

THE MANAGEMENT OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN TSHWANE WEST DISTRICT, GAUTENG

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2012

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SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN TSHWANE WEST DISTRICT, GAUTENG

by

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

in the subject

EDUACTION MANAGEMENT

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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JUNE 2012

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Declaration

I declare that *The Management of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools in Tshwane West district, Gauteng*, 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.

X

PM RAMADIKELA
MR

DATE

Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the management of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools in Tshwane West district, Gauteng. A literature study was undertaken to investigate the existing theories and models of parent involvement as well as their practical application. A literature study was also done to explore the historical development of the management of parent involvement in South Africa. The advantages of and barriers to parent involvement were also investigated through the review of both local and international literature.

An interpretive, qualitative approach was adopted and an investigation of the management of parent involvement was conducted in three of the selected historically disadvantaged secondary schools in Tshwane West district, Gauteng. In-depth interviews were conducted with principals and focus-group interviews were held with three teachers as well as three members of the School Governing Bodies of each of the three selected schools.

The overall impression was that the extent of parent involvement in the education of their children was very minimal due to the inability of the School Management Teams, especially school principals, to initiate, facilitate and sustain organisational structures and management processes which would ensure the effective involvement of parents in the education of their children.

As a result of those findings, it was realised that a need existed to equip members of the management teams, including school principals, with appropriate skills that would assist in the implementation and sustenance of effective parent involvement programmes.

KEY TERMS: Management; Educational Management; Parent; Parent Involvement; Parent Participation; Parent-teacher partnership, Home-school relations; Qualitative Research; Historically Disadvantaged; Secondary school.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to:

- God the almighty who always was faithful to me, and gave me the courage and the wisdom during the hard times when I was busy with my studies.
- My grandmother, Mmatshaba Matabea Mmaphophi Ramadikela, who is no more, who instilled the virtues of hard work and patience from my tender age. I will never forget her strict but fair discipline with which she raised me.
- My supervisor, Dr. NMM Mbunyuza, for leading me courageously and intelligently throughout the entire duration of my studies. Her dedicated guidance and sincere devotion through all aspects of this study is soulfully acknowledged.
- Professor Schoeman, of the Department of Teacher Education, for always being available to me when I needed her guidance, and for helping me with the technical presentation of this manuscript.
- Dr Andrew Graham, of the University of Johannesburg, for having edited the contents of this dissertation.
- Wellington Makoni, a friend, for arranging the different parts of this dissertation together.
- My parents, Phophi and Ngoakoana, especially during the time when I was studying. Their advices and words of encouragement were really very helpful to me.
- Principals of the three selected schools, and everybody who made themselves available when I was conducting fieldwork.
- Lastly, My lovely wife, Mildred, and my three lovely daughters, Tebogo, Gabaza and Rorisang Ramadikela, who understood the fact that I also had my own needs, and made unimaginable sacrifices just for me to obtain this degree. Thank you very much.

Dedication

My beloved late grandmother

Mmatšheba “Matabea” Mmaphophi Ramadikela

Abbreviations

- ATP - Action Team for Partnership
DoE - Department of Education
GDE - Gauteng Department of Education
HDSS - Historically Disadvantaged Secondary School
HSRC - Human Sciences Research Council
HOD - Head of Department
LTSM - Learner Teacher Support Material
MEC - Member of the Executive Council
PTA - Parent-Teacher Association
PTSA - Parent-Teacher-Student Association
SASA - South African Schools Act
SES - Socio-economic Status
SGB - School Governing Body
SMT - School Management Team

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CHAPTER 1

PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Prior to 1994, the education of black learners was managed by the then Department of Education (DoE), both poorly and with parental involvement not welcomed. School committees were established by the government in 1953, however, in contrast to white schools, only four to six of the committee members could be selected by parents, whilst the rest were government appointees. Those structures were unacceptable to the black community and many schools elected instead to institute Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), albeit without any legal standing (Risimati, 2001:40).

The 1994 elections in the new political dispensation brought about radical and progressive changes in all spheres of government, including education. The promulgation of the South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996 (RSA 1996b), which became effective in 1997, gave parents the legal right to become actively involved in school matters and their children's education. The Act mandated the establishment of school governing bodies (SGBs) in all public schools, so that parents could become actively involved in their children's scholastic progress. Lemmer and Van Wyk (2004:261) write that post-1994 legislation has introduced important reforms that have impacted on parent involvement. For instance, the constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA 1996a) introduced the democratisation of the education system and the concept of partnership among stakeholders in education through co-operative governance, and the South African Schools Act (RSA 1996b) went further by defining the concept of parent; describing basic parental duties; setting requirements for schools related to parents' right to information; and providing for parent and community representation in mandatory SGBs.

School effectiveness is measured in the education system by the percentage of passes that the school attains at the end of each year. Secondary schools which obtain the minimum of 70% as set by the DoE are regarded as effective schools. However, it has become clear that the majority of secondary schools that are failing to meet the minimum requirement pass rate are

the historically disadvantaged ones in black townships. Moloi, Dzvimbo, Potgieter, Wolhuter and Van der Walt (2010:475) write that a large percentage of South African schools are failing as institutions of teaching and learning. They express concern that the borders between the “effective” historically white schools distinguished from the “ineffective” majority of historically black schools continue to be based on race. The inability of black schools to attain a minimum pass percentage can be attributed, amongst other factors, to lack of proper management of parent involvement in those schools. Mahlangu (2008:7) writes that parent involvement in former state-aided schools is well established, however, this is not true in the vast majority of black schools, implying that parent involvement is not properly managed in them.

The present study investigates the management of parent involvement in the historically disadvantaged secondary schools in the Tshwane West district, and recommendations based on its findings will assist in bringing about new strategies for parent involvement. Other secondary schools in a similar situation may also benefit from this research.

1.2 BACKGROUND

Before presenting the problem statement and posing the research questions, it is necessary to explore the background to the topic.

1.2.1 The importance of parent involvement

A parent is one of the most important pillars upon which the education of a child should be placed, and without parental support in education the child may experience great difficulty in his or her academic achievement and later on in life. Botha, Kruger, Pretorius, Van Niekerk and Van der Merwe and Van Zyl (2006:231) argue that the best curriculum facilities and teachers will be of no avail unless the investors (the parents) are clearly seen as the *raison d'être* of the entire process. Despite teachers standing *in loco parentis*, the parents also have a great responsibility for the education of their children (Padgett, 2006:44).

Research continues to find evidence that higher levels of involvement by parents are related to academic success for students. Parental involvement is seen as an integration of home and school (Smith, 2006:44), and when parents work collaboratively with the teachers at school their children tend to succeed academically. This point is elaborated by Hill and Tyson

(2009:740), who write that family-school relations and parent involvement in education have been identified as a way of closing demographic gaps in achievement and maximising students' potential. Involved parents raise academically oriented children, and academically oriented children involve their parents in their education (Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007:377).

1.2.2 The benefits of parent involvement

Parent involvement in the education of their children is related to benefits such as improved scholastic achievement and lower dropout rates for children, reduced disciplinary problems for teachers, and the opportunity for parents to know and understand what the teachers are doing with their children at school. In support of this assertion, Ji and Koblinsky (2009:687) write that parent involvement in children's education has been found to be a strong predictor of academic achievement and positive school behaviour. Benefits include higher grade point averages, better scores in reading and Mathematics, reduced special education placements and grade retention, and lower dropout rates. It increases students' academic achievement and, equally important, promotes positive attitudes and behaviour. Research also found an increase in students' school attendance and positive feelings of self (Ferrara, 2009:125), as well as influencing cognitive and social development (Driessen, Smit & Slegers, 2007:510).

Parents' socio-economic status is seen as a major determinant of their level of involvement in their children's education, with those from lower socio-economic milieus and, often concomitantly, an ethnic minority background who generally achieve less at school. Conversely, parents from high socio-economic milieus have been found to create a more school supportive childrearing environment (Driessen et al., 2007:515). The latter function as role models for their children and are more inclined to follow their children's scholastic progress and help them with homework, thus having a positive impact on their achievement. Hill and Tyson (2009:758) argue that parental involvement creates an understanding of the purposes, goals and meanings of academic performance, communicates expectations about involvement and provides strategies that students can effectively use. Academic socialisation has the strongest positive relation to achievement.

Epstein (in Mncube, 2009:84) 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. Moreover, parents who are involved

develop a greater appreciation of their role. Educators may involve parents in classroom activities in a variety of ways, for example, drawing up classroom rules, devising an assessment plan or drafting a homework policy. Educators and parents may also agree on when classroom meetings will be held and when home or school visits would be made. These will be included in a year plan, of which each parent would be given a copy. In this way, such the educator would be able to manage parent involvement successfully in his or her class, and realise the benefits (Mncube, 2009).

1.2.3 Reasons for parent involvement

Most parents want what is best for their children and would involve themselves in their education if they knew what to do. Of the four approaches to parent involvement identified by Risimati (2001:20-30), namely: functional, parent empowerment, cultural competence and social capital, this study is based upon the functional approach, which emphasises the role and responsibilities of teachers and parents in promoting student achievement. Thus, emphasis is on the management of parent involvement, involving the maximum number of parents in a variety of roles, with the aim of improving learner achievement (Risimati, 2001:20).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Family-school relations and parental involvement in education have been identified as a way to close the demographic gaps in achievement and maximise student achievement (Hill & Tyson, 2009:740), but whilst authors such as Constantino (2007:44) argue that families can make a huge difference in student achievement, particularly when schools and homes work together in a collaborative and competent approach to education, it is important for the process to be properly managed. For any parent involvement programme in the school to be a success, the role of the principal is crucial, as he or she is responsible for encouraging and guiding the school management team (SMT) and SGB in line with the vision of the school. Constantino (2007:58) stresses the importance of the principal's leadership in the implementation of the parent involvement programme, writing that, when cultivating family engagement to bring about enhanced student learning; perhaps the most important element is the principal's belief in it. As with any other reform measure, if leaders do not embrace the

concept, then there is little hope that anyone else within the organisation will embrace the concept. Any leader who does not believe in the power of family engagement will have little success leading staff members and communities toward the goal.

Once the principal has succeeded in persuading all the stakeholders and interested parties, i.e., teachers, non-teaching staff, learners, department officials, and governmental and non-governmental organisations, of the importance of parental involvement in their children's education, the next step is to involve them in the initial strategic planning. This usually takes place at the end of the preceding year and it is at this stage that a comprehensive policy should emerge. Depending on which model is followed, a committee should be appointed by the SGB in collaboration with the SMT to take charge of the various levels. Epstein, for example, has identified six areas of parent involvement, namely: parenting; communication; learning at home; volunteering; decision-making; and collaborating with the community (Simango, 2008:12). Each of these requires thorough planning, organising, leading, controlling and evaluation by the committee. An example of a programme is the seven-point minimum plan, which involves devising a strategy; creating an inviting school climate; instructing parents and teachers; communicating between the school and parental home; establishing class parents' committees; creating opportunities for contact; and drawing up an annual programme (Botha et al., 2006:241-243).

Researchers such as Smith (2006) and Cooper and Crosnoe (2007) cite socio-economic status as a barrier to parent involvement, with children from low-income families, with less involved parents, often experience fewer of the academic benefits than those from higher income homes. This is largely the result of financial and time constraints related to poverty (Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007:375). The size and complexity of secondary schools; class size; departmentalisation of instruction by academic subject; the number of teachers each student has across subjects; the complexity of curricular choices; and the often obscured nature of course tracking in a middle (secondary) school, all complicate parental involvement (Hill and Tyson., 2009:741–742). Parents are unsure of their roles and this feeling of “un-connectedness” grows stronger as their children move from grade to grade in middle and high school (Ferrara, 2009:125). It is important that principals, together with SMTs identify barriers to parent involvement, such as the ones listed above, early in the year, so that alternative measures are put in place to ensure effective and successful implementation of a suitable plan.

