therefore have rights with regard to the choice of school, as well as the right to information and religion. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that:

*Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least at the elementary and fundamental stage and elementary school shall be compulsory.

*Education shall be directed to the full potential of human personality and to the strengthening and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Dekker and Lemmer also refer to Morris (1998:51), who states that "the best kind of adult learning takes place at the time when it is asked for, in conjunction with other parent learner at the same stage". They argue that lack of parental involvement within these areas results in a high early drop-out rate and negatively affects teachers' competence.

According to Epstein (2001:45), there are several roles that parents should play in their children's education. These can be summarised as follows:

- Parental involvement enhances academic performance. Academic achievement increases when parents are involved in their children's education. The more intensively involved the parents are, the greater the positive impact on academic achievement.

- Parental involvement leads to better classroom behaviour. Parental involvement not only enhances academic performance, but also has a positive influence on student attitudes and behaviour. A parent's interest in and encouragement of his or her child's education can affect the child's attitude towards school, classroom conduct, self-esteem, absenteeism and motivation.

- Parents should stay involved in their children's education from preschool through to high school. Parental involvement can make a positive difference at all age levels. Parental involvement tends to be the greatest with young children and to then taper off as children get older. Studies have shown, however, that involvement of parents of middle and high school students is equally important. In high school, for example, a parent's encouragement can determine whether a child stays in school or drops out. Similarly, a child may consider going to college more seriously when parents show interest in the child's academic achievements and talk with the child about the benefits of a college education.

- Training helps parents of disadvantaged children to get involved. Parents of minority or low-income children are less likely to be involved in their children's education than parents of non-disadvantaged children. If they receive adequate training and encouragement, however, parents of minority or low-income children can be just as effective as other parents in contributing to their children's academic success. As discussed below, one of the purposes of NCLB is to get parents of under-achieving children involved in their education.

- Reading together at home greatly improves reading skills. Reading in particular improves significantly when parents and children read together at home. Reading aloud with a child contributes significantly to the child's reading abilities.

- Schools can encourage parental involvement in many ways. Significant parental involvement is most likely to develop when schools actively seek ways to get parents involved and offer training programmes to teach parents how to get involved in their children's education.

- Parental involvement lifts teachers' morale. Schools and teachers benefit from parental involvement because involved parents develop a greater appreciation for the challenges that teachers face in the classroom. Communication between home and school helps a teacher to know a student better, which in turn allows the teacher to teach the student more effectively. Communication also helps to dispel any mistrust or misperceptions that may exist between teachers and parents.

- Parental involvement benefits children and parents. By becoming involved in their children's education, moms and dads get the satisfaction of making a contribution to their

children's education and future. They have a better understanding of the school curriculum and activities and can be more comfortable with the quality of education that their child is receiving. They spend more time with their children and are able to communicate better with them. Some studies show that a parent's participation in a child's education may inspire the parent to further his or her own education.

- Time constraints are the greatest barrier to parental involvement. Lack of time is the main reason parents give for not participating more in their children's education. It is also cited by school personnel as a reason for not seeking parental support more actively. Thus, effective solutions to enhanced parental involvement should include freeing up time of parents and teachers or finding ways to work around their schedules.

2.6 PARENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE SCHOOL

Parents have shown a reduction in involvement when they feel threatened as the school work becomes more advanced (Eccles, 1993:44). Research done in black South African schools, especially in rural areas, indicates that contextual factors that hamper parents' involvement in their children's education are illiteracy, curriculum changes, lack of time, school climate, urbanisation, health problems, economic factors, their attitude and the attitude of educators, including management (Brown, 2007:32).

The Vhembe region has a high rate of illiteracy and semi-literacy, with youth having dropped out of school as a result of cultural beliefs and economic instability. Siririka (2007:65) indicates that as many African parents in South Africa cannot read and write, helping children in formal education will remain a problem for some time. Parents may also find that the methods used to teach various subjects are different from those that they experienced. They may sometimes feel that they will frustrate or confuse their children.

Parental involvement actually declines as students grow older, so that it is less in secondary school than in elementary school (Stouffer, 1992:18). If parental involvement is so beneficial, why is it not being used to a greater extent than at present? There are many reasons from the perspective of parents and the school for this lack of involvement. One of the reasons concerns the lack of understanding of non-traditional families by the school system. The non-traditional family is struggling to deal with many factors that affect every

member of the family. These can definitely affect the way in which the family is able to be involved in the student's education. More than likely, there is a shortage of time. There are simply not enough hours in the day to accomplish everything. If there has been a divorce or death in the family, there has probably been a change in the financial standing of the family. By the school not being sensitive to this change, the student/family could be embarrassed. The very nature of the family structure is in a state of change, causing confusion and insecurity (Duncan, 1992:30). The parents may be doing the very best that they can to be involved.

"Schools must understand that lack of participation by parents does not necessarily mean they are neglecting their responsibilities. Parents often do not feel welcomed at school. They feel that what they may have to offer is unimportant and unappreciated. Also, parents may not believe that they have any knowledge that the school is interested in knowing. This is especially true when the parent may not have a great deal of education" (Dixon 1992: 23). It is also possible that parents do not have a great deal of interest in the education of their children. They may not feel that education is important.

Another reason for lack of parental involvement is embarrassment. The parents may be illiterate or unable to speak English. This could make communication difficult, if not impossible. Another source of embarrassment is memories of the parent's failure in school. Such parents will not have much desire to return to a place that only served to remind them of their own failures (Brink & Chandler, 1993:56).

For many parents, a major impediment to becoming involved is lack of time. Working parents are often unable to attend school events during the day. In addition, evenings are the only time when parents can spend time with their children, and they may choose to spend time with their family, rather than attend meetings at school. For many apparently uninvolved parents, school was not a positive experience and they feel inadequate in a school setting. Parents may also feel uneasy if their cultural style or socio-economic level differs from that of teachers (Greenberg, 1989:70). Some parents who are uninvolved in school may not understand the importance of parental involvement or may think that they do not have the skills to be able to help, and there are even parents who hesitate to become

involved for fear of overstepping their bounds. It is the responsibility of teachers and administrators to encourage such parents to become involved.

The oft-cited communication gap between the school and parents is the chief culprit when it comes to PI contextual factors associated with the school as an institution. Schools and their teachers have the potential to nurture or inhibit fruitful connections between parents and teachers. Some parents are wary of overstepping some unwritten mark in terms of their relations with teachers (Williams et al., 2002:32, cited in Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003:43). This causes frustration and confusion for parents. Some parents are put down by schools and teachers (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003:5). There are teachers who feel that their work must be protected against unwarranted intrusions from parents. Such teachers invite parents only when there is a problem. Ingram (2007:15) notes that parents are not motivated to participate if the only contact they receive from the school is over something negative, or if they are unaware of their right to ask about their children's education. It is little wonder that many low SES parents find home-school contacts empty, contrived, unsubstantial and awkward (Henry, 1992:23, cited in Desforges & Abouchaar,2003:46).

The degree to which parents see a role for themselves in their children's education and the extent to which they feel confident enough to be to participate may constitute a barrier.

Mncube (2005, 2008) quotes Van Wyk (1998:33), who indicated that illiterate parents are unable to keep abreast of new challenges in education and tend to delegate their responsibility to the school principals, thus becoming passive participants. Parents are sometimes, however, capable of doing a better job of teaching their children than the teachers can.

As indicated above, poverty also presents unique barriers to traditional forms of parental involvement. Low socio-economic status and attitudes of parents can deprive their thinking. Desfoeges and Aboucher (2003:43) reveal that in the UK, low income is often associated with material deprivation, which in turn affects the impact of parental involvement on student achievement and adjustment.

Parhar (2006:2), citing a number of sources, asserts that negative attitudes and behaviours of teachers in relation to disadvantaged parents impact negatively on efforts to involve such

parents, thereby further marginalising them. Ingram (2007:16) also decries school personnel's negative or condescending attitudes towards parents. Such attitudes cripple efforts aimed at increasing parental involvement. Desforges (2003:41) confirms that many parents feel put off by the way in which some teachers treat them. The teachers' attitudes may be a result of inadequate training in respect of parental involvement.

Work schedules, lack of transportation and lack of child care may prevent families from attending school events (Hill & Taylor, 2004:40). Parents may be reluctant to participate in the decision-making of the school governing body as the result of limited education.

Lack of parental involvement is the biggest problem facing public schools. Children's education is influenced by many factors. Browne and Gordon (2009:46) indicate that the essential partnership for guiding young children is between the family and the teacher and must be thoughtfully considered. Bronfenbrenner (1997:16) called this network the "ecology of development". Lack of necessary parental care and attention are the main factors contributing to the subsequent rise in the percentage of early drop outs, teenage pregnancy, and juvenile delinquency (crime among children). The absence of parental instruction causes children to develop irreversible behavioural and emotional problems.

Critically, although the political control of apartheid has gone, full democratic participation has not yet been achieved. Lack of parental involvement and resignation of members from the SGB are theoretically representative of some factors that need to be addressed. Chindanya indicates that the lack of material or other resources also impacts negatively on parental involvement. He quoted Magara (2005, cited in Siririka, 2007: 28), who indicated, in respect of the Ugandan situation, that some parents are so poor that they cannot provide essential facilities for their children. A study by Nistler and Maisers (2000:15) found that schools are able to remove the barriers to parents' participation in order to increase parental involvement.

Hanke (2001:69) indicates that school principals, together with their staff members, should accept, assess and accommodate alliance building with parents, in order to build a strong partnership with parents and explore ways in which to work through those attitudes that may be preventing them from becoming involved in the school. At school level, partnerships

should be established with parents, in order to equip them with the skills and knowledge to participate effectively in their children's education. Teachers need to refrain from adopting the attitude that they do not work with a shopkeeper while they are teaching the child of the shopkeeper (Person, 1959:9). These attitudes reflect different philosophies and beliefs, theories which oppose the idea of a relationship between the school and family. One such perspective emphasises the inherent incompatibility, competition and conflict between families and schools, and supports the separation of the two institutions (Person, 1959; Waller, 1932; Weber, 1947:61).

It is not only parents' attitude that has an impact on parental involvement. Children can have a negative attitude towards their parents becoming involved in the school, and this attitude is also significant. As indicated above, lack of basic necessities such as food and uniforms causes physical discomfort and problems for the child. Lack of exposure to a numerical background, poor self-image, dysfunctional and anti-social behavior patterns e.g. minor theft and lying, substance abuse (most often dagga and thinners), teenage pregnancy and child-headed families, which require children to have additional responsibilities (Baloyi, 2006:18), lead to psychic discomfort, which hampers children's ability to participate fully in school. Furthermore, children may display the same negative attitude as parents towards the school, and show a lack of interest in school. The psychological perspective which motivates parental involvement is related to socio-economic factors. For example, professional parents' sense of efficiency in helping their children at school is related to their socio-economic status (Waller, 1995:29).

2.7. TEACHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS

Most teachers experience the frustration of trying to involve parents and getting little response. Teachers complain that parents do not come to conferences or school open days, check homework or answer notes (Dekker et al., 1999:24). This leads some teachers to conclude that parents do not care about their children's education. While it is true that the emotional problems of a few parents may be so great as to prevent them from becoming involved with their children's education, most parents do care a great deal (Onikama, 1998:17). This caring, is not, however, always evidenced by parents' attendance at school

events. There are a number of reasons why these parents may not become involved, and teachers need to consider these reasons before dismissing parents as being uninterested.

Parental involvement and interest may vary in terms of commitment to family involvement, and may generate mixed messages to parents (Onikama, 1998:2). Many schools believe that classroom learning is best left to the professors. They also argue that parental involvement is a time consuming “luxury” that places yet another burden on already overworked teachers and principals (Henderson, 1988:60). These worries make parents feel that the teachers do not want them around, which decreases the level of parental involvement.

In an article by Bal and Goc (1999:17), they indicate that numerous methods to increase parental involvement have been suggested. Such strategies include increasing communication between teacher and parents, involving parents with limited English proficiency, providing information regarding how parents can enhance learning at home, and encouraging parental academic engagement at home.

In spite of this fact, many teachers still show their concern about the lack of parental involvement at schools and its negative effects on students’ academic performance and grades. Parents are also dissatisfied that they are not well informed about their children’s behaviour in the classroom or test grades, and admit that they are not actively involved in these school activities, and are not aware of its effects on their own children’s performance. Knowing about the most state-of-the-art strategies to enhance parental involvement and converting them into practical actions are essential, not only for parents and their children, but also for everybody who is involved in education, such as teachers, educators, practitioners and the community (Gardner, 2008:112).

2.8. STRATEGIES THAT CAN BE USED BY SCHOOL MANAGERS TO ENHANCE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS

The discussion above on parental involvement can assist school managers to develop strategies that will help to enhance parental involvement in their children’s education. Through various definitions obtained from different studies, Gardner (2008:127) defines socialisation as the process through which an individual learns to embrace the values, skills, attitudes, norms and knowledge needed for membership of a given society, group or

organisation, elaborating that it is generally transmitted through organisational teaching and learning. It is therefore important to involve parents in contributing to discussions made at each level of their children's progress and to incorporate their suggestions into approaches and policies that will impact on them, without causing them to feel intimidated. The following suggestions are given in the guidelines for parent's participation policy by Butler (2008:1). The school governing body can be encouraged to negotiate in terms of their work or work requiring their appraisal; they can be encouraged to participate in classroom management and organisation through a teacher's component at class level and through school-based discussion groups.