Mncube (2009:85) sees a major barrier as parents lacking the necessary skills to perform the duties assigned to them. For black parents in particular, even though they have been given their full legal right to participate in their children's education, through the promulgation of the South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996, they remain reluctant to participate in the SGB. Even for those who have enrolled their children in former Model C schools, the problem persists. A number of reasons have been suggested for this (Mncube, 2009:95-97), including their educational level, lack of knowledge about parental involvement, fear of academic victimisation, language differences, and difficulties in attending meetings. In the light of this particular aspect of the wider problem, a need exists to investigate the role of management in parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools, especially in Tshwane West district, Gauteng.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The problem statement, as presented in the preceding section, can be more effectively analysed if sub-divided into the following research questions upon which it is based:

- What are the problems regarding the management of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools in Tshwane West district?
- What are the roles and functions of the principal and the school management teams, especially with regard to the management of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools in Tshwane West district?
- What strategies can be employed to ensure successful management of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools in Tshwane West district?
- What are the perceptions and attitudes of teachers, principals and School Governing Body members regarding the management of parent involvement, especially in historically disadvantaged secondary schools in District 15?
- How can the findings contribute to assisting the secondary school managers in managing parent involvement more effectively?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of this study is to assess the extent to which parent involvement is managed in selected historically disadvantaged secondary schools in Tshwane West district, Gauteng. To be able to achieve this aim a literature study will be conducted of both local and international sources on parent involvement, notably journals, official documents on South African education, legislation, recognised authoritative books, research papers on related fields, periodicals and newspapers. The value of a literature study is to find sufficient information regarding the management of parent involvement in secondary schools in other provinces and elsewhere in the world, and also to gauge the extent to which the problem has been researched. It familiarises the researcher with the relevant literature and the more theoretical aspects of the topic. In order to answer the above research questions, the following objectives have been set:

- To describe the problems regarding the management of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools in Tshwane West district.
- To identify and describe the roles and functions of the principal and the school management teams, especially regarding the management of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools in Tshwane West district.
- To provide strategies that can be employed to ensure successful management of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools in Tshwane West district.
- To determine the perceptions and attitudes of teachers, principals and school governing body members regarding the management of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools.
- To utilise the knowledge gained from this study to make recommendations with a view to improve the management of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools.

1.6 THESIS STATEMENT

The researcher appreciates that education does not operate in a vacuum but is part of a wider function of society, consequently influencing and being influenced by other sectors,

such as politics, the economy, culture and family, in either a positive or negative way. As a result, the research was based upon the following hypotheses:

- An effective management of parental involvement will benefit education in historically disadvantaged secondary schools.
- In order for comprehensive parental involvement programmes to be successfully implemented in historically disadvantaged secondary schools it is necessary for parents to be educated on the concept of parental involvement.
- Effective implementation of parental involvement programmes in historically disadvantaged secondary schools will depend to a large extent on the knowledge and skills that the teachers have about parental involvement. Consequently, parental involvement should form part of teachers' pre-service and in-service training programmes.
- An effective management of parent involvement necessitates that schools work in collaboration with the communities in which they are situated.
- Early identification of barriers to parent involvement is a prerequisite for the effective management of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools.

1.7 DELINIATION AND LIMITATIONS

This study will be limited to the historically disadvantaged secondary schools in the Tshwane West district, Gauteng, based on the various challenges they face in post-apartheid South Africa. The schools were selected by means of purposive sampling procedure, typical of qualitative research in eliciting information-rich key informants, groups, places and events. The participants were chosen because they were likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon under investigation (Mahlangu, 2008:81). The goal was not to generalise the findings to a wider population from which a sample had been drawn, but rather to obtain rich descriptions of people's beliefs, behaviour and experiences (Springer, 2010:109).

There were 46 secondary schools in the district, of which 33 were located in historically disadvantaged communities, for the purpose of this study referred to as 'black townships'. Ten of these schools were distributed towards the inner city and located in Akasia, Pretoria

North, Hercules and Pretoria city. These did not form part of this study as the researcher regarded them as previously advantaged, but instead it was limited to the 33 secondary schools located in historically disadvantaged communities, in which the residents were predominantly black.

Springer (2010:109) ascertains that the aim of qualitative research is to obtain rich descriptions of people's beliefs and the information obtained from each participant tends to be more extensive and requires more contact with participants. This means that more information is collected from fewer participants, so the researcher selected three out of the 33 historically disadvantaged secondary schools in Tshwane West district. Data was collected by means of observation and interviews, both of which methods require a lengthy period of time. Therefore, three secondary schools were considered as an appropriate sample, considered as information-rich sites and the people within them likely to be informative and knowledgeable about the phenomenon.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is intended that this research will assist the Tshwane West district to review and evaluate current policies on the management of parent involvement in public secondary schools in the district, and the successful implementation of such policies will hopefully spread to other districts in the province, and thence to other provinces. Ferrara (2009:268) points out those prospective teachers must know why parent involvement in schools is vital to learning before they enter the teaching force. Likewise, pre-service teachers need to understand that parent involvement is intricate and largely different from the time their parents were involved in schools. This study should help the district directors devise appropriate in-service training programmes for principals and other staff members in management positions, and enable them to improve the management of parent involvement in their respective schools. Furthermore, pre-service education programmes should not only centre on the challenges of dealing with a parent but should rather show the student teachers how parents can have meaningful participation in their children's classroom learning (Ferrara, 2009:268). This calls for institutions of higher learning to include "parental involvement" as a course of study in their pre-service programmes for student teachers.

The researcher hopes to make parents and the school personnel aware of their responsibilities towards learners' education, and show that neither can accomplish the task alone as it is a collective effort. The research will assist the historically disadvantaged secondary schools in Gauteng Province, especially those in Tshwane West district, to embark on programmes on the management of parent involvement in schools.

1.9 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

It is necessary at this stage to clarify the key concepts as they are understood in this thesis.

1.9.1 Management

According to Hanks and Long (1983, in Simango, 2006:5), 'management' is the process of managing, that is, being in charge; administering; succeeding in doing something despite obstacles; exercising control or dominion, often in a tactful manner; and contriving to carry on despite difficulties. It is the skilful and/or resourceful use of material and time. Management is defined by Botha et al. (2006:7) as a process of working with and through individuals and groups and other resources to accomplish organisational goals. They also refer to the process of planning, organising, coordinating, leading and controlling people, objectives and resources, using human, financial and physical resources to attain the objectives.

Education management is based on authority, freedom, orderliness and managerial dynamics and always has an aim. It can be described as a specific type of work in education which comprises those regulative tasks or actions executed by a person or body in a position of authority in a specific field or area of regulation, so as to allow formative education to take place (Simango, 2006:5). For the purpose of this study, the management of parent involvement implies all management activities undertaken by the school managers (principals), together with their management teams, with the intention of involving parents in their children's education so that effective teaching and learning can take place. Management activities include planning, organising, coordinating, leading and controlling parent involvement practices initiated in schools.

1.9.2 Parent

According to the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996b:4), the term ‘parent’ is the parent or guardian of the learner, the person who undertakes to fulfil the obligation of a person referred to above, towards the learner’s education at school. Lemmer and van Wyk in Simango (2006: 6) include biological parents, guardians, grandparents or any other adult who is responsible for the child when attempting to establish or improve home - school relations. Eita (2007:12) also has adopted a definition given by Lemmer and van Wyk (2004) to include non-traditional caregivers, for example, the non-custodial parent in a broken home; parents who live away from the family due to migrant labour; grandparents; and other relatives or older siblings who are fulfilling the care giving function. For the purpose of this study, the term ‘parent’ should be understood as defined by Lemmer and van Wyk in Simango (2006), since it emphasises the socio-economic status.

1.9.3 Parent involvement

Parent involvement is active and willing participation of parents in a wide range of school- and home-based activities which may be educational or non-educational. It extends from supporting and upholding the school ethos to supervising children’s homework at home. Parent involvement implies mutual cooperation, sharing and support of teaching and learning for learners’ scholastic success (Eita, 2007:12). Driessen et al. (2007:510) state that various terms are used to refer to the cooperation between parents, teachers and schools, amongst which are: parent involvement; parent participation; school-family relations; and educational partnership. For the purpose of this study, these terms will be used interchangeably to refer to the participation of parents in a wide range of school- and home-based activities to improve children’s education (Botha et al., 2006:234). Dekker (in Botha et al., 2006:237) writes that parent involvement ranges from cooperation to participation to partnership. Each of these kinds of involvement calls for a different strategy and should be managed accordingly by the school.

1.9.4 Public Secondary School

A public school is one maintained largely through public funds, which must be made available by the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for education in the province, in

terms of Section 12 of the South African Schools Act (84 of 1996), for the purpose of public education (DoE RSA, 2007: 46). A secondary school is an ordinary school offering at least one grade in the range Grades 8-12 and none in the range Grades 1-7 (DoE RSA, 2007:46).

1.9.5 Historically disadvantaged

The term 'historical' is used to describe something connected with the past or with the study of history, or something that happened in the past (Ashby, Bull, Francis, Parkinson, Phillips, Turnbull & Webb, 2010:711), and the term 'disadvantaged' means having relatively little access to resources, such as education or money (Ashby et al., 2010:412). The historically disadvantaged secondary schools would therefore be understood in this study to refer to those schools which were deprived of the necessary resources in the past to enable them to provide quality public education in the country. Such schools would normally be found in the predominantly black communities, and the circumstances under which they operated then will be more broadly detailed in Chapter 3.

1.10 ASSUMPTIONS

A teacher for the past 17 years, the researcher has extensive experience in the field of teaching and education and approaches the study of the management of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools with certain preconceived ideas. This study is therefore, based upon the following assumptions:

- Former model C schools will not be forming part of this study because they were part of an education system in which parental involvement was functioning well.
- Nor will private or independent schools form part of this study, because they were privately funded by parents themselves and outside agencies.
- The socio-economic and political situation in South Africa prior to 1994 had a detrimental effect on the education of a black child in the sense that parents were devoting very little time to the education of their children.
- Most parents from low socio-economic backgrounds are themselves not educated and therefore have little interest in the education of their children.
- Public secondary schools situated in poor black communities in the townships are the ones that were disadvantaged during the apartheid era.

1.11 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A research design, according to McMillan and Schumacher (2006, 119), is a plan for selecting subjects, research sites and data collection procedures to answer the research question(s). It shows which individuals will be studied and when, where and under which circumstances they will be studied.

This study is an empirical investigation, based on epistemological theory that regards experience as the foundation or source of knowledge. Since experience refers to what is received through the senses, i.e., sense data or what can be observed, the data is¹ based on direct experience or observation of the world. The researcher answers the empirical research question by obtaining direct, observable information from the world, rather than, for example, by theorising or by reasoning, or by arguing from first principles (Punch, 2009:2). The study is qualitative, employing appropriate methods to study the phenomenon, namely the management of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools.

For Creswell (2009:175-176), characteristics of qualitative research are: natural setting; the researcher as key instrument; multiple sources of data; inductive data analysis; participants' meanings; emergent design; a theoretical lens; and interpretive and holistic account.

Other characteristics discussed in De Vos et al. (2005: 276-277) are:

- The phenomenological approach is important in participant observation, as the researcher endeavours to gain in-depth insight into the manifestation of reality. Participant observation is thus anti-positivist in as much as this procedure does not aim at measuring in numbers, or deriving rules for behaviour.
- This procedure endeavours to let the researcher play the dual role of collector and interpreter of the data.
- Participant observers do not generally test predetermined ideas and do not develop hypotheses prior to the enquiry. Instead, an open-ended and naturalistic approach is followed.

Such characteristics are not exhaustive, and will be elaborated upon in Chapter 3.