For effective parental involvement in the decision making process, there is a need to enable them to develop appropriate skills and knowledge to participate in the decision making process, so as to analyse information, plan, negotiate, communicate and find solutions in collaboration with others. Hanke (2006:48) points out that lack of parental involvement is often due to the lack of helpful information for parents. Parents are the people to whom a service is being provided and they are the major stakeholder in the school, hence the school managers should involve them in the daily management of school activities. The sociological perspective, which focuses on the interplay between schools, families and the community at large, gives a better explanation of the socio-economic gradient that combines "demand" and "supply" factors (Azzam, 2007:3). Firstly, the school managers have to establish an executive committee from the school governing body. This SGB should be elected solely by parents, so that they are given the mandate to run the school. Van Schalkwyk (1988:89) indicates that in the Transvaal, such a committee consisted of eight members, of which four were parents.

According to the South African School Act no. 84 of 1996, the majority of the members of the school governing body should be parents. Van Schalkwyk (2001:118) states that in the past, the statutory parent body constituted a management council and school committee or school governing body. The body had certain powers given to it by law, hence the term statutory, and was functional in most traditionally white schools, but was not well established in black schools. Magreth (2007:30) states that in the pre-democratic era, allowance was made for two types of formal parental involvement: a statutory body (usually school committee) and a non-statutory body (parent-teacher association).

Baloyi (2006:21) indicates that with regard to parents, the White Paper (1995a:21-23) highlights the fact that “the principles of democratic governance should increasingly be reflected in every level of the system, by the involvement in consultation and appropriate forms of decision-making of elected representatives of the main stake holders, interested group and role players. This is the only guaranteed way to infuse new social energy into the institutions and structures of the education and training system, dispel the chronic alienation of large sectors of society from the education process, and reduce the power of government administration to intervene where it should not.” It is important to note in this regard that parental involvement has thus far intervened against the utilisation of norms and standards within the Department of Education in the Limpopo Province.

Sociological research in British schools has illustrated the sort of frictions that can be encountered by working class parents in their relationship with teachers (Avvisati et al., 2010:12). Secondly, the school managers can develop special skills among the parents, and these can help in the running of the school. For example, there could be an accountant who can help in terms of the utilisation of school funds. A psychologist might be needed to examine learners with learning difficulties. According to Ratcliff and Neff (1993:91), parents can be recruited as individuals, whereby the school managers make face-to-face contact with the parents and request them to come and help at the school. The recruiter first indicates the need that exists at the school for parental involvement and then explains to the individual the areas of possible involvement, in order to arouse their interest. The recruiter may also use correspondence in the form of telephoning or writing letters to the prospective volunteer, so as to recruit him/her. This duty is usually handled by volunteer co-ordinators, a teacher assigned to manage a parental involvement programme in a particular school, or a school manager. McSweeney and Herold (2011:104) confirm this by indicating that parents with less education will not have good recommendations. The researcher argues that lack of parental involvement is associated with a lower level of education, which affects their knowledge and understanding of how they can become involved in their children’s education.

Van Schalkwyk (1988:88) indicates that in the past, the statutory parent body constituted a management council and school committee or school governing body. The body had certain powers given to it by law. The researcher saw a gap between the authority of the law and

the needs of the school. Parental involvement, as important as it is in education, should also extend to all spheres of the government.

Parents feel that they are too unprepared or intimidated to help children with homework or other schoolwork, especially if they have limited educational skills. School managers are in a different position and have a unique ability to create a good culture of teaching and learning within the schools. As with children, an important aspect of motivation and support is their parental involvement. Epstein (1987:130) argues that educators who work with parents understand their learners better, generate unique rather than routine solutions to classroom problems, and reach a shared understanding with parents and learners. The quality of interpersonal relationships between parents, teachers and learners is decisive for the child's total development, because he or she spends a large part of the day at school (Lemmer et al., 2004:31). The school managers should be able to determine the historical background of their geographical area and children's (learners) background, in order to enhance parental involvement and services that are relevant to the community.

Breiseth et al (2011:16) confirm this by indicating that "the child of a migrant worker from Mexico and the child of a teacher from Mexico probably won't have the same educational and economic needs". Neglected as well as poor interpersonal relationships and ructions within the family may cause emotional blocks in children. Sayed (2002:36) reminds us that some children have difficult temperaments and that to work with them requires two kinds of creative insight. "One should able to know a particular child as an individual ...often the parents' insight. The researcher argues that the child who is rejected and neglected by teachers and ignored by fellow learners for behavioural problem becomes nobody in class and social life. And we need to know about children in general..." (Sayed, 2001:12).

School managers can also schedule alternative places and types of events where they can meet parents. Today, local issues are being presented at funerals, churches, community meetings ("khoros"), and even at pensioners' pay points, so it will be convenient to use these locations as an opportunity to meet parents. Lydia et al (2010:10) support this by indicating that sometimes, when families cannot come to the school, the school has to go to the families. Meetings parents in other settings can provide an informal way of starting to build a relationship with parents. In addition, this will indicate dedication and full commitment on

the part of the school, which is represented by the school managers. Simango quoted McSweeney and Alexander (1996: 71), who state that another way that has been found to be very useful and successful in approaching parental involvement is to organise people into groups, such as classes, where prospective parents are addressed together before they can take decisions regarding whether or not to volunteer. At this meeting, the co-ordinator can clearly explain the school's need for parental involvement, as well as what will be expected from the incumbents. These groups of parents may be organised into a conference meeting where experts address the audience on aspects of parental involvement and its benefits and demands. Parent recruiters or school managers and their SMT may organise workshops where parents are informed about the concept of parental involvement or volunteering and all that it entails.

Fuller (2003:29) suggests that although educators recognise the link between parental involvement and children's success, they tend to value only certain forms of support and fail to recognise other equally important elements. Grossman (1999:43) argues that even student teachers often report that their cooperating teachers have attributed children's problems in school to the fact that their parents simply do not care.

School managers also need to establish a clear communication channel and collaboration with parents. This will provide the staff with an opportunity to communicate with parents about school activities. By establishing two-way communication, parental involvement will increase and parents will be able to give feedback through this communication channel (from school to home and from home to school) (Hill, 2001:56).

It is important for school managers to remember that their goals are similar to those of the parents, although their areas of expertise sometimes differ. Generally speaking, first impressions count a lot. Therefore, teachers need to plan for the tone of their first meeting with parents. A common thread in the literature is the idea that the education professional needs to remain calm in words, movement and facial expressions (Whitaken & Fiore, 2001:21). It is also advisable to provide short courses that will deal specifically with parental involvement, in order to equip educators with the required skills to deal with parental involvement.

The Norms and Standards for Educators' (RSA, 2000a) document make provision for educators to engage for 80 hours a year in some form of professional development. In addition, the Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) (RSA, 2000a) should design courses and provide learnerships on parental involvement for the re-skilling of Grade R educators. Although educators are professionally qualified, parental involvement training programmes are required to cope with the current environment.

The researcher is of the opinion that if both parents and teachers learn to be more accurate in what they say, communication between the two will improve immeasurably. Muir (2005:31) quoted Lee (1996:67), who stated that teachers should have a friendly smile, use welcoming posters, and show respect to parents. Having good communication may also assist educators and school managers to deal with angry parents. When confronted by an angry parent, teachers and administrators should hide their own nervousness by lowering their voices and moving towards the parent, looking him or her straight in the eyes (Whitaker & Fiore, 2001:72).

2.9 CONCLUSION

Desforges and Aboucheur (2003) advise parents to start getting involved in their children's education from as early as pre-school. The researcher concludes this chapter by suggesting that more should be done in terms of educating parents to participate, and they should be encouraged and empowered in the area of school engagement. SASA (1996) provides that parents should form part of school decision making through the SGB. Martins and Holt (2002) refer to this as "joined-up governance". This chapter has outlined the strategies that school managers should use to increase parental involvement, since it is currently lacking and hampers learners' progress. The provision of NCLB and School Accountability Teams enforces parental involvement in schools, and its goal is to encourage parents of under-achieving and low –income children to get involved in their education by providing them with adequate training and motivation.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the research methodology that will be used in this study, and looks at how the research process will unfold. The chapter explains the research paradigm, research methods and research design which are going to be used, and includes ethical considerations, selection of participants, data analysis, and data collection methods. The study is based within a qualitative research framework, using an interpretative approach. This process will help the researcher to gain insight into how principals and educators deal with the lack of parental involvement in the schools.

The qualitative research methodology was chosen because it uses an emic perspective - in other words, it derives meaning from the research participants' perspective (Schurink, cited in De Vos, 1998:242; McMillan and Schumacher, 2010:321, 323). This study focused on parental involvement in their children's education in the Vhembe District, with a view to identifying strategies to enhance involvement, as perceived by parents themselves, school managers, and teachers. When these strategies have been identified, it will be possible to generate relevant solutions in relation to the research participants.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

According to Terhoeven (2009:45), a paradigm can be defined as a world view that includes certain philosophical assumptions about the nature of knowledge. The interpretive paradigm will be used in this study to contextualise it within the qualitative paradigm. This means that the research paradigm governs the research process of this study. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:133), in qualitative research, numerous forms of data are collected and examined from various angles, in order to construct a rich and meaningful picture of a complex, multi-faceted situation. Qualitative approaches have two things in common. Firstly, they focus on phenomena that occur in natural settings, that is, the real world. In other words, it is a way of looking at the world, taking the assumptions that people have about what is important and what makes the world work into account. It is a theoretical orientation (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992:33—see also Bogdan and Biklen, 2007). Secondly, they involve studying those phenomena in all their complexity. Qualitative researchers rarely try

to simplify what they observe (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005:133). Qualitative methodology is concerned with the investigation of small groups (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:375), and aims to generate information that is useful in certain contexts (Kelly, Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006:287), rather than information which can be generalised to the whole population (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:375).

Since this study acknowledges that lack of parental involvement is context-based and that strategies to deal with them therefore also need to be context-based, the interpretive method was deemed to be preferable because it takes the significance of context in relation to meaning into full account. It assumes that all human action is meaningful and has to be interpreted and understood within the context of social practices. In keeping with the interpretive tradition, the researcher sought to understand individuals' interpretations of the world around them (Cohen and Manion, 1994:37) in relation to parental involvement in their children's education at pre-primary, primary and secondary school level.

As the researcher sought to access the meanings that participants assigned to the matter being investigated (for example, some parents with little or no formal education thought that PI was restricted to the payment of school fees/levies and providing labour for the construction or repair of school buildings), she interacted with the participants and created knowledge that was transactional and subjective in nature (Rezal, 2007:27-34). In other words, the researcher and participants had the same characteristic of being interpreters or sense-makers. This really meant that as an interpretive researcher, this researcher sought a shared understanding with the participants regarding what constituted parental involvement, what barriers stood in the way of parental involvement, and how such barriers could be overcome. In pursuit of this shared understanding, the researcher was mindful that history, cultural and social forces might influence the outlook and interpretation of both the researcher and the participant (Rezal, 2007:27-34).

3.3 METHODOLOGY

Methodology implies the science of method or of arranging in due order (Funk & Wagnalls, 2008: 898). There are numerous approaches, auxiliaries and methods from which the

researcher can choose to meet his or her particular needs. Sampling is a tool which is successfully used in many research projects.

3.3.1 Sampling

Sampling can be described as a smaller set of cases that a researcher selects from a larger pool and generalises to the population (Neuman, 2006:219). Sampling is divided into probability and non-probability sampling methods. Under probability sampling there are many types of sampling designs, which include simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling, cluster sampling and random digit dialling sampling (Neuman, 2006:227). Under non-probability sampling, there are also many sampling designs, which include haphazard or convenience sampling, quota sampling, purposive sampling, snowball sampling, deviant case sampling, sequential sampling and theoretical sampling (Neuman, 2006:220).

In this study, the researcher chose to make use of non-probability sampling because it can be regarded as the only sampling method that makes a representative sampling design possible (Jakuja, 2009: 72). Purposive sampling will also be used for the study, because it is convenient for the researcher in terms of time. By using purposive sampling, the researcher will be able to include participants according to the relevant criteria based on emerging research questions. The three principals, four educators and five parents in each of the three schools were chosen as participants in the study. These three schools are all located in the Vhembe District of the Limpopo Province.

3.3.2 Access to participants

The data will be collected from three schools in the Vhembe District. To avoid revealing the identity of these schools, the labels school A, B and C will be used to refer to these schools respectively. To gain access to the research sites and participants, the researcher will seek permission from the District Department of Education. A letter will be written to the District Education Office to inform them about the research and to request permission to access the schools. The researcher will visit all three schools to make an appointment for conducting the interviews with the principals, educators and parents of the children attending each school.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

A researcher, according to Mouton, Johann and Marais (1990:15), is required to, among other things; make a decision regarding which measuring instruments and data collection methods will be the most appropriate for investigating a given subject. Methodology can, for instance, be defined as the logic of the application of scientific methods for the investigation of phenomena. In other words, methodology refers to the logic of the decision-making process in scientific research. It is therefore essential that attention also be given to the research instruments.

3.4.1 Research instruments

In contemporary society, more information is available than can be used (Terry, 1977:179). The computer can yield reams of data relating to products, services, costs and prices. Libraries and the Internet, among others, are fruitful sources for the collection of information. The government offers statistics, numerous studies, reports and booklets on a variety of subjects. In other words, a literature study of the available sources may provide useful information. The key consideration is to acquire information that is useful to decision-making and problem-solving. The information must therefore be relevant and correct. Instruments such as interviews, questionnaires and observation will have to be considered.