¹ Although 'data' is the Latin plural of datum it is generally treated as an uncountable 'mass' noun and so takes a singular verb (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 2011, Eds. Stevenson & Waite).

1.11.1 Data collection methods

Again, the nature of the topic under investigation will guide the researcher on which data collection methods are the most appropriate. Since this aim is to allow the phenomenon to unravel itself from the participants' perspectives, the researcher will employ observation strategies as well as interviews.

1.11.1.1 Observation

Whilst engaging in participant observation the researcher will be taking unstructured and rough field notes (Mahlangu, 2008:67), and include any interpretations that come to mind. Any responses that imply or identify observation records regarding when, where and under what conditions the observations took place will be noted. The following details, as noted by Merriam (1998, cited in Mahlangu, 2008:67) will be noted:

- The physical environment
- The context and the kind of behaviour that the setting encourages, permits, discourages or prevents
- Subtle factors such as unplanned activities
- The symbolic and connotative meanings of words
- Non-verbal communication, such as dress code, physical space and what does not happen, especially if it ought to have happened.

1.11.1.2 Interviews

With a variety of interviewing methods at the researcher's disposal, De Vos et al. (2005:286) warn against regarding any one as superior to any other. The purpose of the research must guide the researcher to choose the most effective method. The researcher has found that conducting in-depth interviews with school principals would be appropriate. Focus group interviews will be conducted with school governing body members and teachers. De Vos et al. (2005:287) argue that the quality of the interview, irrespective of which type is conducted, depends mainly on the skills of the researcher as interviewer. They further state that poor interviewing skills, poor phrasing of questions, or inadequate knowledge of the participants' culture or frame of reference may result in the collection of little useful data. The researcher

will enlist the services of specialists in the area so that the purposes of the interviews may be attained.

1.11.1.3 Identification of participants

De Vos et al. (2005:287) reveal that challenges facing a researcher when using qualitative research interview include establishing rapport in order to gain information from participants, coping with the unanticipated problems and rewards of interviewing in the field, and recording and managing the large volume of data generated by even relatively brief interviews. These require the researcher to identify information-rich individuals within the selected sites who would serve as interviewees, then inform them in writing of the aim of the interview and arrange interview schedules to stimulate the discussion. This would not serve as a blueprint that should be strictly followed. The interviewees would be informed about the ethical principles to be observed throughout the interview session and thereafter, including informed consent and assent, confidentiality and anonymity, trustworthiness and transparency. Securing appointments for interview sessions will depend entirely on the availability of the participants, which implies that the researcher will have to make a telephonic reminder with each one at least seven working days before the date tentatively agreed upon. Such a contact would assist the researcher to ascertain if all the respondents are available, so that alternative dates and times could be agreed upon in case the initial one is not convenient.

1.11.1.4 Recording of data

The last point to be considered is how such data elicited through interviewing is going to be recorded (Punch, 2009:151), either audio- or video-taped. Other settings might require it to be recorded through note-taking. All instances require prudent preparation on the part of the researcher, but whichever method is chosen, some preparation work is involved. After the interview is completed, the data will be transcribed (Punch, 2009:152). In this study, the researcher will use the audio-tape recorder to record all interviews, which will then be transcribed to ease the process of analysis.

1.11.2 Qualitative data analysis

De Vos et al. (2005:333) hold that data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. They add that although qualitative data analysis is not a linear process, as in the case of quantitative research, there are certain steps which may be followed, albeit not to be followed rigidly as a blueprint. Their guidelines are:

1. Planning for recording of data
2. Data collection and preliminary analysis
3. Managing or organising the data
4. Reading and writing memos
5. Generating categories, themes and patterns
6. Coding the data
7. Testing the emergent understandings
8. Searching for alternative explanations
9. Representing and visualising (that is, writing the report).

Once data has been collected through observations and interviews, the researcher will firstly transcribe the tape-recorded interviews then go through the transcripts and use the processes of coding and categorisation to form small bundles of data from which findings can be made.

1.11.3 Validity and reliability

Springer (2010:165) writes that the two concepts of validity and reliability receive less explicit attention among qualitative researchers and are both also used in quantitative research. Triangulation is an essential part of qualitative research and as a form of corroboration it can be thought of as a qualitative assessment of interrater reliability. An important concept in qualitative research is that of social validity, or the extent to which the results of a study are relevant to audiences beyond the scientific community. Qualitative researchers often take the lead in calling for greater social validity, particularly as a way of empowering educational practitioners and connecting research with practice. (Springer, 2010:168). The concepts of validity and reliability are central in any research endeavour and therefore the researcher will make a concerted effort to ensure that they are applied throughout the entire research process, from the choice of the research design through data collection strategies to data analysis. For achieving validity, the processes and instruments

must measure what they purport to measure, in this case giving answers to questions asked at the outset. Reliability, on the other hand, refers to consistency of the outcome of the research, even if it can be conducted under different conditions. The various types of validity and reliability applicable to this research will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

1.12 ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

Ethical principles constitute an important area of research (De Vos et al., 2005:56), particularly in the human sciences, which bring unique ethical problems to the researcher which would not be relevant in the laboratory settings of the natural sciences. Data should not be obtained at the expense of human beings, and in this case gaining access to the research sites requires the researcher to make an application to the DoE for permission to conduct the research. Ethical clearance must also be sought from the university (institution) for which a research is conducted. Of particular importance in this regard is that the physical and psychological welfare of participants should take precedence over anything else and the researcher should make a concerted effort to guard against causing them any physical or psychological harm. These and other ethical principles, such as informed consent and assent, anonymity and confidentiality, transparency and trustworthiness, will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

1.13 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The dissertation is structured as follows.

Chapter 1 has provided an introduction to the study, the problem formulation and aims, outlining the research design and the methodology and clarifying key concepts to be used in it.

Chapter 2 presents a literature review on parent involvement, focusing on the different approaches to parent involvement, including in South Africa. The chapter ends with the management function of parent involvement in secondary schools.

Chapter 3 gives a brief description of the research design, data collection and analysis methods.

Chapter 4 constitutes the presentation, discussion and interpretation of the findings regarding the management of parent involvement in the historically disadvantaged secondary schools in Tshwane West district, Gauteng.

Chapter 5 provides a summary, the main conclusion, synopsis of the findings and recommendations emanating from the study.

1.14 SUMMARY

In Chapter 1, an orientation was given and concerns outlined regarding the topic. A preliminary literature review was presented, followed by the main aim of the study and concomitant objectives were also identified, and the research design and methods of data collection and analysis deemed to be the most appropriate ones discussed.

In Chapter 2, a more detailed review of relevant literature on the approaches to the management of parent involvement in their children's education and their applicability, derived both locally and internationally, will be given.

CHAPTER 2

PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED SECONDARY SCHOOLS: THEORY AND PRACTICE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A literature review is a critique of the status of knowledge on a carefully defined educational topic (Simango, 2006:7). In this study, the researcher will review both primary and secondary sources to provide an in-depth background to the empirical investigation. Primary sources are original written material of the authors' own observations and experiences, including journal articles and research reports (De Vos, Strydom, Fourche & Delpont, 2005, in Eita, 2007:8). Education legislation as well as provincial laws and regulations dealing with the management of parental involvement will be consulted, as will periodicals and newspapers. All these sources will be carefully and judiciously selected and studied with the purpose of selecting data that is current, reliable and applicable. Secondary sources comprise data collected at an earlier time by other researchers for purposes other than the current research (Simango, 2008:8). These include quarterly and annual reviews and yearbooks, professional books, encyclopaedias and handbooks. In this regard the researcher will use recognised authoritative textbooks (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:76).

The aim of the literature review in this study is to find adequate information regarding the management of parental involvement and to apply the knowledge in designing a model of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools in Tshwane West district. Both local and international sources will be consulted in order to gauge the extent of the problem. A literature study also assists the researcher in becoming familiar with the relevant literature and the theoretical aspects of the study (Segwapa, 2008:4). This chapter focuses on the theoretical frameworks and approaches to parent involvement. The historical provision of education in South Africa is briefly considered. Lastly, the management of parent involvement as it is practised currently is also briefly discussed.

Frameworks and approaches to parent involvement are characterised by competing viewpoints and ideologies, widely differing experiences and contradictory arguments. Likewise, the theoretical stance of the role-players towards home and school relations is a

modifying factor influencing the outcome of these relations, because the degree to which educators and parents are influenced by a specific stance will influence the extent of collaboration between home and school (van Wyk, cited in Risimati, 2001:20).

In 1997, Shartrand, Weiss, Keider and Lopez devised a theoretical framework which recognised four approaches to training in family involvement, to be used alone or in combination. The approaches illustrate the kinds of attitudes, knowledge and skills that principals and other stakeholders can acquire to increase their relationships with the families of learners. These are: functional, parent empowerment, cultural competence and social capital (Risimati, 2001:20), each of which will now be discussed with examples of models under each described. It will also be shown which attitudes, knowledge and skills should be acquired by the managers for the effective implementation of a parent involvement programme to facilitate effective teaching and learning in the school.

Research around the world has found that involving parents in their children's education is an important strategy to ensure that the school derives as many benefits of parent involvement as possible for the learners, parents and teachers. Driessen et al. (2005:509) write that expanding the involvement of parents in the education of their children has recently been viewed as an important strategy to advance the effectiveness and quality of education. Within the framework of providing greater autonomy for schools, strengthening parental involvement is also important, with parents constituting a force with a vested interest and thereby the potential to balance the efforts of directorates and school boards.

2.2 THE FUNCTIONAL APPROACH

The functional approach emphasises the roles and responsibilities of teachers and parents in promoting student achievement, thus, the emphasis is on parent involvement to include as many as possible in as many roles as possible, with the aim of improving learning.

2.2.1 Epstein's theory of parent involvement

In the 1980s, Epstein developed a theoretical perspective called the "overlapping spheres of influence" in a student's schooling (Barbour, Barbour & Scully, 2008: 337). As in other partnership models, the framework of Epstein's programme is centred on the idea of the shared responsibilities of home, school, and community for children's learning and

development. This theory was based on a social organisation perspective that posits that the most effective families and schools have overlapping, shared goals and a common mission concerning children, and that they conduct some of their tasks collaboratively (Risimati, 2001:21).

The proposed model of overlapping spheres of influence assumes that there are mutual interests and influences of families and schools that can be more or less successfully promoted by the policies and programmes of the organisations and the actions and attitudes of individuals in them (Epstein, 2001:31). Although there are important differences between schools and families it is necessary to recognise the similarities, overlap in goals, responsibilities and mutual influence of the two major environments that simultaneously affect children's learning and development (Dreeben, cited in Epstein, 2001:31).

Epstein's theory posits that schools neither exist nor function in isolation, but rather work in collaboration with other stakeholders, such as families and communities, in the process of educating a learner. The aim of improving such a partnership is to ensure that schools become effective institutions of learning in communities. Epstein's points of partnership are further accentuated by the issue of parent involvement in their children's education being much larger than improving student achievement. It is central to democracy that parents and citizens participate in the governing of public institutions, since a parent is fundamental to a healthy system of public education (Epstein, 2001:316). Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence includes both the external and the internal models.

2.2.1.1 The external model

The author states that the external model of overlapping spheres of influence recognises that there are three major contexts in which students learn and grow, namely the family, the school and the community, which may be drawn together or pushed apart (Epstein 1990a, 1997, 2009). The degree of overlap or non-overlap among these three spheres is controlled by three forces: i) time, which includes the historic period, changes in the age and grade levels of learners. Families and schools are ever-changing, as the members mature, develop new skills, knowledge, contacts and patterns of social interaction; ii) philosophies, policies and practices of the family; and iii) philosophies, policies and practices of the school (Epstein, 2001). Epstein (2001) notes that in this model, there are some practices that schools, families and

communities conduct separately and some that they conduct jointly to influence children's learning and development.