3.4.1.1 Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews were used in this study to obtain the views of parents on their understanding of PI, its benefits, their practical involvement, what they consider to be barriers to PI, and what they think could be done to enhance it. Schurink and Poggenpoel (1998:314, in De Vos, 1998) succinctly define a focus group interview as a “purposive discussion of a specific topic or related topics taking place between eight and ten individuals”. Each participant may make comments, ask questions of other participants or respond to comments by others, including the moderator (Marshall and Rossman, 2011:145).

Choosing the focus group interview (Annexure 6) as a means of gathering data in respect of parents, the researcher had considered the advantages that this data collection strategy had

in relation to the research problem. These included the following (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:363-364; Nieuwenhuis in Maree, 2010; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:455; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2005:288; Hoberg, 1999):

- It generates qualitative data (words, categorisations and expressions that are used by participants themselves), thereby acquainting the researcher with the language that his populations uses to describe their experiences, as well as their cultural values and styles of thinking and communicating about the research.
- It uses open-ended questions, which allow the participant to answer freely, thus enhancing the validity of the findings.
- It uses group dynamics to produce new and additional data, which could enhance the researcher's understanding of the phenomena being studied.
- It allows participants to react and build upon the responses of other participants, which may result in the generation of opinions and information which might have remained undisclosed in individual interviewing.
- The largely unstructured nature of the questions and the informal group situation encourage participants to disclose behaviour and attitudes that they might not disclose during individual interviews.
- It is a form of triangulation if one also employs the interview and questionnaire as research instruments.

In addition, since some of the parents who participated in the study were not well educated, it was decided that answering an open-ended questionnaire might be too demanding a task for them, hence the choice of the focus group interview. According to O'Hanlon (2003:79), a number of focus groups may be used to enhance the validity of the findings. In this study, ten focus groups were used. These were deemed to be sufficient "to balance the idiosyncrasies of individual focus group sessions" (Hoberg, 1999:146; Bryman, 2004:349). Each group comprised nine people. Such a group was small enough to allow all the participants to have the opportunity to share insights and sufficiently large to provide diversity of perception (Schurink et al., 1998: 314; Marshall & Rossman, 2011:149).

Following Hoberg's (1999:140) recommendation, twelve topics/questions per focus group interview session were used. The topics/questions were carefully predetermined and sequenced in an understandable and logical way, so as to facilitate the natural, spontaneous discussion of events or experiences by the participants (Schurink et al., 1998:315). This enhanced the validity of the findings.

Throughout the focus group interviews, the researcher was aware that focus group members needed not reach consensus, since emphasis was placed on finding out as much as possible about a specific aspect of social reality (Schurink et al., 1998:315, in De Vos, 1998). Focus group members were made aware of this fact.

When a session elicited little or no new information, it signalled that data generation had reached saturation point.

3.4.1.2 Selection of the interview location and seating arrangements

Since there are factors related to the interview location that may threaten the validity of the findings, the researcher ensured that the interview location was easy to find, close to the homes of participants, and free from outside distractions and noise that might interfere with the tape recording of discussions (Schurink et al., 1998:318, in De Vos, 1998).

With regard to the seating arrangements, chairs were arranged in such a way that participants were able to lean forward "without being self-conscious about their bodies" (Schurink et al., 1998:318, in De Vos, 1998; Bryman, 2004:348-349). This helped participants to relax sufficiently to be able to freely express their views.

3.4.1.3 Designing the focus group interview guide

The focus group interview guide sets down specific issues for the group to discuss. It not only establishes the agenda of the group interview, but it also provides the structure within which members of the focus group will interact (Stewart & Shamdasan, 1990, in De Vos, 1998).

In the designing of the interview guide, concepts to be investigated were clearly defined and questions that captured the aim of the study were identified (see Annexure 6). The

meticulously selected questions were carefully phrased prior to the focus group interviews, in order to elicit the maximum amount of information. Care was taken to ensure that no leading questions were used. Open-ended questions that allow respondents to describe their views were employed. The questions were ordered carefully, from the more general to the more specific. Questions of the greatest significance were placed at the beginning and those of lesser significance near the end, and more sensitive issues were dealt with last (Schurink et al., 1998:318, in De Vos, 1998; Bryman, 2004:356; Bryman, 2004:346-352). Follow-up questions and probing to gain an understanding of the critical issues were also used.

The moderator (researcher) clearly explained the goals and objectives of the interview, as well as the ground rules for participation, during his introduction. This assisted in regulating the interaction of participants (Schurink et al., 1998:321, in De Vos, 1998; Bryman, 2004:352). Questions were organised into categories, in order to enhance the validity of the findings.

3.4.1.4. Categories of questions

The researcher followed the guidelines provided by Schurink et al (in De Vos, 1998:319) with regard to the categories of questions. These categories are as follows:

- Opening questions (which are factual and should be answered quickly, in order to establish which characteristics group members have)
- Introductory question (which introduces the general topic of discussion and is not critical to the study, since it is intended to foster conversation and interaction among group members)
- Transitional question (which provides the logical link between the introductory question and the key questions)
- Key questions (which require the greatest attention in the subsequent analysis)
- Ending questions (which close the discussion and are of three types, namely the all-things-considered question, which allows participants to identify the most important aspects that

were discussed; the summary question, which is asked after the moderator has given a short summary of the significant ideas of the discussion and confirmed whether or not the summary is adequate; and the final question, which is asked following an overview of the purpose of the study by the moderator, in order for participants to confirm if everything considered important has been covered).

The interview guide was tested before it was used. It was tested with respondents who were representative of those who participated in the actual focus group interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2011:95). The language used in respect of parents was Karanga, which they understood better than English. The focus group interviews were recorded.

3.4.1.5. Recording of the focus group interviews

The focus group interviews were audio-taped and notes were taken with the aid of an assistant moderator. The notes helped in capturing non-verbal communication. Participants were informed at the outset that the discussion was going to be recorded, in order to capture everyone's comments. For recording purposes, only one participant spoke at a time.

3.4.1.6. Semi-structured interviews

In an endeavour to determine which of the available tools would be the most appropriate for investigating the subject of this study, it was decided that apart from the literature review, interviews and questionnaires would be used to obtain the required information. A semi-structured interview was used for the principals, parents and educators to gather information or insight into attitudes, rather than analysing them in great detail. According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994:46, 82), the most useful method of data collection in qualitative research is an interview, especially when the researcher wants to explore the perspectives of participants and their construction of meaning of a phenomenon. The interview is flexible and adaptable, thus involving direct interaction between the participants and the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:254). The researcher in this study will be the primary instrument of data collection. Many methods will be used to collect the data for this study, one of which is face-to-face semi-structured interviews with principals and educators, in which a tape recorder will be used. To make arrangements for the interviews, the researcher will visit the schools and explain the purpose of the research,

and will request the permission of interviewees prior to the conducting of the interview to use a tape recorder. The interviews with the principals of the two schools will be conducted during their working hours. The interviews will be conducted in the English language, but for more clarity, the vernacular language (Xitsonga) will also be used. According to Kiewiets (2005:27), the interview method has advantages and is always selected for the following reasons:

- It reduces interview bias and leads to easier analysis.
- It is context dependent and free from the influence of the interviewer, so that a more objective view of the social world of the respondent emerges.
- It is done individually.

3.4.1.7. Observation

Observation, in the words of Marshall and Rossman (2006:107), entails “the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviours and artefacts (objects) in a social setting chosen for the study”. It embraces muted cues, facial expressions, gestures, tones of voice and other non-verbalised social interactions “which suggest the subtle meanings of language” (Hoberg, 1999:103). Used to discover complex interactions in natural social settings, observation is “a fundamental and highly important method in all qualitative inquiry” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006:99). As Corbin & Strauss (2008:29) indicate, observations are important because “it is not unusual for persons to say they are doing one thing but in reality they are doing something else”.

The only way to know this is through observation. People may also not be consciously aware of or be able to articulate “the subtleties of what goes on in interactions between themselves and others” (Corbin & Straus, 2008:30). The researcher, however, did not give meaning to action/interaction based on observation, without first confirming the meaning with participants. The researcher combined observation with interviews and questionnaires. He also left open the possibility to verify interpretations with participants (Corbin & Straus, 2008:30). This was important because non-verbal behaviours are easily misinterpreted, especially cross-culturally (Patton, 2002:291).

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher will transcribe each interview. In order to fully study the content, it has to be in written form. This will involve having to write everything down. Jakuja (2009:75) explains that analysis focuses upon identifying recurrent themes across transcripts.

Recurrent themes are similar and consistent ideas, thoughts, images and accounts. Being phenomenological in nature, the emphasis in the analysis will be on the essence and structures of the phenomenon, that is, the experience. Neuman (2006:322) explains data analysis as a technique for gathering and analysing the content of the text. It also refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes or any message that can be communicated. Data collected will be structured to address the main questions of this study. This data will be analysed using thematic content analysis, which involves identifying common themes that emerge from the data.

The language used and the content will be thoroughly examined. Repetition, explanation, justification, vernacular terms, implicit and explicit assumptions and new phrases will be highlighted. The themes will then be compared and consolidated, including repetition in the themes across participants, that is, the principals and educators. The collection and analysis of data will help the researcher to make adjustments and test emerging concepts, themes, and categories against the subsequent data. It will also enable the researcher to build a coherent interpretation of the data that will be collected, and it will provide an opportunity for the researcher to generate insight into the data.

3.6 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Meaningful information must comply with the criteria for validity and reliability. In other words, in order to judge qualitative research it must have the following qualities: transferability, dependability, credibility and conformability (Mqulwana, 2010:61).

3.6.1 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings. From a qualitative perspective, transferability is primarily the responsibility of the person doing the generalising. In this

regard, the researcher will enhance transferability by describing the research context and highlighting the assumptions that will be central to the study (Mqulwana, 2010:61).

3.6.2 Dependability

This is concerned with whether or not the same results would be obtained if one could observe the same thing twice. The idea of dependability emphasises the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs. The researcher is responsible for describing the changes that occurred in the setting and how these changes affected the way in which he or she approached the study (Mqulwana, 2010:61).

3.6.3. Credibility

The credibility criterion involves establishing whether or not the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participants in the research. Since from this perspective, the purpose of qualitative research is to describe or understand the phenomena of interest from the participant's viewpoint, participants are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results (Mqulwana, 2010:61).

3.6.4. Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results can be confirmed or corroborated by others. There are a number of strategies for enhancing Confirmability. The researcher can document the procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study.

The researcher can actively search for and describe negative instances that contradict prior observations. After a study, one can conduct a data audit that examines the data collection and analysis procedures and makes judgments about the potential for bias or distortion (Mqulwana, 2010:62).

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ethical measures that will be adhered to as guiding principles throughout this study are the following:



3.7.1 Informed consent and voluntary participation

Principals, educators and parents will be used in this study. Therefore, the researcher provided every learner with a letter to show their parents or guardians that the research was for study purposes. Participants will be provided with sufficient information about the study to allow them to decide whether or not to participate. The principals, educators and parents will be given consent forms as participants in the study.

This will be done after they have been provided with all the information regarding the research and expressed their willingness to voluntarily participate in the research. The respondents will be informed that they have a choice regarding whether or not to participate in the research, as they are not being forced to participate. They will also be informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point if they no longer want to participate.

3.7.2 Anonymity and confidentiality

The privacy and confidentiality of participants will be guaranteed during the interview. The researcher will keep the recordings and notes strictly confidential. Since the research deals with human beings, the names and identities of the participants and the research sites will not be revealed in the reporting of the findings. Codes will be used to conceal the names of participants. For example, they will be addressed as participants from school A, B or C. The use of codes will ensure that any person who reads the research report will be unable to link the response to a particular participant, even though the researcher will be able to link the responses to individual participants. This will ensure that the personal details of participants remain anonymous.

3.8 CONCLUSION

The qualitative approach was adopted in this study by the researcher during the research process. The reason for using the qualitative approach is that it is a reliable method to use when conducting interviews, since it prevents the researcher from influencing participants, and as such it elicits the desired responses. Sampling in this study included parents, educators and principals of each school, in order to obtain the views of all stakeholders in

the educational system. During the interviews, anonymity and confidentiality were complied with by adhering to ethical requirements for research.



CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, data generated from semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, questionnaires, observation and field notes are presented and discussed. Quotes are used extensively to give a qualitative “feel” to the responses. Only quotes representing common views, rather than a person’s responses, are used.

4.2. Background information

In this study, interviews were conducted in three schools in the Vhembe District with three principals, six teachers and six parents from each school. The participants are residents in the rural area of Vhembe District. Interviews with parents took place at the school which their children attend. In total, thirty-nine participants were involved in this study. For teachers and school managers, English was used as the medium of communication. For parents, Tshivenda and Xitsonga were used because most of them would understand their mother tongue much better than English, given their educational status. Their responses were translated into English by the researcher and the translation was confirmed by a colleague.

The biographical data of the participants are presented in the tables below, as the participants’ information has an impact on the capturing of collected data.

Table 4.2.1 Characteristics of school managers

SCHOOL MANAGERS	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C
Gender	Female	Male	Female
Age	52	47	42
Teaching experience	20	18	11
Experience in a management post	7	11	11
Certificate in educational management	No	Yes	No

Table 4.2.2.Characteristics of teachers (six teachers from each school participated in the study)

Key: I represents teacher 1 to teacher 6 or VI, A= ACE, B. Ed = Honours, Not applicable= N/A

TEACHERS	SCHOOL A						SCHOOL B						SCHOOL C					
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Gender	F	F	F	M	F	F	M	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
Age	45	47	56	57	50	45	53	55	46	49	47	48	45	47	48	54	46	47
Teaching experience	10	10	22	23	18	13	21	20	12	10	12	14	10	13	9	14	9	11
Further education	B.Ed.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	ACE	N/A	N/A	N/A	ACE	N/A	N/A	B.Ed	ACE	N/A	N/A	N/A	B. Ed.

Table 4.2.3.Characteristics of parents (six parents per school participated in the study)

PARENTS	SCHOOL A						SCHOOL B						SCHOOL C					
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Gender	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	M	F	F	F	F	M	F	F	F
Age	25	30	39	52	46	48	26	38	27	54	42	39	40	29	49	35	34	47
Highest standard passed	STD 2	0	STD 2	0 level	0 level	Level 2	Level 1	Level 3	0 level	Level 4	Level 4	Level 1	0 level	Level 2	Level 2	0 level	Level 3	Level 1
No. of children at school	3	1	4	1	2	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	2	1	3	4	1	1

4.3. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data collected in this study is presented under the following headings:

- Participants' understanding of the concept of parental involvement.
- The role played by parental involvement in their children's education in schools of the Vhembe District.
- The extent to which parents in the Vhembe District are involved in their children's education.

- Barriers to parental involvement in their children’s education in the Vhembe District.
- Strategies to overcome barriers to parental involvement in their children’s education.

These themes are presented and discussed in the order given above.

4.3.1. School managers’ understanding of the concept of parental involvement

School managers (principals), teachers and parents were the participants in this study.

Table 4.3.1.1 School managers’ understanding of the concept of parental involvement in their children’s education

In what ways are parents involved in their children’s education at your school?	By bringing their children to school.	By taking part in the SGB, providing for their basic needs, and motivating children to learn.	By bringing their children to school.	
Based on your experience, what are the barriers to parental involvement?	They are not sending their children to school well. Language seems to be a problem.	Parent of low-achieving children are not assisting their children with homework, and are not bringing them to school	They do not prepare their children properly for school in the morning, as children come to school dirty. Socio-economic status is also a problem.	
As a school manager, have you attended workshops on parental involvement?	Not really	We usually attend finance meetings with the SGB	Never attended any workshops	
How do your teachers try to encourage parental involvement in your school?	By sending parents progress reports via their children	Some teachers invite parents to discuss their children’s progress	They do nothing as their understanding of the concept is not clear.	
Has the district organised a workshop on	No workshop was held	No workshop was held	No workshop was held	

parental involvement in their children's education?				
How do you engage parents on the development of school policy?	We have never engaged them	Never involved them	Yes, the South African Schools Act is about parents and their children	
What strategies can be used to overcome barriers to parental involvement in their children's education at your school?	Calling them to meetings at the school.	Encouraging them to attend meetings and workshops on parental involvement.	Inviting them to school when events are being held.	

Discussion

Responses by school managers relating to their understanding of parental involvement point to the fact that all three school managers' understanding of parental involvement is limited. Less than 50% of the school managers managed to mention more than five of the ten activities associated with parental involvement, as indicated in the table above. This showed that they were only aware of a few ways in which parents could be involved in the education of their children.

In fact, during the interviews, 66% of the school managers struggled to articulate their understanding of the concept of parental involvement. In the words of one of the school managers, representing many of these school heads' responses, "It's really difficult to say what parent involvement is. Umm...it depends on the school ... or perhaps the parents. Basically it's about contributing in cash or in properties towards helping the school to function well." An equally typical quote from the school manager of school B was: "Parental involvement should mean parents helping the school, for example building classrooms and the like." These were clearly not very confident answers, betraying a very limited understanding of parental involvement in their children's education.

The school manager of school C understands of parental involvement referred more to school-based involvement than home-based involvement. For example, parental involvement activities, such as parents helping with school development and infrastructural maintenance, and helping with the provision of teaching and learning resources, featured more in school managers' responses than activities such as assisting children at home with homework, good parenting and providing for children's basic needs. Apart from homework supervision and motivating children to learn, little mention was made of home-based involvement (such as home discussion, which is associated with discussing school-related activities, and home supervision, which involves monitoring the child's out-of-school activities).

With regard to the ways in which parents involved themselves in their children's education, the school managers of School A and School C indicated that parents are involved by bringing their children to school. However, they did not mention other aspects which parents should also consider. The school manager at School C elaborated well on how parents involve themselves in their children's education. The school manager of school B said that "we have parents who assist and support teacher's effort to solve the children's problem". All school managers were able to give more than one factor that constitutes a barrier to parental involvement in their children's education.

4.3.2. Teachers' understanding of the concept of parental involvement in their children's education

Table 4.3.2.1 Teachers' understanding of the concept of parental involvement in their children's education

N=6, 6=100%.

Activities of teachers associated with their understanding of parental involvement	Teachers at school A (six teachers participated)		Teachers at school B (six teachers participated)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
What do you understand by the concept of parental involvement?	2	33%	1	16%
Does the school communicate effectively with parents?	3	50%	2	33%
How good is the provision of teaching and learning resources?	1	16%		16%
In your experience, what are the	4	66%	3	50%

barriers to parental involvement?				
What types of parents mostly engage in their children's education?	5	83%	2	33%
As a teacher, how do you encourage parental involvement in their children's education?	2	33%	3	50%
Have you attended workshops on parental involvement?	0	0%	0	0%
How do you engage parents on the development of school policy?	0	0%	0	0%
Has the district organised a workshop on parental involvement in their children's education?	6	100%	6	100%
What strategies can be used to overcome barriers to parental involvement?	2	33%	3	50%

Discussion

Teachers differed from school managers in that they gave less prominence to their understanding of the concept of parental involvement (which they apparently regarded as the school managers' concern). They gave more prominence to the issue of effective communication between the school and parents. They also gave more prominence than school managers did to activities such as engaging parents on school activities, providing teaching/learning resources and providing for children's basic needs. This was apparently because they thought that their job as teachers would be made easier if these two issues were addressed. A typical answer given by a teacher was the following: "If (parental involvement) involves parents helping us by buying books and stationery so that teaching and learning becomes easier as the government is not providing enough resources."

It is noteworthy that few teachers mentioned parental involvement activities such as the type of parents involved in school activities (N=5 or 83%, N = 3 or 50% and N = 2 or 33% respectively). Teachers indicated that parents who are highly involved are those whose children are performing well. A typical answer from a teacher at school A was that "we write letters to parents to discuss about their children's progress, only parents of well performing

children will come to school” (66%, 33% and 50% respectively of teachers were collaborating with parents).

This does not mean, however, that these parental involvement activities are insignificant. It simply means that school managers and teachers who did not mention them may have been unaware that they constituted parental involvement activities.

The interviews indicated that teachers’ training did not prepare them for involving parents. None of the teachers interviewed had done a course specifically on parental involvement. In fact, they did not remember being taught anything about parental involvement in their children’s education. The responses of all the teachers interviewed showed that they were not fully aware of how to involve parents. Training colleges need to do more to prepare teachers in terms of life situations they might encounter as class teachers at schools in the Vhembe District.

What emerged from the responses of school managers and teachers was that their knowledge of parental involvement was limited and that both groups gave more prominence to different parental involvement activities. From the responses to the question “Has the District organised a workshop on parental involvement?” it is clear that there is a need for staff development, both for school managers and teachers, so that their understanding and appreciation of parental involvement will be the same. In the absence of a common understanding and appreciation of parental involvement, school teachers and school managers may be working at cross purposes, to the detriment of children. It is noteworthy that school managers mentioned parents visiting the school when there was a problem, which school teachers did not mention this. This may be because parents making such visits were mostly attended to by the school managers and seldom found their way to teachers. With regard to the development of school policy, nothing was said by either school managers or school teachers.

Focus group interview with parents

Parents who participated in focus group interviews believed that they should participate in their children’s education, but were ignorant as to how they should be involved. In the words of one parent: “As parents we have a responsibility to do everything to promote our

children's education, but we do not know what we should do". In another focus group interview, one parent pointed out the following: "We are willing to help school in the education of our children, but our little education stands is a problem". These responses strongly indicated that parents felt incapacitated to participate in their children's education, either because they did not know how they could be involved or believed that they could not because of their limited education. The parents' understanding of parental involvement was clearly very limited.

The literature confirms these findings. Gregoire (2010:31) indicates that some parents feel ill-equipped to assist their children with homework completion, which was also mentioned by Mncube (2005, 2008), who quoted Van Wyk (1998:33), stating that illiterate parents are unable to keep abreast of new challenges in education and tend to delegate their responsibility to school managers, thus become passive participants. Parents thought that the teachers were capable enough to teach their children, and could do a better job than they can. As one parent said: "Teachers must not expect us to teach children. We are not qualified to do so. It's the teachers' job. Are they not paid for it?" Such parents were more aware of their perceived limitations than their potential to be meaningfully involved in their children's education. However, despite their own feelings of inadequacy, an overwhelming majority indicated that it was their duty and responsibility to assist their children with homework.

It emerged from the focus group interviews that some parents thought of parental involvement as having to do more with sending their children to school every day than anything else. A typical statement from a parent in this regard was the following: "If we don't send our children to school they will have little education as we are, we don't want our children to follow our path". They did not think much about parental involvement in terms of assisting their children with homework activities, in order to improve their children's school achievement.

However, there were other parents who indicated during the focus group interviews that they understood parental involvement as referring to the participation of parents in the provision of teaching and learning resources (although they were limited by socio-economic factors), helping children with homework (although they were limited by their own

educational status), and motivating children to learn. This shows that parents have a different understanding of parental involvement. In light of this fact, the need to educate parents in respect of parental involvement is self-evident. While it was acknowledged by the researcher that parents had different needs in terms of participation in their children's education, there is still a need to bring them to a level where they have a common understanding of parental involvement in their children's education, and a level that will enable teachers to collaborate with all of them without too much difficulty. Parents' individual differences or needs could be attended to after establishing their common understanding of parental involvement in their children's education.

Some parents indicated that their limited education did not totally prevent them from helping their children with their education. As one parent said, "Though we are uneducated, we can secure help from our neighbors' children who are attending the nearby secondary school to assist our children." Other like-minded parents said that there were things they could do to promote children's learning, notwithstanding their limited education. A typical response from one parent was: "We can teach our children folktales which teach good morals; this could also develop their listening and speaking skills. We can teach children proverbs' using our language of communication which teach wisdom, and also riddles which sharpen thinking skills". Others mentioned that they could teach their children crafts, traditional music and dance, as well as poetry.

It was notable that in all focus group interviews with parents, they seemed to be quite excited to learn from their peers that they were not helpless regarding involvement after all. It would clearly be prudent for school managers and teachers to learn from parents what they (parents) could comfortably do in terms of helping their children with their education.

In one focus group interview, there were some male parents who thought that parental involvement was more a mother's duty than a father's duty. A response which represents this kind of thinking was: "To play with small children would undermine our authority, resulting in indiscipline on the part of children. A mother must be more involved because culturally a mother takes care of the family while a father represents authority in the family". The majority of the parents were shaking their heads to indicate disagreement with

this type of thinking. However, the fact that some parents did not say anything to contradict this rather inexplicable view means that such parents need to be rid of such misconceptions.

What emerged from the focus group responses by parents was that, like school managers and teachers, their understanding of parental involvement was very limited. Some parents emphasised personal factors, while others focused on what they could do to help enhance their children’s education. From the responses, it also became apparent that some parents responded in a reactive manner to schools’ demands, while other parents were proactive and eager to act on their own initiative.

From the discussion above, it has emerged that school managers, teachers and parents had a limited understanding of what PI entailed, and that they did not all have the same understanding of parental involvement in their children’s education.

4.3.2. Role of parental involvement in their children’s education

As reflected in chapter 2, it was confirmed by many researchers that parental involvement in their children’s education has immense benefits for school children.

Table 4.3.2.1 the perceptions of School managers in the Vhembe District regarding the role of parental involvement in their children’s education

Activities associated with the role and duties of parental involvement	School manager of school A	School manager of school B	School manager of school C
Development of infrastructure and maintenance	Parents assist in the development of infrastructure	Parents are not likely to present themselves to the school	Few will avail themselves when invited
Provision of learning support material	Nothing indicated about learner support material	Nothing indicated about learner support material	Nothing indicated about learner support material
Motivation of children	As teachers, they motivate children at school	Sometimes invite motivational speakers to the school	As teachers, they motivate children at school
Promotion of discipline	If parents are involved, children tend to change their bad behaviour	Only assists children from advantaged family backgrounds	Not easy to explain, as parental involvement has declined

Supervision and monitoring of children's work	Parents of well-performing children are involved	Parents of well-performing children are involved	Parents of well-performing children are involved
Promotion of school attendance	Children are encouraged when parents are actively involved	Children feel a sense of ownership when parents are involved	Children are encouraged when parents are actively involved
Provision of children's basic needs	Some parents prepare lunch boxes for their children	Some parents provide uniforms	Parents depend on the school to provide children with nutrition

Table 4.3.2.2. The perceptions of teachers in schools of the Vhembe District regarding the role and duties of parental involvement

Activities associated with the role and duties of parental involvement	Teachers at school A (six teachers participated)		Teachers at school B (six teachers participated)		Teachers at school C (six teachers participated)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Development of infrastructure and maintenance	4	66%	4	66%	4	66%
Provision of learning support material	3	50%	4	66%	3	50%
Motivation of children	4	66%	2	33%	4	66%
Promotion of discipline	3	50%	2	33%	2	33%
Supervision and monitoring of children's work	2	33%	2	33%	3	50%
Promotion of school attendance	3	50%	3	50%	3	50%
Provision of children's basic needs	4	66%	4	66%	2	33%

Discussion

With regard to the role and duties of parental involvement, school managers mentioned what happens at their schools. The school managers of school A, B and C had different

ideas about how parents involved themselves in the development of infrastructure and maintenance. The school manager of school A indicated that parents are assisting with the school infrastructure, while the school manager of school B mentioned that parents are not involved in the school infrastructure. The school manager of school C indicated that parents sometimes come to the school when invited.