2.2.1.2 The internal model

Epstein (2001) writes that the internal model of the interaction of the three spheres of influence shows where and how complex and essential interpersonal relations and patterns of influence occur between individuals at home, at school, and in the community. These social relationships may be enacted and studied at an institutional level, for example, when a school invites all families to an event or sends the same communications to all families, and at an individual level, for example, when a parent and a teacher meet in conference or talk by telephone. Connections between schools or parents and community groups, agencies and services can also be represented and studied within the model. The "maximum" overlap takes place when schools and families operate as true "partners" with frequent cooperative efforts and clear, close communication between parents and teachers in a comprehensive programme of many important types of parent involvement. However, she maintains that there is never a total overlap because the family maintains some functions and practices that are independent of the schools' or teachers' programmes, and vice versa.

2.2.1.3 The working relations between the three spheres

Within her theory of the overlapping spheres of influence among the family, the school and the community, Epstein (1987, 1992, 1996 & 2001) argues that the different spheres may fulfil through their practices the roles and responsibilities of one another in order to attain a common goal, which is to produce educated and successful learners. When teachers and parents emphasise their shared responsibilities they support the generalisation of skills required by both groups to produce educated and successful learners. Their combined endeavour pushes together the spheres of family and school influence and increases interaction between them (Kgaffe, 2001:15). According to Epstein (1996), the theory of overlapping spheres of influence states that the mutual interests and influence, policies and practices of all stakeholders can increase interaction and create families and schools which can help the learners to become more successful in education (Epstein, cited in Kgaffe, 2001:15). Epstein also notes that, at any time, in any school and in any family or community,

parent involvement is a variable that can be increased or decreased by the practices of any of them. Moreover, the theory recognises the multiple contexts and interpersonal relations of all informants (Kgaffe, 2001:16).

2.2.2 Types of parent involvement

Several studies helped to identify and improve a framework of six major types of involvement that fall within the areas of overlap in the spheres of influence model. Each type of involvement may be operationalised by hundreds of practices that schools may choose to develop their programmes. There will be more or less overlap and shared responsibility depending on whether many or few practices in the six types of involvement are working, and each practice that is implemented opens opportunities for varied interactions of teachers, parents, students, and others across contexts. The six types, described briefly below, explain how schools can work with families and communities to assist them to become or stay informed and involved in children's education at home and at schools (Epstein, 2001:43).

2.2.2.1 Parenting

Parenting has to do with assisting families with child-rearing skills and family support, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions to support learning at each age and grade level (Epstein, 2001:43). In an educational partnership, teachers may offer parenting information to families while parents offer information about their culture, beliefs, and educational goals for their children. The goal of positive parenting includes providing a healthy, safe environment so that children will become well adjusted, contributing members of society (Cox-Petersen, 2011:116). Teachers, as educators, have a responsibility to support families in their roles related to parenting.

2.2.2.2 Communicating

Communication goes far beyond simply sending letters home, even on a regular and consistent basis. More importantly, it involves opening channels so that parents can effectively reach and contact school officials. Two-way communication between home and school and vice versa, according to Epstein (2001:44), may involve information about special

school programmes, services for students and families and reports of student progress (Glanz, 2006:40).

2.2.2.3 Volunteering

Principals can contribute greatly by soliciting community volunteers with varying degrees of expertise to work in the school. Special tutors, person power to assist with lunch duty responsibilities, and individuals to help with office work may be useful (Glanz, 2006:40). Referring to the same type of parent involvement, Epstein (2001:44) notes that this type of involvement has to do with improving recruitment, training, work, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at the school or in other locations to support students and school programmes. For Cox-Petersen (2011:122, citing Epstein, 2001) there are multiple levels of volunteerism in schools. At the simplest level, families can volunteer their time at home, facilitating children's homework, literacy skills, or other out-of-school educational activities. The second level includes involvement in school functions, such as open houses or parent conferences, attending performances, and participating in family nights. The third level includes volunteering time at the school site as a sports activity facilitator, lunch monitor, recess monitor, or classroom helper. Finally, families can volunteer their time to join the local parent-teacher association or organisation, attend parents' meetings, or participate as a joint decision-maker as part of the school council. Schools should encourage all families to volunteer at the minimum standard. Opportunities for volunteering should vary according to different timeframes, that is, some events should take place in the morning, some in the late afternoon, and some in the evening.

2.2.2.4 Learning at home

Learning at home necessarily means involving families with their children in learning activities at home, including homework and other curricular related activities and decisions (Epstein, 2001:44). Principals who urge parents to become involved with their children's work at home influence student achievement positively. Workshops on assisting children with homework and projects are useful, and should be repeated often to involve as many families as possible (Glanz, 2006: 41).

2.2.2.5 Decision-making

Decision-making means including families as participants in school decisions, governance and advocacy activities through PTAs, committees, councils and other group organisations (Epstein, 2001:44). Peterson (2011:128) refers to shared decision-making as site-based management or school-based management, and it has been a popular structure in many schools. It includes families, students, teachers and members of the community for the purpose of improving curriculum and instruction. This concept was created to provide decision-making power to groups that were traditionally excluded from the process.

2.2.2.6 Collaborating with the community

Collaborating involves coordinating the work and resources of the community businesses, agencies, colleges or universities, and other groups to strengthen school programmes, family practices and student learning and development (Epstein, 2001:44). Communication in this area includes home to community, school to community and home to school to community. Businesses, cultural institutions, health and social service agencies, and other community groups possess resources and expertise to strengthen education and promote partnerships with educators (Petersen, 2011:128-129).

2.2.2.7 The role of management in the functional approach

In the functional approach, the attitude that all educators should learn skills and sensitivity in dealing with parents should be maintained (Risimati, 2001:23). In a democratic society such as South Africa, the democratic, participatory management style is now being advocated and promoted in public schools, with the result that the principal is no longer seen as the sole manager in the school. SMTs have been established apart from other teams such as the SGBs and cultural and sports committees. However, the principal remains the key manager of personnel and inevitably an ex officio member of all teams that perform roles and functions in favour of a successful teaching and learning. The principal should, as Risimati (2001:23) argues, therefore know the benefits of and barriers to parent involvement.

He or she should have the skills of involving parents of all backgrounds in school as well as knowledge of his or her role in promoting or limiting parent involvement. The principal should understand the different cultural beliefs, lifestyles, childrearing practices, home

structures and living environments when using this approach to parent involvement. He or she should also develop effective interpersonal communication, which will enable him or her to deal with defensive behaviour, distrust, hostility, and frustrated parents. He or she should also have the skills of involving parents in their children's education outside classroom (Risimati, 2001:24).

According to Risimati (2001:24), the principal (as well as other managers in the school), if they are to implement this model of parent involvement, should develop skills in supporting and involving parents as decision-makers, advocates and curriculum developers. The authors add that the principal as well as the SMTs should also have skills in sharing information and leadership to help parents make decisions, as well as interacting with them on an equal footing.

2.3 THE PARENT EMPOWERMENT APPROACH

The parent empowerment approach emphasises the strengths of disenfranchised families, who do not have much power and belong to disadvantaged groups (Risimati, 2001:24). The approach is based on a belief that schools are key institutions in local communities and thus in a special position to enhance or retard the empowerment process (van Wyk, 2001:132). It is also built on the assumption that all families have strengths, and the most useful knowledge about rearing children can be found in the community itself, in the older generation, in social networks and in ethnic and cultural traditions (van Wyk, 2001:133). According to Cochran & Dean (1991, cited in (van Wyk, 2001:133), educators who are to be trained in the empowerment approach must be taught how to empathise with parents and recognise their strengths, make the most of parent-teacher conferences and find creative ways to involve parents in school activities. The following models are examples of the approach.

2.3.1 Swap's "school-to-home" transmission model

This model posits that educators specify what parents should do to help their children at home, while parents endorse the importance of schooling, reinforce school expectations at home, provide conditions at home that nurture development, support school success, and ensure that the child meets the minimum academic and social requirements (Decker, Decker & Brown, 2007: 79). The model advises that parents spend enough time with their children to

transfer cultural capital (Risimati, 2001:25), which according to Swap (1992, cited in Risimati, 2001:25) includes the way of being, knowing, writing, talking and thinking within the dominant culture.

Education programmes are designed to assist parents in becoming more effective and to instruct them in the values and skills needed to do so. Parents should be trained to parent, talk to their children and interact with them more. The school can play an important role in teaching parents how to support learning at home (Risimati, 2001:25). In the parent empowerment approach, parents are encouraged to become involved in social action in the community and to become active in their children's schools. Cochran and Dean (1991, in van Wyk, 2001:133) argues that educators who are to be trained in the empowerment approach must be taught how to empathise with parents and recognise their strengths, make the most of parent-teacher conferences, and find creative ways to involve them in school activities.

2.3.2 The role of management in the parent empowerment model

Risimati (2001:26-27) states that the principal as well as his/her management team, and a committee appointed in the school to see to the implementation of a parental involvement programme based upon the assumptions of the parent empowerment approach should recognise that parents want what is best for their children and that they want to be good parents to their children. The SMT should know that most useful knowledge of rearing children can be found at home and should therefore respect the role of the home in making sure that the education of the child is properly nurtured. The author further states that the principal and management teams should have knowledge of the history of disenfranchisement, particularly of the effect of a family's disadvantaged status on its interaction with the school. They should not control parents but rather understand their views and needs. They should have skills in promoting the political empowerment of parents through advocating shared decision-making at school, informing them of governance roles in the school, recruiting them to sit on boards and councils and ensuring their voices are not overridden in meetings. The principals and the SMTs should also ensure that all staff members understand the parent empowerment approach and acquire the necessary skills to implement it properly.

2.4 THE CULTURAL COMPETENCE APPROACH

The cultural competence approach is based on a belief that the school is an inclusive, respectful setting in which diversity is welcomed (van Wyk, 2001:133). It is based on a research model that shows how classroom practice can be developed, transformed and enriched by drawing on existing funds of knowledge in minority learners' households. The term 'funds of knowledge' is used to refer to those historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and wellbeing (van Wyk, 2001:133). For Risimati (2001:27), it is important for the teachers to respect and use the cultural diversity found within the schools, and this theory explains the influence of culture on the education of learners. An example of this approach is found in the curriculum enrichment model of Swap.

2.4.1 Swap's Curriculum Enrichment Model

This model emphasises interactive learning in the curriculum enrichment model, advocating mutual respect between parents and educators, mutual learning and mutually developed objectives (Risimati, 2001:28). The goal is to expand and extend the school's curriculum by incorporating families' contributions. The model, according to Decker et al. (2007:79), is based upon the assumptions that continuity of learning between home and school is critical to children's learning and that the values and cultural histories of many children are omitted from the standard curriculum, leading to a discontinuity of culture between home and school, and often to reduced motivation, status and achievement. The omission of cultural values distorts the curriculum, leading to a less accurate and less comprehensive understanding of events and achievements, and to a perpetuation of damaging beliefs and attitudes about minorities. The parents and educators should thus work together to enrich curriculum objectives and content and the relationship between home and school be based on mutual respect, with both parents and teachers seen as experts and resources in the process of discovery. Risimati (2001:28) emphasises that in order for schools to become productive and comfortable environment for children they will have to incorporate the familial and cultural skills and values learned in homes and communities.