From the semi-structured interview, it became clear that school managers have little knowledge about how parents are involved in their schools. None of the school managers mentioned anything about the provision of learner support material. From the responses by teachers with regard to the role and duties of parental involvement, it seems that they were aware that parents should play a role in their children's education. School managers and teachers differed with regard to the issue of development and maintenance (4=28%). The differences in terms of provision of learning support material (N=9 or 50% and N=12 or 66%) may be because teachers are more exposed to learning environments than school managers.

They hope that if parents provide learning support material, effective teaching and learning will take place, thereby motivating children (N=4 or 28%). Some teachers mentioned the promotion of teacher motivation (N=12 or 66%) and improved school attendance (N= 9 or 50%), as well as the promotion of good behaviour. A typical response from one teacher was the following: "when parents play a role in the education of their children we get strength and we are motivated to assist these children". In school B, teachers (N=3 or 17%) mentioned the home environment as a determinant of parental involvement. Aspects of the home environment that they mentioned included reading materials in the home, story-telling, and cognitive stimulation at home.

The school manager of school A was also concerned about children who arrive at school late, and are dirty, hungry, tired and unable to concentrate on their school work. She blamed the children's family structure for this, where some children are said to be staying with their siblings, while others are staying with their grandparents. The hidden trend in all three schools is that most biological parents are inclined to stay with their children, while grandparents are left to attend to matters related to the children's education. Teachers

(N=2 or 11%) at School C also mentioned the home environment as a determinant of parental involvement.

What was clear from the responses of school managers and teachers was that they had limited knowledge about the role and duties of parental involvement. Some did not manage to come up with more than three roles, but they were somehow aware that parental involvement had a role and duty to play in the education of their children and was thus important. It is therefore possible to develop them to a level where they will be aware of the essential role of parental involvement and take advantage of this knowledge to enhance the performance of children under their supervision.

In one focus group interview, some parents demonstrated a remarkable awareness of the role and duties of parental involvement. They indicated that parental involvement promotes a positive relationship between parents and teachers, which may result in teachers being more encouraged to help their children. In other words, teachers would develop more work motivation. Most of the parents indicated that collaboration between parents and teachers resulted in mutual respect, trust and joint (teacher-parent) efforts aimed at enhancing children's education. As one parent typically remarked, "When we work together with schools, we are bound to understand each other, respect each other and trust each other. This will result in children's performance getting better."

These findings are corroborated by Haack (2007:11), who observes that parental involvement results in parents understanding what teachers do, what their children are learning, and how the school functions. They develop a more positive interest in their children's teachers and school. In addition, parents who are involved in the education of their children feel useful and have a better understanding of how they can help their children succeed in school.

According to the parents who were interviewed, when they saw parents and schools working together, they developed a greater appreciation of education and as a result, children tended to take schooling more seriously. In other words, children would understand why they are motivated and encouraged in their education. This view is supported by Davis (2004:21), who observes that parental involvement creates a feeling of caring and belonging towards the school and makes children more aware of the importance

of schooling. Parents also believed that if they were involved in their children’s education, teachers would act more responsibly in relation to their job. Other roles and duties that they mentioned included the reduction of absenteeism, promotion of good behaviour in their children, and children not creating disharmony between parents and teachers. They would not be able to play parents against teachers. As one parent put it, “When children see us working collaboratively with teachers they will take schooling seriously and won’t attempt to create conflict between parents and teachers. They will realise we are working as a team.” School development and maintenance was also mentioned as the role accruing from parental involvement, as was the boosting of parents’ self-confidence through their involvement in their children’s education.

It should be noted, however, that not all parents mentioned all the roles of parental involvement indicated above. Some conceded that they did not know much about the roles and duties, but said that they had really become enlightened by their peers. In the words of one of the parents: “We certainly need more interactions like this one. We have learned a lot regarding our role in our children’s education.” Such an attitude is an indication that parents were prepared to learn more about what they could do to enhance the education of their children.

4.3.3. Extent to which parents in the Vhembe District are involved in their children’s education

Table 4.3.3.1. School managers’ percepts of parents’ involvement in their children’s education

Activities associated with ways in which parents are involved in the education of their children	School manager at school A	School manager at school B	School manager at school C
Attendance of parents’ meetings	Few parents attend meetings	Less than one-third of parents attend meetings	Few parents attend meetings
Provision of learning support material	Some parents prepare the lunch boxes for their children	Some parents buy uniforms for their children	Parents depend on the school for their children’s nutrition
Parents’ consultation	Only parents of	Only parents of	Only parents of well-

with the school	well- performing children attend meetings	well-performing children attend meetings	performing children attend meetings
Supervision and monitoring of children's work	Parents of well performing children are involved	Parents of well performing children are involved	Parents of well performing children are involved
Promotion of school attendance	Children are encouraged when parents are involved	Children feel a sense of ownership when parents are involved	Children are encouraged when parents are involved
Provision of children's basic needs	Some parents prepare lunch boxes for their children	Some parents buy school uniforms	Parents depend on the school for their children's nutrition

Table 4.3.3.2: School teachers' perceptions regarding parental involvement in their children's education.

Activities associated with ways in which parents are involved in the education of their children	Teachers at school A		Teachers at school B		Teachers at school C	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Attendance of parents' meetings	2	33%	2	33%	2	33%
Provision of learning support material	3	50%	4	66%	3	50%
Parents' consultation with the school	2	33%	2	33%	2	33%
Supervision and monitoring of children's work	2	33%	2	33%	3	50%
Promotion of school attendance	3	50%	3	50%	3	50%
Assistance with extra-mural activities	4	66%	4	66%	2	33%

Discussion

Responses by school managers and teachers regarding ways in which parents were involved in their children's education indicated that the respondents were aware of a few ways in which the parents of the children they taught were involved. School managers mentioned no more than six parental involvement activities. Parental involvement activities mentioned most by school managers were school based, rather than home-based. Of the three school managers, two mentioned school development and maintenance, and one mentioned providing learning support material. The other three ways in which parents were involved were mentioned by the school managers of school B. These were attending school events, and visiting the school when there was a problem with their children in order to solve the problem.

School teachers mentioned eight ways in which parents were involved in their children's education. What some of them mentioned which school managers did not mention were homework supervision (N =5 or 28%), provision of uniforms and food to take to school (N = 3 or 17%), encouraging school attendance (N = 6 or 33%) and moulding children's character (N = 4 or 22%). It was not clear why school heads did not mention these parental involvement activities. This might be an indication that they were not very sure of what constituted parental involvement. Teachers mentioned more school-based parental involvement activities than home-based activities.

What stands out prominently from the school managers and teachers' responses is that parental involvement in the Vhembe District was not given sufficient attention. Parents were involved in a very limited, if not peripheral, way and schools did not seem to be unduly bothered by this state of affairs.

Responses given by parents from all focus groups were to some extent similar to school managers and teachers' responses. Prominent in their responses were the following ways in which they were involved: school development and maintenance (such as helping with the construction of classrooms or toilets by means of providing money, paving of school yard materials and labour), payment of school fees and levies, provision of learning support material, buying school uniforms and provision of lunch boxes, and encouraging children to attend school. They mentioned that money was not always easy to obtain. As indicated in

chapter two, parents, regardless of economic and literacy level factors, are still their children's first teachers and the family remains the primary source for learning, even after children enter school. Parents need to be involved in the education of their children for it to be effective.

According to Cotton and Wiklund (2001:18), "Parents are concerned about their children's academic performance but do not always know how to express concern or how to participate." As with the teachers, the parents' focus groups believed that their role in the education of their children was important and would foster their children's performance. Parents gave less emphasis in their responses to parental involvement activities such as homework supervision. This was mainly because they felt constrained by their own limited education. The few who indicated that they helped children with their homework said that they did so by providing children with space and time to do their homework undisturbed.

Some of them said that they gave children the answers to their homework problems, thereby betraying the fact that they were not quite aware of what they were supposed to do in terms of helping children with their homework. Even those who said that they sought help from neighbors' children who were attending secondary school could not determine how such help would be rendered.

Many parents did not indicate much in terms of what they discussed with their children before they left for school and after they returned home. The majority of the parents indicated that before their children went to school in the morning and after the children returned home in the evening, they engaged them in routine conversations which were restricted to questions such as (in the morning when children left for school): "Have you put all your books and food in your bag?" or "Don't play along the way...you must get to school in time." The same thing happened in the evening when children returned home. The routine questions asked or remarks made included: "Take out your uniform, Eat your food quickly so that you go and draw water from the borehole before it gets dark" or "Did you learn well today?, What is that you have learn? " The conversations were mainly ritualistic and thus meant very little to the children. They lacked motivational potency. The parents were not aware that daily conversations about the school, alongside supervision and monitoring, were associated with children's higher achievement scores in reading and

writing (Hoell, 2006:7). The need to impress upon parents the importance of engaging their children in motivational conversations cannot be overemphasized. It is also notable that daily conversations about the school provided opportunities for parents to identify their children's learning problems and generate solutions to such problems.

Parents also mentioned that they tried as much as they could to provide learning support material, although they had real problems getting money for this purpose. The parents were very clear that they considered it to be their responsibility to provide learning support material for their children.

Regarding attendance of school events/meetings, as well as parents' consultation, the parents conceded that their attendance was irregular or inconsistent. This may be the reason why only one (33%) school manager and nine (50%) teachers mentioned attendance of school events as one of the ways in which parents were involved in their children's education. Most parents did not see the reason for attending school meetings because at such meetings, they were hardly given the opportunity to express their views on pertinent matters.

Only a few parents indicated that they visited the school when there was a problem with their children. From the semi-structured interviews with school managers, it was notable that only two (67%) of the school managers mentioned that parents visited the school when there was a problem, and only (n=2 or 11%) teachers mentioned this. Very few parents mentioned building children's character as a parental involvement activity in which they engaged. It seems parents view this not as out-of-school education, but as a family activity. The three forms of parental cognition were parents' aspirations concerning their children's future occupation, parents' self-efficacy in rearing and educating their children, and parents' perceptions of the school.

It is very clear that when opportunities for parent-child interaction are limited, as it was not frequently mentioned, parental involvement is also limited.

Parents' experiences with regard to their role in their children's education was also mentioned by two school managers and teachers (N=10 or) as a determinant of parental involvement. One teacher gave a typical answer when he mentioned, in relation to parents' ambitions concerning their children's future occupation, that when parents "do not have

high ambition for their children’s future they do not make efforts to ensure that their children reach lofty ambition”.

A typical answer also given by one parent in relation to parenting was as follows: “When you do not believe that you have the capacity to influence things in the direction you want, and then you are not confident to help your children with their schooling.” It is thus very important to help parents develop their self-belief with regard to the education of their children.

Parents’ perception of the school was also a determinant of parental involvement that was mentioned by the school manager of school A. In relation to this determinant, the other two school managers’ remark was quite revealing. The school manager of school C said the following: “If teachers are perceived as welcoming, concerned about children’s educational needs, respectful to parents and have good communication with parents, then parents become inclined to participate in their children’s education.” Whatever the school does, it must be perceived as welcoming by parents in order for them to willingly participate in their children’s education. Therefore, the perceptions that the school creates must be positive.

4.3.4.1 Activities associated with the understanding of school managers with regard to barriers to parental involvement

Table 4.3.4.1

Activities associated with barriers to parental involvement	School manager of school A	School manager of school B	School manager of school C
School policy	South African School Act	South African School Act	South African School Act
Communication	Via letters	Through the SGB	When they come to the school
Socio-economic status	High rate of unemployment	Parents working far away from home	Depend on social grant
Educational background	Less than 5% with standard 10	Less than 5% with standard 10	Majority are primary school drop outs
Teachers’ attitude towards parents	Parents help via the school manager	Parents come to the office	Parents come to the office
Parent’s attitude towards the school	Fear of limited education	Some are limited by financial constraints	Low self-esteem

4.3.4.2. Activities associated with the understanding of school teachers with regard to barriers to parental involvement

Table 4.3.4.2

Activities associated with barriers to parental involvement	Teachers at school A		Teacher at school B		Teachers at school C	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
School policy	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Communication	2	33%	2	33%	2	33%
Socio-economic status	3	33%	2	33%	2	33%
Educational background	4	66%	3	50%	4	66%
Teachers' attitude towards parents	4	66%	3	50%	3	50%
Parents' attitude towards the school	3	50%	3	50%	3	50%

Discussion

Responses given by all school managers with regard to barriers to parental involvement in their children's education were closely related and some were identical. With regard to school policy, all school managers mentioned that they know the South African School Act (SASA). School managers were silent about the admission policy, learners' code of conduct, policy on dress code, policy on finance, and the health and safety policy, which should be developed by the school governing body and presented to parents at parents' meetings. School managers and teachers thought that in the absence of a clear school policy, schools could not develop effective parental involvement strategies. This was because nobody would be clear with regard to what needed to be done. Determinations would not be organised and hindrances and confusion would reign. In the words of the school manager at school C: "Without a clear school policy confusion prevails. Teachers and parents wouldn't know how to collaborate." This was supported by the teacher at school C, who said: "With both school personnel and parents not knowing how to determine parental involvement, there was bound to be confusion and ultimately conflict between parents and teachers (and even between teachers and school managers)".