2.4.2 The role of management in the Curriculum Enrichment Model

Research has found that parent involvement in the education of their children has certain benefits (Ferrara, 2009a:125), whilst for Driessen et al. (2005:509), strengthening the cooperation between schools and parents appears as critical to improve the school careers of disadvantaged groups, such as ethnic minority and low socio-economic status pupils. Risimati (2001:29) writes that it is for this reason that the school management which is employing the curriculum enrichment model of involving parents in the education of their children should select appropriate themes that reflect the cultural diversity of the school. The SMT should ensure that parents are equipped with the information about the language used so that they understand the functioning of the power structures. This would enable them to make independent decisions and to act independently with a view to making a contribution towards the development of children. Furthermore, the SMT should have knowledge of cultural differences on discipline, learning and childrearing practices. If the learners' culture is negative it can serve as a hindrance to school improvement efforts, so the SMT should be able to reverse the negative stereotypes of parents, families and community members. The management team, in particular, the principal, should know the culture of the school and should continually communicate it to parents, learners and teachers.

2.5 THE SOCIAL CAPITAL APPROACH

Built on the concept of community support for education (Van Wyk, 2001:133), the social capital approach consists of families' and schools' shared expectations and goals, which are reinforced through social interaction between children and adults. This means that the attitudes and ideas of children about the importance of education are taken into consideration (Shartrand et al., 1997, in Risimati, 2001:29). An example of this approach is found in Coleman's theory of parent involvement.

2.5.1 The role of management in the Social Capital Approach

The school management should ascertain that all those charged with the responsibility to implement a parent involvement programme in the school have knowledge of the social capital approach and parents' investment in their children's education (Shartrand et al., 1997, cited in Risimati, 2001:32). They must recognise that schools and homes have different

knowledge systems which influence partnership between them and manage conflict which might emanate as a consequence of conflicting values (Risimati, 2001:31). The school management must be able to communicate values with a view to building trust among community members. Risimati (2001:32) states that the principal (school management) should have the skills in communicating with parents in a way that models how values will be transmitted between other members of society (parent-child; teacher-child or parent-teacher).

The school management should have skills in motivating parent involvement in home-learning activities, home visits and collaborating with the community. The management skills of planning, organising, delegating, coordinating and monitoring (control) are important for each member of the management team to have. They should also be able to apply them to ensure that such types of parent involvement as home-learning activities, communication, collaborating with the community and volunteering are properly and effectively implemented. It is important to involve parents in volunteering, attending to school events and fundraising, and creating social capital. They should be able to involve parents in designing one curriculum that represents shared values (Risimati, 2001:32). The author further states that the principal (school management) should ensure that all staff members share this knowledge and are capable of involving parents and the community in schools.

2.6 PRACTICAL APPLICATION AND RELEVANCE OF THE DIFFERENT APPROACHES

Each of the four approaches discussed above accentuates a particular aspect of the concept of parent involvement. The functional approach emphasises that as many parents as possible should be involved in as many roles as possible, to improve the quality of their children's education in school. The parent empowerment approach focuses on empowering parents, more especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, so that they may be able to contribute to their children's education. The cultural competence approach, on the other hand, looks at how cultural values and norms can influence the education of a child and how schools and homes can bridge cultural differences to ensure that the education of a child is not compromised. Lastly, the social capital approach emphasises the intersection of the social capital between the school and the homes that should work for the learner's academic success at school. Nevertheless, there are more commonalities among these approaches than there are

differences, one of which is that they all aim at making certain that any parental involvement strategy would result in improving the quality of education of their children.

The frameworks discussed in the previous paragraphs are relevant in historically disadvantaged secondary schools, in that for the scholastic achievement of learners it is important that as many parents as possible must be involved in as many school activities as possible. However, parents may have to be taught to become involved, and this calls for parent empowerment so that they can become conversant with the culture of the school and gain the social capital necessary for their success both in schools and in the community. With the necessary knowledge of how they can become involved, and the appropriate skills, they can contribute to successful implementation of any parent involvement programme.

Since it would not be practically possible to employ all the frameworks and models of parent involvement in any particular school simultaneously, and since all those discussed above are relevant to the unique situation of historically disadvantaged secondary schools, the practical implication is that a new framework of parent involvement that will suit their unique situation should be developed, comprised of some aspects of the previously developed ones. Such a framework would be a comprehensive approach to parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools.

2.7 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

This study investigates the management of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools in Tshwane West district, many of which are still struggling, 17 years after the democratisation of education and the empowerment of parents, through the passing of the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996. Perhaps the reason these schools do not perform maximally is that parent involvement is not managed effectively. The types of involvement can guide the development of a balanced, comprehensive programme of partnerships, including opportunities for family involvement at school and at home, with potentially important results for students, parents and teachers, which will depend on the particular types of involvement being implemented, as well as on the quality of the implementation (Epstein, 2001:414).

Research both locally and internationally attests to the importance of parent involvement and the benefits to learners, parents, teachers and communities, which are widely documented. Michael (2004:33) contends that though this is the case, its potential is still largely ignored in schools. Educators do not systematically encourage family involvement whilst parents do not always participate when encouraged to do so.

Parental involvement therefore has benefits and advantages not only for the learners, who are at the centre of an educational process, but also for the parents as well as the teachers. In the next section, the focus is on the historical provision of education in South Africa, the pre-colonial age up to the attainment of a new democratic dispensation in 1994. This will shed light on the losses and gains in terms of, in particular, the creation of opportunities, more especially in historically disadvantaged secondary schools in the black communities, for parents to become active participants in the education of their children.

2.8 EDUCATION PROVISION IN SOUTH AFRICA

In this section, attention will be focused on the historical provisioning of education in South Africa. Generally speaking, the study of history is significant for various reasons, not only helping us to understand the present but also showing how it has been shaped. It also shows us that change is continuous (Christie, 2006:29). It is important to note that schools (education) exist to satisfy a particular need in a society, so they cannot operate outside the communities in which they exist, and as Christie (2006:17) writes, if one wishes to understand the schooling system in a particular society one cannot look only at schools. One must also look at the society in which they operate. The author adds that schools are only one part of the entire social system, which means that to understand different views of education it is necessary to look more deeply into the views that people have about the whole society. People's views on education fit in with their broader view about society and education systems need to be seen as part of it. As the wider society has changed with time so have the education systems (Christie, 2006:17-29).

For the purpose of this research, a brief account will be given of the historical development of education in South Africa before 1994. Educational changes will also be noted since the change to universal suffrage in 1994.

2.8.1 The period prior to 1994

The purpose of the Education Policy Act 39 of 1967 was to intensify the distinction between the provision of education for whites and the education for blacks. By giving white people more powers and functions in governance structures the provision of education would remain discriminatory against other population groups in South Africa. The white parents embraced this system while the majority of black parents experienced a deep sense of resentment against it. Resistance to the education system by the majority of blacks was inevitable (Segwapa, 2008:27).

It should at this stage have become clear that parent participation in the education of their children had always been given expression through the establishment of statutory bodies such as the management councils or school committees in white schools. These bodies were also vested with certain powers given to them by law and functioned in most traditionally white schools. However, such committees were not well established in black schools, where they were established by the apartheid government as a means of forcing black parents to subsidise the form of cheap education the state wished for (Segwapa, 2008:58).

Rasimati (2001:40) writes that, in general, these structures were rejected by the black community, and many schools elected to institute Parent-Teachers Associations (PTAs). However, these bodies did not have powers granted to them by the law and in time were ramified to include the students in secondary schools, thus becoming Parent-Teachers-Students Associations (PTSAs). Both the statutory and the non-statutory structures of governance in both white and black schools dealt with matters of schools funding (Michael, 2004:58).

The escalating mass actions and strikes of June 1976 continued throughout the 1980s in schools, colleges and universities, leading the government to appoint the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), a government research body, to conduct an investigation into education provision in South Africa, and make recommendations for an education policy (Christie, 2006:61). It should be noted that, among the gains made by the student uprisings of 16th June 1976, the government passed the Education and Training Act, Act No 90 of 1979, to replace the Bantu Education Act No 47 of 1953. With African education now under the Department of Education and Training (DET), more money was spent on it, on teacher upgrading and on school building projects. However, education for Africans remained segregated and unequal (Christie, 2006:57), giving cause for the boycotts to continue.

The De Lange Report put forward proposals for educational change in South Africa, among which was a more comprehensive system of mass schooling, with one education department for all groups, and proposed the principle of “equal quality” in education for all groups (Christie, 2006: 62). The government agreed fully with the report, except for one education department for all.

At the beginning of the 1990s, parents had already lost their children to political turmoil prevalent at the time, and there was a high failure rate in black secondary schools, attributable partly to lack of parental involvement and guidance in the education of their children. The government had, on the other hand, developed a strategy for allowing all schools, especially the previously privileged white ones, to admit learners from other racial groups. However, class discrimination was still reinforced because only those parents who had the financial resources could afford to send their children to those schools.

The National Party government had their own aim for education, which was to enhance and fortify their policy of apartheid. As a result, they ensured that they promoted separate developments for the various racial groups of whites, Coloureds, Indians and Blacks. They ensured that blacks received the kind of education that would put them in an inferior position in the country. The De Lange Commission was appointed in 1980 to make recommendations to remedy the collapsing education system set up by the Bantu Education Act in 1953. The Commission had an immense impact on the kind of education system envisaged for the new South Africa, and the value of parental participation in the education of their children. The government of the day agreed with all the recommendations tabled, except for one, that there should be a single education department for all in South Africa (Christie, 2006:250). Consequently, resistance continued until the attainment of the new dispensation in 1994.

On 27th April 1994, the first national elections to employ the principle of universal suffrage were held, and the Nationalist Party government was replaced by one formed from the African National Congress (ANC) under the leadership of President Mandela.

2.7.2 The period during the post-apartheid era

As acknowledged above, history is significant in helping understand the past, rectify its mistakes and make provisions for the future. The new government of 1994 passed the Constitution of South Africa Act, Act No 108 of 1996, the aim of which was to build a new

nation based on the principles of non-racialism, non-sexism and equality. People's rights as citizens were enshrined, irrespective of their race, colour, religious orientation and class, and were to apply to all spheres of society, including education. Lemmer and van Wyk (2004:261) point to legislation that introduced important reforms impacting on parent involvement.

The South African Constitution (RSA 1996a) introduced the democratisation of the education system and the concept of partnership among stakeholders in education through co-operative governance, followed by the South African Schools Act (1996, Act 84 of 1996) (RSA 1996b), which went further by defining the concept of parent; describing basic parental duties; setting requirements for schools related to parents' right to information; and providing for parent and community representation in mandatory school governing bodies (SGBs). In the new system of education the role that parents should play in the education of their children has been emphasised more than at any time in the country's history.

The newly democratically elected Government of National Unity (GNU) published two White Papers on education which ushered in the Schools Act (Segwapa, 2008:35), as follows.

2.8.2.1 The White Paper on Education and Training (1995)

The White Paper on Education and Training (1995) described education as a basic human right and acknowledges the inalienable right of parents to choose the form best suited to their children. The Act also promised access to education and training of a good quality for all South Africans and the redress of past imbalances (DoE, 1995:21). The principles were taken up in the National Education Policy Act No 27 of 1996, which affirms the constitutional right of people to education and states that no learner may be denied a right to education on the grounds of parents' inability to pay school fees (DoE, 1996a:21). Michael (2004:31) concurs in this regard by indicating that the White Paper on Education and Training (RSA, 1995) reaffirms the principle of representation by stating that democratic governance should increasingly be reflected on every level of the system (RSA, 1995: 22). She continues to assert that the main thrust of the Act is that, since the state has inadequate financial and organisational capacity to do everything for schools, all stakeholders, parents, educators, learners and local community members should be actively involved in their organisation,

governance and funding. Baloyi (2003:30) regards the White Paper (1995:21-23) as highlighting the importance of parental and community involvement:

The principle 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 stakeholders, interest groups 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 (RSA, 1995:21-23).

The Act prioritises parents and community involvement in education, and parents continue to be given a chance to involve themselves formally.