Parents also thought that the absence of a clear policy on parental involvement resulted in confusion and misunderstanding. In the words of one parent: “We end up confusing and misunderstanding each other”. Van Wyk and Lemmer (2004:261) confirm that the attitudes of schools towards active parental involvement are frequently unclear. One parent at school A summarised this by saying: “In the absence of school policy, school managers and teachers were certain to be varying in their management of parental involvement. This certainly confused us parents.”

This is mainly because of the absence of a clear school policy on parental involvement. The school climate is thus affected, in that some teachers, unaware of how to handle parental issues, do not invite parents to the school. In this regard, Lemmer (2004:45) declares that parents are more likely to become involved at school if the school welcomes them and makes it easy for them to become involved. In support of the need for a clear school policy on parental involvement, Van Wyk (2004:27) observes that while many factors affect a parent’s involvement, it is the teachers and school managers’ responsibility to encourage interactions between the school and home. This can be effectively done if there is a clear school policy for both school personnel and parents.

From school managers’ responses, it is clear that school managers have limited knowledge of the concept of parental involvement. The school manager at school A mentioned that they communicated with parents via letter, while the school manager of school B indicated that they did this via the school governing body, and the school manager at school C mentioned that they communicated with parents during parents’ meetings.

Teachers at school C felt that parents did not communicate about important issues such as a child’s health problems or grief in the family. This made it difficult for teachers to handle children appropriately. At school C, one teacher said: “Sometimes you push a child too hard not knowing that he/she is not healthy or is grieved.” It was also mentioned by teachers at school A that they felt that neither school managers, teachers nor parents communicated their expectations or concerns to each other about the children. Haack (2007:30) confirms that home-school collaboration includes communication between home and school or teachers and parents, decision-making and school collaboration with the community and families. During focus group interviews, parents indicated that effective communication

between school and parents was very limited. A typical answer from one parent was that “we are summoned at school only when there is a problem concerning our children”. Epstein (1996:226) observes that teachers’ good intentions may not work out well if the communication with parents is only in connection with children’s problems.

The school climate in relation to parental involvement is obviously influenced by the school managers’ limited knowledge of parental involvement. For example, with the school managers not knowing what procedures need to be put in place for communication to flow from school to family and from family to school, an unpleasant school climate may prevail (Haack, 2007:45).

Communication with parents should be open and stress-free. Open communication between parents and teachers can help parents feel at ease about receiving the necessary help with their children’s academic work (Tam and Chan, 2009:81). Communication should not only be about negative things that occurred at school concerning their children, but also about special or positive things that happened in class (Tam and Chan, 2009:81). This was caused by various factors. In some cases, teachers thought that parents had too little education to be able to help with the education of their children. A typical answer from a teacher at school B was the following: “The parents of the children we teach are not educated enough to be able to meaningfully help their children with their learning. There is no point worrying them with school matters”.

In other cases, parents themselves thought that all matters relating to school should be left to teachers who were knowledgeable and were actually paid for it. In the words of one parent at school C: “What can we tell teachers about education? They are adequately educated to deal with all matters relating to school. We should not interfere with their work”. Such thinking on the part of teachers, school managers and parents tended to build barriers between the school and home, instead of building bonds. They became frustrated with each other because they were unaware of each other’s expectations or concerns. There were also cases where parents simply did not know how to communicate their expectations and concerns to the school. They ended up regarding teachers with suspicion and vice versa. Teachers need to provide other means of communicating with parents, whether it is via phone calls, emails, circulars, home visits or meetings at a popular area

within the community. A typical answer from parents in school C was the following: "There are children who actively, even if innocently, promote parental involvement, there are others who actively create barriers to parental involvement, and some bring the message from school to parent while others possessed the information". In the words of Edwards and Alldred (2002), in Deslandes and Cloutier (2002:47), there are children who are just as active in discouraging, evading and obstructing their parents' involvement in education.

Parents' economic status was also regarded as constituting a barrier to parental involvement by school managers, teachers and parents. A school manager at school B expressed this as follows: "Most of the parents are too poor to provide their children's learning supportive material. That is why they dare not set foot on the school yard." This implies that some parents turn away from the school because they are afraid of being asked about what they owed the school!" In a typical response, the school manager at school A criticized parents because of this situation: "They contribute precious little in terms of school infrastructural development, hence their children learn in terrible conditions! They also don't buy the required stationery." A school manager at school C expressed it as follows: "You see majority of parents are sub- economical. You find that they are less involved and others really don't care. So in terms of such school based activities as referred to above, the financially constrained parents were not meaningfully involved in their children's education".

Some parents believed that their poor economic status greatly compromised their ability to meaningfully involve themselves in their children's education. In the pretty severe words of one parent at school A: "We don't have anything...we are humiliated when it comes to contributing to our own children's education. It makes it difficult for us to claim a say in how our children are educated at school". The majority of parents in the focus group interview nodded in agreement with this remark. This implies that some parents are rendered powerless by their lack of money. They felt that they had no basis on which to claim their right to participate in their children's education. It sounded as if their economic status denied them the right to be involved in their children's education.

These findings are supported in the literature. Haack (2007:47), for example, cites socio-economic background, such as economic status, as a determinant of parental involvement.

It is noted that parents' economic status was usually related to their educational level. Vogels (2002:2) confirms that parents with poor socio-economic status are more likely to have low self-esteem, low level of education, low income and no occupation. Negative parental attitudes were also cited by school managers and teachers as constituting a barrier to parental involvement.

Negative parental attitudes manifested themselves in different ways. It was indicated in chapter two of this study that there are parents who simply believe that the responsibility for education belongs to the school (Siririka, 2007:27; Zoppi, 2006:4). Some parents were found to be so overprotective of their children that they did not send them to school if it was cold, or they prohibited their children from participating in sports in case they got injured. The school manager at school C said the following: "There are parents who think we are not sufficiently concerned about their children's welfare that they prohibit their children from participating in sports for fear that they might be injured".

Other parents were said to be unwilling to work with the school—they never worried to attend school events such as parents' meetings, consultation days or open days. Some were even said to frequent village beer parties where they purchased beer while they owed the school money in terms of fees and levies. One teacher at school A put it this way: "Some parents are so irresponsible that they prioritize beer drinking than providing learning materials for their children." This, according to school managers and teachers, frustrated teachers to the extent that it impacted negatively on their performance.

Variances occurred where both school managers and teachers were apparently reluctant to blame themselves for hindering parental involvement in their schools. Their argument was that the school managers were supposed to give direction and leadership, especially on such matters as parental involvement, which involved non-professionals (parents), so as to avoid confusing the parents. In addition, the school managers were expected to lead the formulation of a school policy on parental involvement. One of the parents at school A said that "if schools were unclear about parental involvement, it would be difficult for us to participate meaningfully in our children's education". One parent put it aptly by saying: "Because of our limited education, we very much depend on the advice we get from school managers and teachers in relation to matters to do with our children's education children's

learning.” This was corroborated by the teacher, who said the following: “Uneducated parents cannot help children with their schooling simply because they have no capacity to do so” (Hoell, 2006:28). The need to capacitate parents so that they meaningfully participate in their children’s education is self-evident in these responses.

The literature confirms and illuminates these findings. Mansfield (2009:21) observes that parents’ educational level has been positively correlated to parental involvement (see also Depleanty et al., 2007). Depleanty et al. (2007) in Mansfield (2009:21) found that parents with a higher degree of education are more likely to be active in school activities, PTA meetings and parent-teacher conferences. On the other hand, parents with a low educational level were unable to provide their children with the skills to negotiate the school system successfully, which could in turn impact negatively on the children’s school performance. Such parents tended to be less involved when it came to homework (Tam and Chan, 2009:81).

It is also notable that some parents thought that teachers and school managers were likely to view them in a bad light with regard to parental involvement. In the words of one parent: “Because of our situation in terms of education level and poverty, school managers and teachers somewhat blame us for our children’s progress.” Such parents assumed that they were not appreciated by school personnel and thus did not need to make the effort to become involved.

This finding is supported in the literature. Haack (2007:13) notes that some parents believe that teachers will judge them negatively blame them for their children’s learning difficulties and will not value their input. This view is also supported by Holloway (2008:4).

Negative teacher attitudes were seen in this study as constituting a barrier to parental involvement. Some teachers looked down on parents whom they regarded as uneducated and thus incapable of meaningful PI. In the words of one teacher: “The parents are not sufficiently educated to be helpful in terms of their children’s schooling. Involving them will just make things worse.” As a result, most teachers did not worry to communicate with parents about children’s academic progress and behaviour. Such teachers did not want parents in their classrooms because they thought that they would be disturbed, since the parents did not have anything helpful to contribute. Teachers’ negative attitude also meant

that parents were not given the opportunity to communicate their expectations, or even their concerns, regarding their children's education. This had the potential of frustrating the parents.

Parents' limited education was also seen as constituting a barrier to parental involvement by teachers, school managers and parents. Hanni and Phippen (2010) found that most parents felt that parental involvement is important to them and wanted the teachers to show them or give them things that they could do with their children at home. Siririka (2007:161) confirms that limited parental educational experience resulted in the lack of relevant skills to get involved. As one parent stated, "We are not very much educated. We don't know what we are supposed to do...and we are not sure if we can do what the school may expect us to do." The parents did not know why and how they could be involved in school activities. Such parents were also ignorant of their rights in relation to involvement in their children's education. Some parents, the respondents submitted, had an inferiority complex resulting from their own unhappy experiences with school education. As a result, they tended to shun the school.

Owing to their limited education, some parents thought that school matters were best left to school teachers who were trained to deal with them and were also paid to do so. Zoppi (2006:16) affirms that some parents think that their own lack of education prevents them from participating in their children's education. As one school manager put it, "Parents literally surrender their children to the school and expect the school to handle all matters relating to their education". Haack (2007:45) confirms that some teachers view parents as being unable to work collaboratively with them and may not try to involve them or tell them how they can help. Parents' disrespectful attitude towards teachers was also cited as a barrier to parental involvement. Teachers' bad behaviour contributed towards the negative attitude of parents towards them. As one school manager said: "Respect is earned. It cannot be taken for granted."

Parhar (2006:2) notes that teacher ideology played a fundamental role in excluding parental involvement in schools. Teachers holding shortfall ideologies believed that deprived parents lacked the cultural and social advantages necessary for involvement. In other words, they were not cultured in the system for them to be able to competently

participate in their children's education. Teachers contributing to this view may reinforce practices that exclude uneducated and socio-economically disadvantaged parents. According to Haack (2007:45), some teachers do not know how to involve parents, believe that parents do not have the skills, or do not think that it is fair to ask parents to spend time on school-related activities at home.

Some teachers felt that their heavy workloads made it impossible to take parental involvement seriously. This gave them an accepting attitude. As one teacher put it: "When you teach 70 learners in one class how many parents are you going to deal with and where you do get time to do so?" Mansfield (2009:18) affirms that school size, and by extension class size, could impact negatively on parental involvement. When teachers believed that their teaching loads were barely manageable, they regarded parental involvement as a threat. It is clear from the responses given above that when teachers misbehaved, they attracted negative attitudes from parents and thus hindered parental involvement.

Parents in various focus group interviews cited school managers and school teachers' attitude as a barrier to parental involvement. As one parent at school C put it, "There are school managers who believe that they possess the school. They don't consult and people lose interest in matters relating to the school". This was corroborated by other parents at school B, who said: "The school managers think we are too uneducated to contribute ideas for the development of the school. They make us feel inappropriate". From these responses it is clear that both school managers and school teachers impact negatively on parental involvement. Parents viewed this as an autocratic school leadership style. A typical answer from a parent was that "we did not feel free to communicate our expectations as well as our concerns". They did not consider themselves to be partners with the school in their children's education.

Parents believed that teachers had either a disdainful attitude towards them, or simply did not think that parents had the capacity to be meaningfully involved. One parent typically said: "Some of these teachers really hate us because of our limited education and limited means. They don't see anything good coming from us." Most parents thought that teachers' negative attitudes convinced them that they were not welcome to actively participate in their children's education. One parent put it as follows: "It is teachers who are supposed to

guide us regarding how we could be involved in our children’s education. If they demonstrate a negative attitude towards parental involvement, then there is no way we can be meaningfully involved.”

School managers were quiet with regard to this barrier. This could be because they did not realise the full impact of an autocratic leadership style, or they were autocratic themselves. Clearly, the responses of parents indicate that teachers have the responsibility to persuade parents through word and action that they are appreciated as people who could make a contribution to their children’s education.

It has emerged from the above discussion that barriers to parental involvement result from various situations, such as lack of a clear school policy (and as a result school), policy on health and safety, policy on governance, lack of knowledge on the part of school managers, teachers and parents, parents’ economic status, negative attitudes of the school (school managers and teachers), and poor communication. It is also clear that these barriers are contextually based. As a result, strategies to alleviate or overcome them need to account for the unique situation of the Vhembe District.

4.3.5. Strategies to enhance parental involvement

4.3.5.1. Activities associated with school managers’ understanding with regard to strategies to enhance parental involvement

Table 4.3.5.1

Activities to enhance parental involvement	School manager of school A	School manager of school B	School manager of school C
Development of a clear school policy	It will minimize the barriers	It will minimize the barriers	It will minimize the barriers
Effective communication with parents	It may reduce humiliation for both teachers and parents	It may reduce humiliation for both teachers and parents	It may reduce humiliation for both teachers and parents
Workshop on parental involvement	Workshop will assist all of us	All of us will benefit	We will be capacitated by the workshop
Supervision and monitoring of	It will improve children’s progress	It will improve children’s interest in	It will improve children’s progress

homework		education	
Teachers' changing their attitude	Parents will feel welcome	Parents will feel welcome	Parents will feel welcome

4.3.5.2 Activities associated with the understanding of school teachers with regard to barriers to parental involvement.

Table 4.3.5.2

Activities associated with strategies to enhance parental involvement	Teachers at school A		Teacher at school B		Teachers at school C	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Development of a clear school policy	6	100%	6	100%	6	100%
Communication	3	50%	2	33%	3	50%
Workshop on parental involvement	3	50%	4	66%	3	50%
Supervision and monitoring of homework	4	66%	3	50%	4	66%
Parents' consultation	4	66%	3	50%	3	50%

Discussion

School managers mentioned the following strategies to enhance parental involvement: development of a clear school policy, effective communication, a workshop on parental involvement, supervision and monitoring of homework, and teachers abstaining from unbecoming behaviour.

Responses given by school teachers were closely related to those of school managers. Teachers mentioned the following strategies to enhance parental involvement in their children's education: development of a clear school policy (N=18 or 100%); effective communication between parents and the school (N=8 Or 44%); workshop on parental involvement (N=10 or 56%); supervision and monitoring of homework (N=11 or 61%), and parents' consultation (N=13 or 72%). It is notable that responses by school managers and

school teachers had two differences. School managers mentioned teachers abstaining from unbecoming behaviour and home visits, which were not mentioned by teachers.

The reason why school teachers did not mention the strategies indicated above was apparently because they did not want to create the impression that teachers' unbecoming behavior was of large concern.

As indicated above, no school manager interviewed mentioned anything about school policy, except the SASA. All school managers and school teachers thought that a policy on parental involvement was necessary. They operated their schools without a school policy. School managers indicated that they only stressed to parents what they expected them to do as part of their involvement in their children's education. A teacher at school C blamed the school for the lack of a clear school policy on parental involvement: "We were not aware of the policy, but the school should be blamed on this matter because the school principal should advice the school governing body on developing the policy". What emerged from the interviews is that school managers and teachers' limited knowledge on parental involvement should be addressed.

Parents indicated that they really need to be knowledgeable about the concept and how to enhance parental involvement. Responses given by school managers and teachers with regard to a workshop on parental involvement, when asked if their training had involved the concept of parental involvement, all indicated that parental involvement was not part of their training. In fact, they were under-informed about the reality of involving parents. At school A, the manager vigorously responded that: "No, that one I have learnt by experience when I came to the school." The school manager at school C added the following: "I know more how to deal with them and how to handle those who are harsh, also those who are offensive."

Teachers indicated that a workshop on parental involvement is of crucial importance. A typical answer from the teacher at school C was the following: "If parental workshop should be done both to teachers and parents so that each one will understand what to do". Responses given by teachers indicated that 56% had an interest in such a workshop. Some teachers indicated that they learned about parental involvement workshops when they did their Advanced Certificate in Education Management. A teacher at school B confirmed this

by saying that: “we learned about the workshop programme on parental involvement while we were doing our ACE Management”. A teacher at school C added that: “we learn through experience from schools where our children attend”. In various focus groups, parents showed an interest in such a workshop, as they would be empowered with knowledge on how to involve themselves in their children’s education.

All three school managers gave the same responses in relation to the supervision and monitoring of children’s homework. They all indicated that this would improve children’s performance. Schools required parents to provide enough fuel for lighting and a conducive environment for their children to do homework in the evenings. This, they felt, would facilitate the complete teaching of subject content. Some teachers suggested that parents should also provide extra work and supplementary reading materials, in addition to those given by the school.

Teachers were, however, not very positive about the cooperation they received from parents with regard to homework assignments. One teacher from school A was critical of some parents regarding their involvement at home: “When you give homework to the children you will find that they don’t even complete it and when you call the parent to find out if they make follow-ups parent won’t turn up.” Educated parents appeared to work more with their children at home, but uneducated parents “do not worry”.

The school manager of school C observed that some of the parents were concerned about their children’s schoolwork: “Because you see them come to follow up in school what their children are doing. But the ones who are not concerned are the majority and they don’t come”. According to Epstein (1997:8), homework does not just mean “work done alone, but also interactive activities shared with others at home”, as well as the community and the relationship between schoolwork and real life. The school provides information and ideas to families about how to help pupils at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions and planning.

It was clear that teachers should not accept that parents were uninterested in helping their children at home. Parents showed an awareness of their role in both supervising and helping with homework.

School managers assume that if teachers change their unbecoming behaviour, parents will have more positive attitude towards schools.

The findings indicated that teachers had a limited understanding of parental involvement, implying that the theory that was taught in their preparation programmes was not applicable in practice. Furthermore, the researcher was conscious of the fact that teacher novices did not receive any exposure to parental involvement in their teaching. According to Lee (2005:40), professional growth in teachers occurs when their teaching programme acknowledges teachers' individual and professional needs. Bernauer (2002:89), Bolam (2003:103) and Lee (2005:47) also note that teachers are most effective when their training is a continuous process that includes a formal, systematic and suitably planned programme based on their needs. In light of the fact that school education is free and there are large classes in the Vhembe district, there is a need to equip teachers with the skills and knowledge to work with parents as important investors.

The interviews also showed that the parents of children at the schools of the Vhembe district did not show any interest in their children's school work. This is evidenced by the way in which they responded to meetings called at the schools to discuss matters relating to the school and their children. The school manager at school C said the following: "It is very exceptional, actually their attitudes towards school is not that positive. Most of these parents of course are uneducated and so they are not involved in their children's school work".

None of the school managers acknowledged the importance of parents' consultation. This is because school managers usually do not go to class. Responses from school teachers indicated that parent consultation assisted teachers to get to know the children better. A teacher at school C indicated that they normally contacted parents at school once a quarter: "We summoned the parents of under achieving children to discuss their children's progress. Those parents, they don't come". At school C, a typical answer from a teacher was that: "there is no formal meeting at all, when parents were invited those who will manage to come they usually change the agenda of what they are invited for". A typical answer from parents at school A was the following: "there were more informal contact between teachers

and us than formal contact, we meet at shopping complex and we talk about children at school but they use to hide important information about our children”.

In another focus group, parents indicated that they are willing to involve themselves in the education of their children, but schools are not ready to accommodate them. One parent said that “because we are illiterate, we are not welcome at school to check our children’s work”. However, school teachers and parents viewed parental consultation differently. Some parents appreciated it, as they had an opportunity to check their children’s work and to get to know the teachers of their children. Some teachers felt uncomfortable, since they want to have control over children’s work and therefore do not want interference from parents. It emerged from the interviews that teachers’ understanding of parental involvement is limited also by ineffective communication between parents and teachers.

School managers and parents agreed that teachers needed to abstain from improper behaviour. School managers felt that when teachers behaved in violation of expected standards, parents tended to lose hope and regarded them as being a danger to their children. A school manager at school C put it this way: “Who can trust badly behaved teachers with their most treasured ‘possession’—their child?” It is difficult to see how cooperation can be effective when there is no trust.

Parents were particularly vigorous about this point. In some focus group interviews, parents indicated that some teachers even had relationships with married women whose husbands worked in urban areas. This ruined relationships with relatives of both the married woman and the absentee husbands. As one parent put it, “Who can work with someone who is being dishonest with his/her relative? You will be enemies, we can’t trust you!”

In other focus group interviews, some parents expressed concern regarding teachers who were suspected of having unsavoury relations with school children. This resulted in anxious relationships between teachers and parents. “We will not tolerate teachers who are danger to our children; we apparently can’t work with them.” Teachers needed to behave in a manner that removed such mistrust, which originated from the fact that some of them had, in the past, been caught having affairs with children.

A parent at school B expressed concern in relation to teachers who failed to contain themselves after drinking too much beer. All this bad behaviour disgusted parents, who believed that some teachers were no longer interested in being role models to children. As a result, such teachers lost the respect and trust of parents. In the words of one parent at school A, “When teachers behave badly, they lose our trust and respect. It becomes difficult for us to work with them”. It was noted, from the interviews with teachers, that no teacher mentioned this strategy of overcoming barriers to parental involvement. This was seemingly because they believed that the problem was not well-known enough to warrant much attention.

4.4. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher dealt with an investigation of parental involvement at three schools in the Vhembe District. The research questions were answered and the research aims and objectives addressed under the following headings: the extent to which parents are involved in the education of their children; the role played by parental involvement in their children’s education in the schools of the Vhembe District; ways in which parents in the Vhembe District are involved in their children’s education; barriers to parental involvement in their children’s education in the Vhembe District; and strategies to enhance parental involvement in schools of the Vhembe District. Chapter five will provide the conclusion and recommendations based on the findings of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

It has been indicated in chapter four that the research problem has been addressed and the research aim achieved in this study. This chapter focuses on the conclusions drawn and recommendations made based on the literature reviewed in chapter two and the data presented and discussed in chapter four. This study investigated parental involvement in their children's education by means of an experimental investigation using a small sample of participants from three schools in the Vhembe District of the Limpopo Province. A qualitative approach was used. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the school managers and teachers, and focus group discussions were held with six parents from each of the selected schools, as indicated in chapter three.

The findings of the study have revealed the feelings of school managers about the importance of and need for workshops on parental involvement in their schools. They also indicated that there are challenges facing them which inhibit parental involvement in their schools and which call for the involvement of different participants in the education of children, such as members of the community as a whole, school personnel and parents.

5.2. Conclusion

This study has recognised that the manner in which parents involved themselves in their children's education was influenced by their inadequate understanding of the concept of parental involvement. School managers and school teachers were not confident enough to persuade the researcher as to the extent to which parents were involved in their children's education. The findings also emphasised the inadequate understanding of the concept of parental involvement by school managers and school teachers. Although a few parents indicated their appreciation of parental involvement by suggesting ways in which they could become involved, it was clear that a developmental programme should be introduced. Although it also came to the attention of school managers and teachers that most of the parents did not attend school meetings, in relation to parents' role in their children's education, school managers and teachers' understanding was that parents should bring their children to school. They were silent about the monitoring and supervision of their

children's work while they are at home, which can result in better academic performance. Parents should have high expectations for their children's future and academic achievement.

It emerged from the interviews that many factors present barriers to parental involvement. These include the following: parents' limited education, economic status, lack of a school policy, poor communication and teachers' attitude towards parents. Negative and destructive attitudes towards differences in people remain important barriers to children's education. Discriminatory attitudes resulting from bias against people on the basis of educational status, potential and ability manifest themselves as barriers to parental involvement. Internal designations included the failure to realise that there was a problem, considering that it was the schools managers and school teachers' responsibility, a selfish attitude, ignorance about how to help, lack of educational skills, and other personal issues.

5.3. Recommendations

- From the conclusions drawn above, it is recommended that parental involvement workshops be organised for school managers, school teachers and parents.
 - To improve parents' attendance of school meetings, teachers should provide them with an opportunity to communicate their expectations and concerns.
 - In relation to parents' role in their children's education, parents should be motivated to ensure that their children accomplish their goals.
 - Parents should be empowered with skills of self-confidence, so that they will realise that their children have potential.
 - Schools should encourage parents to play an important role as partners in their children's education.
 - Schools should develop their own school policy, in line with the Constitution of the Republic (RSA).
 - Parents should be asked how they want to become involved, rather than imposing tasks on them.
 - School managers, teachers and parents should respect each other because respect tends to be reciprocal.
-

- Teachers should not judge parents according to their inadequate level of education, and should rather be submissive.
- Teachers should behave ethically at all times, both at work and at home.
- Effective communication should be encouraged between the school and home.

5.4. Limitation of the study

Findings based on qualitative outcomes have an extraordinary degree of reliability and validity, and therefore offer an appropriate starting point for planning parental involvement programmes. This study was limited to three schools in the Vhembe District, and three school managers, six teachers and six parents participated in the study. It did not include all staff members of the selected schools, all schools of the selected circuit or all circuits of the selected district, since the researcher was looking for a comparatively small sample. Therefore, future research could include more participants and a larger sample.

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APPENDIX A

1511

MALULEKE S G MISS
P O BOX 1535
ELIM HOSPITAL
0960

STUDENT NUMBER : 3312-698-4
ENQUIRIES TEL : 0861670411
FAX : (012)429-4150
eMAIL : mandd@unisa.ac.za

2014-03-11

Dear Student

I hereby confirm that you have been registered for the current academic year as follows:

Proposed Qualification: MED (EDUC MANAGEMENT) (98405)

CODE	PAPER	S NAME OF STUDY UNIT	WEIGHT	LANG.	PROVISIONAL EXAMINATION EXAM.DATE	CENTRE (PLACE)
Study units registered without formal exams:						
DFEDU95		M ED - EDUCATION MANAGEMENT	0.381	E		
@ DFEDU95		M ED - EDUCATION MANAGEMENT	0.381	E		
@ Exam transferred from previous academic year						

You are referred to the "MyRegistration" brochure regarding fees that are forfeited on cancellation of any study units.