2.8.2.2 The South African Schools Act (1996b)

The South African Schools Act (SASA) No 84 was passed in Parliament on 1st November 1996, but only came into effect in 1997. Its objective was to provide for uniformity in the organisation, governance and funding of schools (DoE, 1996b:103), and made provision for compulsory education for all learners up to 15 years of age, proclaiming the responsibility of parents for their school attendance. The Act upheld the rights of learners, parents and educators and promoted their acceptance of responsibility for governance and the funding of schools in partnership with the state.

The Act mandated the establishment of SGBs in all public schools in order to ensure that parents, teachers, learners and non-teaching staff would actively participate in the governance and management, with a view to providing teaching and learning environments (Segwapa, 2008:33). Section 23 of the Act provided a guideline on how SGBs in ordinary public schools were to be constituted. Section 23 (1) clearly stated that membership of the governing body of an ordinary public school should comprise elected members, the principal in his or her official capacity, and co-opted members. Section 23(2) stated that members should comprise a member or members of each of the following categories: parents of learners, educators, members of staff who are not educators, and learners in the eighth grade or higher (RSA, 1996b:102). The latter part confirmed that SGBs could only be established in ordinary secondary public schools, in order to perform certain functions that are a prerequisite for

effective and efficient teaching and learning. A full disclosure of the functions of the SGB is found in Section 20 and 21 of SASA, but for the purpose of this discussion the functions included: development of the mission statement of the school; adoption of a code of conduct after consultation with learners, parents and educators; determination of the admission and language policies, within the framework laid down in the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 and the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, and any other applicable provincial law; after a fair hearing, suspension of learners as a correctional measure for a period not exceeding one week; recommendation to the HoD the teaching and other staff at the school; and supplementing the resources supplied by the state in order to improve the quality of education provided to all learners. In this case, parents could be asked to pay school fees, the amount to be agreed upon by the majority of parents, and such funds administered by the SGB, which must also prepare a budget each year to show estimated income and expenditure for the following year (Kgaffe, 2001:59; RSA, 1996b: B-12-13).

Lemmer and van Wyk (2004:262) delineate the SGB's powers as being: to determine the overall school policy and to formulate a code of conduct; to develop language and admission policies (in terms of the Act and the Constitution); to determine school times; to control and maintain physical facilities; to recommend the appointment and dismissal of teaching and non-teaching staff; to handle matters of discipline relating to staff and learners; to promote staff development and support the curriculum; and to administer the school funds and school budget.

2.8.2.3 Summary

The promulgation of the two Acts and the sections on the role of parents and other stakeholders in the education of the children, point to the extent of commitment on the side of the government to the parents' legitimate right to become involved and actively participate in the education of their children. The legal provision for the establishment of SGBs in secondary schools also points to their pivotal role in the successful education of their children. For Kgaffe (2001:60), the functions of the SGBs illustrate the indispensable link they form between the school and the community it serves.

Examining the historical provision of education in the country it becomes clear that white parents had a voice in the education of their children, whereas black parents' involvement

was restricted to the specific function of providing funding. Black parents were not provided with the opportunities to gain the necessary experience to involve themselves constructively in the organisation and governance of the schools their children attended. It is for this reason that many, more especially in disadvantaged communities, still experience problems in involving themselves in SGBs, and initially require assistance. Capacity building programmes are therefore necessary and, according to Kgaffe (2001:60), the state has determined that these be provided out of funds appropriated for this purpose by the provincial legislature.

Despite the good intentions by the government manifested by the passing of the Acts, as a way of providing the most conducive and enabling environments for all parents to become meaningfully involved in the education of their children, many secondary schools in the previously disadvantaged communities are still struggling to reach the government targets each year. This might be attributed to the inability on the part of those schools to involve parents in schools' activities for the learners' scholastic achievement.

2.9 BARRIERS TO PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Barriers in this discussion refer to all those factors which deter parents from becoming involved in the education of their children for their scholastic success. Kgaffe (2001:107) refers to a barrier as an obstacle or problem that prevents the development of an effective relationship developing between parents and schools. Barriers that prevent this relationship from developing deprive all, particularly the learners, of the benefits associated with effective parent involvement. The sources are varied, from impediments that emanate from the parents themselves to those generated by educators and other staff members, or by children. It is therefore up to those who are concerned with proper management of effective parental involvement, namely principals of schools and their teaching and non-teaching staff, not only to become aware of these impediments but also to devise ways and means of countering them, so that their schools can derive as many benefits as possible of family-school relations for the children's academic achievement.

Parental involvement in education is influenced by a number of factors, including the socio-economic status (SES). Mbokodi and Singh (2004:301) point out that efforts by policymakers and school administrators to involve parents in their children' education create more

hindrances to the working class, clearly identified in historically disadvantaged secondary schools where most of the parents lack the necessary literacy levels of participation. In addition, many are unemployed, consequently reducing their role in negotiating from a point of strength (Mbokodi & Singh, 2004:301). Mncube (2009:85) also stresses the impact of illiteracy as an impediment to parent involvement, noting that, in practice, parent governors are not yet participating fully [supposedly in the SGB], since many lack the skills to perform the duties assigned to them. In such situations the principal continues to perform the functions now supposed to be the responsibility of the SGB.

The attitude of teachers towards parents may also serve as a barrier to effective involvement. In rural schools, parents are often not afforded the opportunity to play their full role in the governance of a school, with decisions usually taken by the SMT rather than the SGB (Mncube, 2009:91). The educational level of parents, lack of education on parental involvement, fear of academic victimisation, language barriers and difficulty in attending, are some of the impediments cited by Mncube (2009:95-96).

Research points to lack of education on parent involvement as another barrier, seen by Ferrara (2009:125) as constituting a feeling of “un-connectedness” that grows stronger as their children move from one grade to another in middle and high school. Even though mother and father are the child’s first teachers, the role of the parents as the support teachers in the home fades quickly once the child enters school. He cites teachers’ lack of knowledge in involving parents in their children’s education, writing that even today there is limited professional development at the school or district level that incorporates the importance of the role of parents and the harnessing by classroom professionals of this parental power.

Schools may also place more challenges to parents effectively becoming involved in the education of their children, especially through middle and high school. Hill and Tyson (2009:742) found that and the size and complexity of middle schools often makes it difficult for parents to become effectively involved. The large number of students makes it difficult for teachers to develop and maintain productive relations with the parents of each one, while the departmentalisation or specialisation of instruction by academic subjects results in teachers having fewer interactions with individual students. The increase in the number of teachers each student has across subjects makes it difficult for parents to know who to contact to obtain information about their child’s progress.

SES is also seen as a determinant in the level of parental involvement in the education of their children. Economically disadvantaged parents will be less involved in the education of their children, apart from other important family and child characteristics, because of the financial and time constraints that go hand in hand with poverty. They often work long hours in multiple physically demanding jobs and have fewer means of transportation. For these parents, lack of time, energy and access may constrain attempts at school involvement (Cooper & Croesnoe, 2007:362). Similarly, DePlanty, Kern and Duchane (2007:367) found SES to be another major determinant of the level of parental involvement, stating that the resources parents gain through their social networks contribute to their involvement in their children's education. If parents have minimal social networks they tend to be less involved, as those from disadvantaged groups experience barriers to communication with the school and so cooperation (Driessen, Smit & Slegers, 2005:510). A question of time is reported as another impediment to parental involvement, as teachers do not have open communication with parents as they believe they do not have the time. According to DePlanty et al (2007:362), teachers think involving parents is extremely important, but time constraints limit their time to deal with them.

School-family disconnection and violence at school are other barriers, with Snell, Miguel and East (2009: 246) pointing to a separation between school and home cultures. Students are described as dealing with dual lives and dual expectations, whilst the danger of violence conveys a feeling of helplessness or powerlessness in the parents. If parents were accorded an opportunity to devise solutions it would be a starting point for their involvement (Snell et al., 2009:246). Parents' educational level is also cited as a barrier to school involvement, with research demonstrating a positive correlation between the mother's education level and the degree of parent involvement in school activities. Parent involvement may also decrease as students move from elementary into junior high school because parents are less knowledgeable in some of the academic areas. The less educated parents the less qualified they are to help their children with homework. As a result, less well educated parents might shift their attention from school because they feel inadequate when helping their children with homework (DePlanty et al., 2007:362).

In addition to the social, economic and educational factors cited above, research also confirms that psychological factors, such as teacher and parent efficacy, may also serve as deterrents to effective parent involvement. Epstein (2001) showed that it decreases

dramatically as children move into secondary school, a view echoed by Deslandes and Bertrand (2005:165), who found a steady decline in parent involvement, but a steady increase in adolescent autonomy as they progress through high school. At this stage parents are forced to redefine and reconstruct their roles in their relationships with their adolescent children, and are no longer able to intervene directly in their education. Deslandes et al. (2005:165) refer to the concepts “parents’ role construction” and “parents’ self-efficacy” in helping children succeed in school.

Teacher efficacy, on the other hand, refers to the teacher’s level of confidence in dealing with parents. If a teacher has a feeling of isolation or separateness, more than likely he or she will not contact parents or involve them in home activities. DePlanty et al (2007:367) reinforce a positive relationship between teacher efficacy and teacher report of parent involvement, speculating that higher efficacy teachers might invite and receive more parent involvement than do lower efficacy teachers. A teacher’s sense of efficacy is a judgement about his or her capacity to influence student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated.

Characteristics of early adolescent development and family dynamics are other impediments to effective parent involvement. Hill and Tyson (2009:742) write that adolescence is marked by a dramatic cognitive development of conceptualisation of the self as an autonomous, efficacious individual. Adolescents are already able to understand how courses and extracurricular activities are related to goals and aspirations in the immediate timeframe and thereby decrease their need for direct parental involvement. Direct involvement strategies, such as school-based involvement and direct homework assistance, may be needed less. Indeed, students’ increased sense of autonomy is associated with their desire not to have their parents visit the school. Adolescents at this stage play a greater role in deciding which type of parent involvement they need, which makes active school-based involvement less effective than other types of parent involvement. In support of the above assertion, Catsambis (1998, in Elish-Piper, 2008:45) argues that once students approach adolescence effective parent involvement shifts from the role of “parent as teacher or tutor” to “parent as coach, mentor, or supporter” role. This change in parent role is also necessary because older students study school subjects that may be unfamiliar to parents or that exceed their parents’ comfort levels or expertise (e.g., Algebra, Biology, foreign languages). As parents shift to a coaching,

mentoring, and supporting role, they can remain involved while also offering their teenage offspring the space they need to grow into healthy adults.

Michael (2004:42-43) cites the following as barriers to parent involvement: A large number of linguistically diverse learners; differences in ethnicity and social class between teachers and parents; limited skills and knowledge among parents and educators on which to build collaborations, as well as restricted opportunities for interaction and cultural and language differences; psychological obstacles to mutual involvement, such as misperceptions, misunderstandings, negative expectations, stereotypes, intimidation and distrust; changing demographics and employment patterns; working mothers; divorces; single parent families; second and third marriages; children having children; an increase in poverty; time; uncertainty about what to do; lack of supportive environments; lack of training of teachers and principals; and predominant institutional cultures in the schools which place little value on the views and participation of parents.

Research points to lack of communication between schools and parents (Simango, 2008:29), negative school experience and language barriers (Risimati, 2001:39) and lack of facilitation of parent involvement (Risimati, 2001:40). Parents being expected to provide financial support to schools may discourage them from contact, as may lack of clear policies on parent involvement, changing family structure, lack of support for parenting tasks of parents/caregivers, and, on the part of the schools, little use being made of expertise from the community (Kgaffe, 2001:107).

2.10 THE MANAGEMENT OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Whilst acknowledging that most policymakers and educators endorse the need for school-family-community partnerships to improve education, van Wyk (2001:116) writes that little is being done to prepare educators to work with parents or members of the community in South African schools. Strong parent involvement is linked to sound management and a strong culture of teaching and learning, the absence of which is a cause for concern. For Lemmer et al. (2004:267) the general malfunctioning of black schools may be attributed to the legacy of apartheid, whilst Botha et al. (2006:241) see cooperation between parents and teachers as vital for effective teaching and learning.

Parent involvement does not happen automatically, and has thus become one of the most important areas in school management, requiring the establishment of SMTs. Bush and Middlewood (2005:108) state that the legislation has not defined a SMT, but the working definition being used by the provinces and the DoE is that it consists of the principal, deputy principal and HoDs. This team is important in that it is the one responsible for the day-to-day professional management of the school.

The principal is the most important figure in this team because he/she is the one who must ensure that the school is managed effectively. The key areas in school management include learner affairs, staff affairs, administrative affairs, financial affairs, physical facilities and school community affairs (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2003: 81). Decker et al. (2004:124) see the principal as usually the first line gatekeeper, the individual who will determine whether a school reaches out to involve families and the community in the education of children. The principal's willingness and ability to engage in collaboration are essential to the success of the initiative. Constantino (2007:58), on the other hand, argues that when cultivating family engagement to bring about enhanced student learning, perhaps the most important element is the principal's belief in it. As with any other reform measure, if leaders do not embrace the concept there is little hope that anyone else within the organisation will.

Lemmer et al. (2004:260-261) found that currently the most comprehensive model of partnership in literature appears to be Epstein's framework of six major types of home-school-community involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and community collaboration. Each type of involvement poses specific challenges for its successful implementation, and leads to different outcomes for learners, parents and teachers. They further note that integral to the model is an organisational structure that coordinates school, family and community partnerships, and that this structure should be part of, but not synonymous with the SGB. They write of a need for a broader conceptualisation of parent involvement, which transcends participation in school governance. Their most disturbing finding is that a comprehensive model of parent involvement is uncommon in South African schools.

As a relatively new concept in South African education, it is important that implementation of parent involvement programmes includes certain management tasks of planning, organising, delegating (leading), coordinating and control be carried out as thoroughly as

possible. Each of these management activities is now discussed in depth, with specific reference to the management of parent involvement.

2.10.1 Planning of parent involvement

The principal's role as a leading figure is of paramount importance in ensuring there is thorough planning of all activities, including parent involvement in the education of their children. Planning is the first task in the management process, its purpose being to manage the future and ensure that decisions taken on human and other resources are based on school policy. It includes forward thinking and assessing, as well as deciding on priorities (Van Deventer et al., 2003:79). For Van Deventer et al. (2003:80), plans have two basic components: i) future aims, based on identified needs, which are broad statements of intent. Aims are operationalised, that is, put into practice and thus becoming a reality, by breaking them down into specific and reliable outcomes; and ii) a plan of action: This is a specific course of action to ensure that the necessary actions are taken to achieve the aims and outcomes that have been planned.

As a process, planning involves providing answers on a continuous basis to the questions what, when, where, who and how. It involves determining in advance: *what are the needs?* (the needs of the school, a department, a subject, a class group, a lesson or a project); *how are the needs going to be met?* (the ways in which the needs are to be accomplished or reached); *when and where will the needs be addressed?* (determine dates and venues for the necessary curricular and extra-curricular activities); *who will do it and what is needed?* (the necessary resources, personnel, financial and physical, to fulfil the determined needs of the school or department, or to enable the teaching and learning of the grade(s) or subject, or to complete a project); *how is the plan to be executed?* (a plan of action to ensure that the aims and outcomes that have been set are reached, in order to fulfil the need); and *why should the needs be met?* (to realise the educational need of establishing a culture of teaching and lifelong learning through formative education in schools) (Van Deventer et al., 2003:80).

2.10.2 Organising of home-school connections

Once plans have been completed they must be implanted, which means that someone or a certain group of people must perform the necessary tasks or work to attain the school's

outcomes. Organising is a process of creating a structure for the school that will enable its members to work together effectively towards achieving its outcomes. Organising involves developing actions or mechanisms that will contribute to the realisation of the school's outcomes (Van Deventer et al., 2003:109).

In the case of home-school connections, the roles and responsibilities of parents, teachers and learners will be organised in a manner that helps realise the outcomes. According to Van Deventer et al. (2003:118), the management task of organising is important for a variety of reasons, namely: it leads to an organisational structure that indicates clearly who is responsible for which tasks and it clarifies the staff's responsibilities. Accountability implies that the responsible staff members will be expected to account for the outcomes of the tasks for which they are responsible. Clear channels of communication are established and distribution of resources maintained. The total workload of the school is divided into activities to be performed by an individual or a group of individuals and the principle of synergy enhances the effectiveness and quality of the work performed.

Leadership and control are impossible without organising the activities of management and staff, nor are leadership and control possible if the school does not clearly state who is responsible for carrying out and coordinating specific tasks (Van Deventer et al., 2003:118).

2.10.3 Delegating for family-school partnership

Although a principal or a teacher may be a leader in working with some families or with groups in the community, one person cannot create a lasting, comprehensive programme that involves all families as their children progress through grades (Epstein, 2001:415). It is for this reason that Epstein (2001) regards the establishment of a school-based action team for partnership as an essential structure in each school. Barbour et al. (2008:339) assert that such an action team or general steering committee guides the partnership effort and acts as the direction-setting team. According to Epstein (2001:339), the job of the action team is to assess the partnership practices, arrange for the implementation of the agreed on activities and to improve and coordinate all practices for the types of involvement. It leads in these responsibilities but is assisted by other teachers, parents, students, administrators and community members. The group membership includes a reasonable arrangement from the following constituencies:

- few teachers from different grade levels
- A few parents
- The school principal
- At least one community delegate
- A student delegate if at junior level or above

The work of a principal, a school manager, is to get the work done through the efforts of others. No principal can exercise leadership without delegating most of the responsibilities (Van Deventer et al., 2003:118).

2.10.4 Effective coordinating of family-school partnerships

Coordinating is essentially good teamwork, which ensures that all the members of the team are working together to achieve determined outcomes. It is the process through which school managers try to relate people, tasks, resources and time schedules in such a way that they are complementary as well as supplementary, and support the whole school in realising its aims and outcomes (Van Deventer et al., 2003:123). Members of the action team for partnership perform certain tasks for an effective family-school partnership and it is important that the principal, in collaboration with the team leader, ensures that the activities are properly coordinated to realise success. The principal's leadership is essential in this regard.

Coordinating is important for the following reasons:

- To synchronise people (staff, learners and parents) and activities to achieve set outcomes
- To develop team spirit and promote teamwork
- To ensure cooperation between educators
- To ensure that policy is uniformly applied (Van Deventer et al., 2003:123).

Once an action team for partnership has been established, its main purpose shall be to draw up a policy for parent involvement and to ensure that such a policy is relayed to all the stakeholders. The action team will also be responsible for drawing up an annual action plan which will serve to synchronise the stakeholders and activities so that the set goals may be achieved. Both a policy and an action plan serve to bring about cooperation and teamwork between the stakeholders.

2.10.5 Control as a management task in home-school relations

Control is the last of the management tasks in the management process, and this can be viewed as the starting point for the next management process. It is the management process through which education managers ensure that deviations from or failures of planned activities are kept to a minimum so that the school's outcomes may be accomplished with as little disturbance as possible (Van Deventer et al., 2003:127).

Petersen (2011:252) writes that using assessment and evaluation tools can assist schools and partners in collecting evidence to support and improve the partnership over time. Assessment should take place during the course of the partnership activities (formative assessment), and an evaluation can take place after the project or part of it is complete (summative evaluation). Research continues to argue for assessment as an on going process that influences planning and implementing educational practices. Evaluation refers to a benchmark or a cumulative event by which decisions are made in relation to a particular project. For Van Deventer et al. (2003:128), the process of control is not the sole responsibility of the principal. Each educator and staff member of a school has the obligation to be involved in the control process, thereby ensuring that each one is engaged in the process of realising the outcomes of the school.

Epstein (2001:339) writes that each year the ATP updates its three year outline and develops a detailed one year action plan. In other words, the team continues to find out how it can improve its structure and practices to increase the families as partners. This cannot happen if there is no proper control of the activities of the school-based action team for partnerships.

2.11 SUMMARY

The different models and theories of parent involvement for each one of the frameworks were discussed. It was also noted that each of these is still relevant provided it meets specific requirements in the interest of the education of the child (2.6). The advantages (2.7) as well as barriers to parent involvement (2.9) were also discussed at length. The researcher examined the historical background of the topic to clarify the extent to which parents were involved in the education of their children (2.8). It became apparent that in the history of the South African education provision, parents in the black communities were given little opportunity to have a say in the education of their children. The socio-economic and political circumstances served to alienate and disadvantage them until the attainment of a new

democratic order in 1994. The discussion ended with a review of the managerial tasks to be performed in schools for the successful implementation of parent involvement programmes in schools. Those management tasks include planning, organising, delegating, coordinating and control.

In Chapter 3, the research design and methodology will be outlined.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 was a review of literature pertinent to the management of parent involvement in secondary schools, through which the researcher acquire insight into the topic being empirically investigated, namely the management of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools in Tshwane West district, Gauteng. Several relevant theories on parent involvement were examined, as well as their practical application. Barriers to parent involvement in secondary schools were also investigated, and the chapter concluded with a brief discussion of the management of parent involvement.

In this chapter, the focus is on the research design and the methodology employed in investigating the management of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools, particularly in Tshwane West district (district 15), which is the last and the newest district to be developed by mixing schools which previously belonged to Bophuthatswana Department of Education with some previously belonging to Gauteng Department of Education (GDE).

Empiricism is a theoretical framework which emphasises that knowledge is acquired through the senses. Following the positivists' investigation of the world through experimental methods, it was realised that this alone could not lead to a full understanding of the world, and consequently other theoretical perspectives, such as interpretivism, constructivism and hermeneutics were developed to fill the gap. Emerging from this were two major approaches to empirical research, namely, *quantitative* and *qualitative*. In this study, a qualitative approach has been followed.

3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Data collected during such observations captures a rich understanding which may not be generalised beyond the research setting or unique characteristics of the sample. Researchers often opt for this approach when they believe that the educational outcomes are too complex

to reduce to a number (Suter, 2006: 41). Qualitative data is therefore defined as empirical information about the world, not in the form of numbers (Punch, 2009:87; Springer, 2010:20), and qualitative researchers therefore use words to describe what they have observed empirically.

Given the nature of the problem under investigation, the researcher decided to follow the qualitative approach to explore the life-worlds of the participants by conducting in-depth interviews with principals, teachers and parents serving in school governing bodies (SGBs) in selected secondary schools. In this chapter, a rationale for the use of qualitative research will be provided and the choice of data collection methods outlined. The procedure includes the criteria for selecting the research sites and participants, data analysis, validity and reliability.

The qualitative paradigm stems from an anti-positivist, interpretive approach which is idiographic and thus holistic in nature, and aims mainly at understanding social life and the meaning people attach to everyday life (De Vos et al., 2005:74). In its broadest sense it refers to research that elicits participants' accounts of meaning, experiences or perceptions. It elicits descriptive data in the participants' own written or spoken words. The qualitative researcher is therefore, concerned with understanding (*verstehen*) rather than explanation; naturalistic observation rather than controlled measurements; and subjective exploration of reality from the perspective of an insider rather than the outsider perspective predominant in the quantitative paradigm. According to De Vos (1998, cited in Risimati, 2001:60), the qualitative approach, unlike quantitative research, does not provide the researcher with fixed steps to follow in conducting an empirical research.