BALANCE ON STUDY ACCOUNT: 0.00

Yours faithfully,

Prof M Mosimege
Registrar

0108 P 00 0

UNISA
2014 -03- 21
MAKHADO

2014 -03- 21
MAKHADO

APPENDIX B

ENQ: MALULEKE SG
CELL NO: 0794667472

P.O BOX 1535
ELIM HOSPITAL
0960
20 -01-2014

The Circuit Manager
Soutpansberg east
Private Bag X 2009
MAKHADO
0920

Sir

SUBJECT: A LETTER FOR REQUEST ON THE COLLECTION OF DATA AT MULWELI PRIMARY SCHOO, IN SOUTPANSBERG EAST CIRCUIT, VHEMBE DSTRIC, LIMPOPO

The above matter bears reference:

1. I SASAVONA GLADYS MALULEKE PERSAL NO: 81670010 registered student at the University of South Africa (UNISA) hereby request permission to collect DATA.
2. My research topic:A STUDY OF PARENTALINVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN’S EDUCATION IN VHEMBE; LIMPOPO” in Education Management.
- 3.I have selected three schools that are Pre – Primary, Primary School and Secondary School.
4. Participants on my research will include the principals, teachers and the parents. About confidentiality any information that reveals the identity of the participant will not be used.

I hope my request will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Maluleke SG

Student no.33126984

Signature: 

APPENDIX C



Limpopo
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

Soutpansberg East Circuit
P.O. Box 1292
MAKHADO
0920
015 516 1289
015 516 3494/5
65 Munnik Street

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Ref: 81670010
Enq: Musenwa M.P.
Cell: 0731967101
Date: 21.01.2014

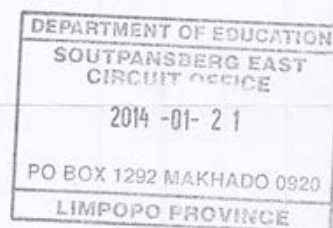
Maluleke S.G.
P.O. Box 1535
Elim Hospital
0960

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY: YOURSELF

1. The above matter refers.
2. Please note that your request to conduct a study at three school within Soutpansberg East Circuit has been approved by the Circuit Manager.
3. You will have to make arrangements with schools and ensure that Departmental programs are not hampered by you study.
4. Hoping that you will find this in order.


The Circuit Manager
/pmm

21/01/2014
date



APPENDIX D

Enquiry: Mr Chauke M.M

Cell: 083 991 3793

E-mail: ozias.dav@gmail.com

Tel: 015-519 9571



Ozias Davhana Sec. School

Private Bag X 351

Elim, 0960

Fax: 086 657 5784

28th March 2014

Ms Maluleke S.G.
P.O. Box 1535
Elim Hospital
0960

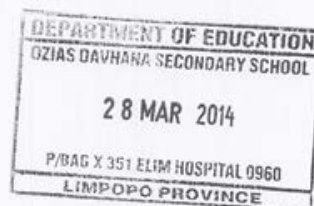
Madam

RE: Data collection at Ozias Davhana Secondary School

1. The matter above refers.
2. Permission is hereby granted for the collection of data at our institution as you requested.
3. You are informed that your activities should not interfere with the normal running of school activities.
4. We shall be able to interact with you during non-contact times, and after prior appointment done with your targeted respondents or interviewee for each visit you conduct.
5. You may contact us at any time for any enquiry.
6. We look forward to a positive working relationship with you.

Yours faithfully


Mr Chauke M.M. (Principal)



INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PRINCIPALS

Dear Principal

I, Sasavona Gladys Maluleke, am a student at the University of South Africa (UNISA), currently studying towards a Master of Education Degree in Education Management. I am carrying out a research study on parental Involvement in their children's education in the Vhembe District; Limpopo.

You are requested to participate in the study by responding to the attached interview guide. You were selected purposively to be part of the study because you have experience on how parents are involved in their children's education. The questionnaire will take you approximately 20 - 30 minutes to complete, and you are requested to complete it fully at your earliest convenience.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you agree to participate in the study, please sign the consent form below. If you wish to withdraw from participation, you are free to do so and you may withdraw before or during your decision to participate, even if you have signed the consent letter, without any penalty. You are also free to ask questions at any time should there be any issues that you want clarified.

In this study, there is no reimbursement or compensation for participating. However, the results of the study will help to enhance parental involvement in their children's education.

You are assured that the information collected from you will be treated in confidence and your anonymity will be ensured. It will not be disclosed to your superiors or to your colleagues, and will be destroyed six months after the completion of the study. You are requested to exclude your name from the questionnaire. No clues as to your identity will be given in the final report.

For any research-related queries, please contact my supervisor, Prof. Mathipa, at 0822022118 or email: mathier@unisa.ac.za

If you need further information, please contact me using the details below:

Name: S G Maluleke

Mobile Number: 0794667472

Email: 33126984@mylife.unisa.ac.za

If you agree to take part in the study, please sign the consent letter overleaf.

Kind regards

Sasavona Maluleke

CONSENT FORM PRINCIPALS

I..... Chaukeagree to participate in Maluleke Sasavona research study. The purpose of the study was explained to me in writing and I am voluntarily participating. I understand that my confidentiality and anonymity will be respected. By signing below I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above information. I am aware that I can discontinue my participation in the study at any time without penalties .

Signature *C. Chauke*

Date 26.06.2014

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SCHOOL MANAGERS/ PRINCIPALS

Dear principals

I, Maluleke Sasavna Gladys, a student at the University of South Africa (UNISA) currently studying towards a Master of Education Degree in Education Management. For my dissertation, I am doing research on parental involvement in their children's education.

As part of a master's study, I am kindly requesting you to respond to interview guide below which seeks your understanding concerning parental involvement in their children's education. The interview will take 15-20 minutes. Your responses will be treated with absolute confidentiality in keeping with research ethic. Kindly respond to the questions as fully and honestly as possible. Thank you for your participation.

1. What do you understand by the term Parental Involvement in children's education?
2. How is your relationship with parents of children you have in school?
3. How do parents involved in their children's education at your school?
4. What role does parent involvement play in their children's education?
5. What are the benefits of Parental Involvement?

4. What role does parent involvement play in their children's education?
 5. What are the benefits of Parental Involvement?
 6. How would you describe the communication between the school and the parents?
 7. Are you aware of any governmental policy relating to Parental Involvement? If so what does it say?
 8. Have your school developed school policy like learners code of conduct, policy on safety, policy on health and learners dress code? Motivate your answer.
 9. When developing those policies, have you engage parents?
 10. What would you like parents to enhance Parental Involvement?
 11. In your view, how is the teacher's attitude towards parents at your school?
 12. During your training to be a teacher, were you expose to learning content related to Parental Involvement?
 13. As a school manager have you attended any workshop on Parental Involvement?
 14. Have you ever organized workshop for teachers and parent on Parental Involvement?
 15. Have the department ever organized workshop on parental involvement?
 16. Are parent meaningfully involved in their children's education? Motivate your answer.
 17. Through your experience what type of parent involved in their children's education?
 18. What strategies can be used to enhance effective parental involvement in their children's education?
 19. Is there any area on parental involvement we have not covered which you consider important?
-

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS

Dear Teacher

I, Sasavona Gladys Maluleke, am a student at the University of South Africa (UNISA), currently studying towards a Master of Education Degree in Education

have experience on how parents are involve in their children's education. The questionnaire will take you approximately 20 - 30 minutes to complete, and you are requested to complete it fully at your most convenient time during this week. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you agree to participate in the study, please sign the consent form below. If you wish to withdraw from participation you are free to do so and you may withdraw before or during your decision to participate even if you have signed the consent letter without any penalty. You are also free to ask questions at any time should there be any issues that you want clarified. In this study there is no imbursement or compensation for participating. However, the results of the study will help to enhance parental involvement in their children's education.

You are assured that the information collected from you will be treated in confidence and anonymity. It will not be disclosed to your superiors or to your colleagues, and will be destroyed six months after the completion of the study. You are requested to exclude your name from the questionnaire. No clues of your identity will be given in the final report.

For any research related queries, please contact my supervisor, Prof. Mathipa ER 0822022118 or email, mathier@unisa.ac.za

If you need further information please contact me on the details below:

Name: Maluleke SG

Mobile Number: 0794667472

Email: 33126984@mylife.unisa.ac.za

If you agree to take part in the study, please sign the consent letter overleaf.

Kind regards

Sasavona Maluleke

CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS

I, Baloyi agree to participate in Maluleke Sasavona research study. The purpose of the study was explained to me in writing and I am voluntarily participating. I understand that my confidentiality and anonymity will be respected. By signing below I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above information. I am aware that I can discontinue my participation in the study at any time without penalties.

Signature

Baloyi

Date 17-06-2014

Signature _____
Date _____

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

Dear teachers

I, Maluleke Sasavna Gladys, a student at the University of South Africa (UNISA) currently studying towards a Master of Education Degree in Education Management. For my dissertation, I am doing research on parental involvement in their children's education.

As part of a master's study, I am kindly requesting you to complete this questionnaire which seeks your views concerning parental involvement in their children's education. The questionnaire will take approximately 15-20 minutes. Your responses will be treated with absolute confidentiality in keeping with research ethic. Kindly respond to the questions as fully and honestly as possible. Thank you for your participation.

1. What is your understanding by the term parental involvement in their children's education?

Parental involvement means that parents should engage themselves and part of their children's education.

2. What are the role of parental involvement in their children's education?

To monitor the child's school.

3. Are parents of the children you teach involve themselves in their children's education?

Some do some don't

4. What type of parental involvement are mostly engage?

Providing help children with school

5. How do parents involve themselves in their children's education?-----

They usual come to school when there is a problem with their children?

6. Do you think that parents know that they should meaningfully engage themselves in their children's education? Motivate your answer-----

Parents ~~does~~'n know what to do.

7. How do you communicate with parents of the children you teach?-----

Write letters and send it with children

8. What is that you exactly expect from parents to do while they involve themselves in their children's education?-----

We expect them to provide learners with books as we have shortage.
Giving support for homework.

9. Do you engage parents in developing the school polices regarding their children's education? Motivate your answer-----

No. the school doesn't have school policy. It means we do not engage them.

10. Do you encourage parents to suggest what they think they can do to assist their children with their education?-----

11. How do parental involvement interference with your work as a teacher?

Parents have limited education for their inadequate skills, they will always come to classes to disturb my lesson.

12. In the context of your experience kindly identify barriers to parental involvement?

Economic status, illiterate parents working far from home.

13. What strategies can be used to engage parents in their children's education?

Organising developmental work shop for parents.

14. Have you been expose to learning content related to parental involvement while training to be a teacher?

Yes during my practicals at

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS

Dear Parents

I, Sasavona Gladys Maluleke, am a student at the University of South Africa (UNISA), currently studying towards a Master of Education Degree in Education Management. I am carrying out a research study on parental involvement in their children's education in the Vhembe District, Limpopo.

You are requested to participate in the study by completing the attached questions. You were selected purposively to be part of the study because you have experience on how parents are involved and the barriers to parental involvement in their children's education. The questionnaire will take you approximately 20 - 30 minutes to complete, and you are requested to complete it fully at your earliest convenience. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you agree to participate in the study, please sign the consent form below. If you wish to withdraw from participation, you are free to do so and you may withdraw before or during your decision to participate, even if you have signed the consent letter, without any penalty. You are also free to ask questions at any time should there be any issues that you want clarified.

In this study, there is no reimbursement or compensation for participating. However, the results of the study will help to enhance parental involvement in their children's education.

You are assured that the information collected from you will be treated in confidence and that your anonymity will be ensured. It will not be disclosed to your superiors or to your colleagues, and will be destroyed six months after the completion of the study. You are requested to exclude your name from the questionnaire. No clues as to your identity will be given in the final report.

For any research-related queries, please contact my supervisor, Prof. Mathipa at 0822022118 or email: mathier@unisa.ac.za

If you need further information please contact me using the details below:

Name: S G Maluleke Mobile Number: 0794667472

Email: 33126984@mylife.unisa.ac.za

If you agree to take part in the study, please sign the consent letter overleaf.

Kind regards

Sasavona Maluleke

CONSENT FORM PRINCIPALS

I, Chauke agree to participate in Maluleke Sasavona research study. The purpose of the study was explained to me in writing and I am voluntarily participating. I understand that my confidentiality and anonymity will be respected. By signing below I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above information. I am aware that I can discontinue my participation in the study at any time without penalties.

Signature *Chauke*

Date 26.06.2014

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SCHOOL MANAGERS/ PRINCIPALS

Dear principals

I, Maluleke Sasavna Gladys, a student at the University of South Africa (UNISA) currently studying towards a Master of Education Degree in Education Management. For my dissertation, I am doing research on parental involvement in their children's education.

As part of a master's study, I am kindly requesting you to respond to interview guide below which seeks your understanding concerning parental involvement in their children's education. The interview will take 15-20 minutes. Your responses will be treated with absolute confidentiality in keeping with research ethic. Kindly respond to the questions as fully and honestly as possible. Thank you for your participation.

1. What do you understand by the term Parental Involvement in children's education?
2. How is your relationship with parents of children you have in school?
3. How do parents involved in their children's education at your school?
4. What role does parent involvement play in their children's education?
5. What are the benefits of Parental Involvement?

5. Do you feel competent to help children with homework and general study at home? Elaborate your answer
6. Are you feel welcome when visit the school where your children attend?
7. What are teachers attitude towards parental involvement?
8. How is the reaction of the school manager when you arrive at school where your children attend without invitation?
9. What are the benefits of parental involvement in their children's education?
10. Are there any policies you know in relation to parental involvement in children's education?
11. As parents have you ever been engage on drafting school policies?
12. Are those school policies communicated to you?
13. What are the barriers to parental involvement and how can they be overcome?
14. How does your individual factor affect the way you are involved in your child's education?
15. What should be done to make you participate more actively in your children's education?