Qualitative research is holistic, allowing the researcher to study people's attitudes and aspirations in their natural settings, gaining an overview of the context under study, its logic, its arrangements, and its explicit and implicit rules (Punch, 2009:117). The researcher attempts to gain a first hand, holistic understanding of phenomena of interest by means of a flexible strategy of problem formulation and data collection, shaped as the investigation proceeds (De Vos et al., 2005:74). In this study, the researcher followed a holistic approach as the management of parent involvement will be studied against the background of the historically disadvantaged communities and educational provision in Gauteng province.

In qualitative research, the researcher is an instrument (Risimati, 2001:61), seeking validity through skill, competence and rigor. It is thus necessary to develop an understanding of the skills needed to work with people with a view to gathering data. Punch (2009:117) writes that

relatively little standardised instrumentation is used at the outset, but the researcher attempts to capture data on the perceptions of local actors from the inside, through a process of deep attentiveness, empathetic understanding and suspending or bracketing preconceptions about the topics under discussion. In this study, the researcher was instrumental in thorough preparation, and as well as having acquired skills in interpersonal relations and the mastery of data collection and analysis techniques, also conducted an extensive review of relevant literature on the topic.

De Vos et al. (2005:75) write that participants' natural language is used in order to come to a genuine understanding of their world and that qualitative research aims to understand social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life. With analysis mostly carried out in the medium of language (Punch, 2009:118), the component words can be assembled, sub-clustered and broken into semiotic segments, then organised to permit the researcher to contrast, compare and bestow patterns on them. Qualitative research produces descriptive data in the participants' own written or spoken words (De Vos et al., 2005:74), as detailed, thick description, using direct quotations to capture personal perspectives and experiences (Risimati, 2001:62). This researcher left no word unattended as all were regarded as having the potential to help unravel a particular reality essential in addressing the problem being investigated.

The inductive method is a kind of reasoning which proceeds from the specific to the general, and relies on experience as a source of knowledge (Springer, 2010:6). It is appealing because the starting point consists of observations rather than assumptions or traditional ideas and the knowledge acquired can extend far beyond prior knowledge. The researcher sought to understand the actions of those involved in secondary schools in the management of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged areas in Tshwane West.

3.3 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The concept of research design is defined differently by different researchers. According to De Vos et al. (2005:75), it is flexible and unique and evolves throughout the research process, with no fixed steps to be followed and its exact replication impossible. For Punch (2009:112), at the most general level research design means all the issues involved in planning and executing a research project, from identifying the problem through to reporting and

publishing the results. At the specific level it refers to the way the researcher guards against, and tries to rule out interpretations of the results. The research design is the basic plan for a piece of research and includes four main ideas, namely: the strategy, the conceptual framework, selection of samples and the instruments used for data collection (Punch, 2009:113).

De Vos (1998, in Risimati, 2001:64) maintains that qualitative researchers employ a wide range of strategies in their effort to understand the phenomenon being studied, depending on the purpose, nature of research questions as well as skills available for the researcher. Each strategy has its own perspective and methods of data collection. Based upon the nature of the problem to be investigated, the researcher employed participant observation, in-depth interviews and focus group interviews with principals, a few teachers as well as some members of the SGBs.

3.4 SELECTION OF SCHOOLS AND PARTICIPANTS

Tshwane West district covers a wide geographical area around Pretoria,² which began to function independently in 2007, having been formed by conglomerating some schools which previously belonged to Bophuthatswana Education Department with those regarded as historically advantaged under the GDE. For the purpose of this study, the researcher concentrated on those secondary schools located in Mabopane, Soshanguve, Ga-Rankuwa, Winterveldt, Kameeldrift and Lotus Gardens, these being locations (settlements) in the district which that were strongly affected by the political turbulence prevalent throughout the country prior to 1994. There were 46 secondary schools in the district, however only 33 qualified as historically or previously disadvantaged.

The schools constitute what Springer (2010:100) refers to as a ‘population’, that is the entire group of individuals (secondary schools) being studied, or as Punch (2009:251) refers to it, the ‘total target group’. However, for logistical reasons it is difficult to include the whole population in one study. All research involves a process of selecting participants, known generally as ‘sampling’, because no study, whether quantitative, qualitative or mixed, can include everyone (Mahlangu, 2008:80; Punch, 2009:251).

² It encompasses the residential areas of Mabopane, Winterveldt, Ga-Rankuwa, Kameeldrift, Rosslyn, Akasia, Pretoria North, Mountain View, Roseville, Capital Park, Hercules, Pretoria Gardens, Pretoria West, Lotus Gardens and Soshanguve

3.4.1 Sampling

Sarantakos (2000) cited in De Vos et al. (2005: 328) describes sampling in qualitative research as being relatively limited, based on saturation rather than representation. The size is not statistically determined and involves lower costs and less time than in other forms of research. The researcher used a small sample, the principal, three teachers and three members of the SGB in each of three schools chosen. Patton (2002, in De Vos et al., 2005:328) writes that there are no rules for sample size in qualitative enquiry, but rather it depends on the purpose of the enquiry, what is at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility and what can be done with available time and resources.

Sampling is in essence a process of drawing a small group of subjects (a sample), from a population which serves as a representative of the whole population, and which is included in the actual study. For De Vos et al. (2005:194) a sample comprises elements of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study, or as a subset of measurements drawn from a population. However, a sample is not primarily as an end in itself but rather a means of helping to explain facets of the whole population, to whom they are generalised. According to Springer, (2010:100), the researcher identifies a target population then chooses a sampling procedure. In quantitative research generally, and in some qualitative studies, the goal of sampling is to obtain a representative sample, that is, one that accurately reflects the characteristics of the population from which it is drawn.

A purposive sampling procedure was chosen for this research, that is one deliberately intended to select those secondary schools which the researcher believes are the most information-rich and accessible. The researcher had worked in the area for over 15 years and, as a manager over a longer period, was able to locate them without difficulty. The principals, teachers and parents showed a willingness to contribute to the study.

3.4.2 Selection of participants

Mahlangu (2008:81) contends that purposeful sampling is the selection of information-rich cases for an in-depth study designed to increase the utility of the information. The information is obtained from a small sample participating in a specific research project. Denzin and Lincoln (cited in De Vos et al., 2005:328) point out that qualitative researchers seek out individuals, groups and settings where the specific process being studied is most

likely to occur. A process of constant comparison between the individuals and groups is essential, since the researcher is in pursuit of understanding all aspects of the research topic. The search for data must be guided by processes that will provide rich detail to maximise the range of specific information that can be obtained from and about the context. In the case of purposive sampling, researchers purposely seek typical and divergent data (De Vos et al., 2005: 329). According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993, in Mahlangu, 2008:81), the researcher searches for information-rich key informants, groups, places and events to study, because they are likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon being studied.

The three secondary schools which were selected to participate in this study were considered as information-rich sites because they were situated in very poor localities, characterised by high unemployment and absence of parents to forces of migrant labour. This impacted on the daily lives of children as they spend considerable time without the proper guidance or motivation provided by a prudent adult at home. The majority of people living around such schools in the community were staying in tin houses or shacks, without proper sanitation. The community was characterised by social ills such as murder, theft, and burglary, while the schools were experiencing teenage pregnancy, high absenteeism, late coming, fighting and even shootings within the premises. These schools were struggling to meet the minimum pass percentage as required by the DoE (the schools and surroundings are described in greater detail in Chapter 4).

3.4.3 Access

According to Mahlangu (2008:84), gaining access requires acquisition of consent to enter the site, observe whatever is necessary for the study, talk to anybody, obtain and read whatever satisfies your research purpose. The same approach is maintained by De Vos et al. (2005:279), who assert that it is important to gain permission to enter the field and that while the granting of permission rests with the relevant authority it also lets people on the ground know what the project seeks to accomplish. All those directly involved in the project should be consulted in the process of gaining access. The researcher applied to the DoE to conduct research at the specified sites, for which a permission letter was issued and submitted for ethical clearance to the researcher's university, then to principals of the selected schools.

Similar letters were submitted to the SGBs and teaching staff, informing them of the researcher's intention and the purpose of the study (see Appendix?).

Mahlangu (2008:84) writes that keeping access is as delicate as gaining it, particularly the manner in which people are approached, the understanding of the participants, and the agreements reached. Copies of the relevant research product must be shared with the relevant parties before the results are made public and the researcher must seriously consider all comments made by them. For De Vos et al. (2005:279), the permission granted at the beginning of the project does not entitle the researcher to all information and s/he should gain further permission as and when necessary. This would apply in instances when the researcher would like to gain access, for example, to school policy on specific issues, such as parental involvement on discipline, or in instances where a disciplinary hearing was being heard in the school. Continued access would also depend to a large extent on the respect that the researcher has towards everybody on the research site. A researcher who treats the community with tact and openness is likely to achieve more and to obtain permission more readily. Treating the leaders and community members with respect and in a warm, professional manner will achieve more than attempting to gain forced entry (De Vos et al., 2005:279).

3.4.4 Maintaining relationships

De Vos et al. (2005:280) maintain that the quality of data is enhanced if good relationships can be maintained with all the members of the community throughout the project. They further argue that relationships should be built on mutual trust, cooperation and the knowledge that the relationship will be terminated at some stage or other when the inquiry has been completed. Trust and cooperation, however, do not automatically come into being but are aspects which the researcher has to acquire firstly and, most importantly, by present to the participants. Mahlangu (2008:86) states that the researcher's appearance and behaviour should be acceptable to the focus group in order to boost rapport-building and acquire continuous access to the focus group.

The researcher's knowledge and sensitivity towards the participants' language and culture is also of significance in an endeavour to establish rapport with the participants. Once the participants realise that the researcher has an interest in their way of life they will

progressively open up and discuss more sensitive issues. Mahlangu (2008:86) recommends that the researcher be able to speak and understand the nuances of the language of the focus group. In case the researcher does not understand specific workplace terminology or comments, they may be shelved until he or she feels comfortable enough to ask for clarification. Conversely, in keeping with adherence to ethical guidelines, the participants were allowed to seek clarity on issues of concern before any interviewing could commence.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES

The qualitative approach necessitated the employment of appropriate methods of data collection, namely observation as the dominant one, supplemented by in-depth interviews with principals and focus group interviews with selected teachers and parents.

3.5.1 Observation

Observation is described by Clough and Nutbrown (2002, in Lowe, 2006:59) as a way of “seeing” familiar and routine events in a new way. This involves looking critically at the familiar and asking questions about what one sees. It relies on the researcher seeing and hearing certain phenomena and recording these observations, rather than relying on the subjects’ self-report responses to questions or statements (Mahlangu, 2008:62). There are two main forms of observation, *non-participant* and *participant*.

In non-participant observation, the researcher is not actively involved in the activity or situation they are observing (Lowe, 2006:60), merely recording information without interaction with participants. The researcher looks and listens (and perhaps also tastes, smells and touches) without conversing or sharing activities with the individuals being observed (Springer, 2010:144). With this form of observation the researcher may gather information unobtrusively, or the individuals may be aware of the researcher’s presence but have no meaningful interaction with him or her.

In participant observation, meanwhile, the role of the researcher is on a continuum from total involvement to total observation (De Vos et al., 2005:274; Punch, 2009:157). The researcher in this study assumed the role of a detached, unobtrusive observer at the beginning, so as to be able to collect as much information as possible about the physical environment of the three selected schools, as well as the behaviours of people as manifested in their natural settings.

The researcher observed the schools' infrastructure and surrounding communities then moved onto human behaviour and the manner in which they were interacting in their natural settings. In particular, observations were made of the relationship between the principals and other staff members and between principals and teachers towards visiting parents and other significant others, and the relationship between learners and visiting parents. The researcher's role progressively changed along the continuum, towards complete participation, conducting informal unstructured conversational interviews with principals, teachers and visiting parents on the school premises. The findings of this observational research are discussed in Chapter 4.

The following characteristics of participant observation have been identified by De Vos et al. (2005:276-277):

- The phenomenological approach is important in participant observation, as the researcher endeavours to gain an in-depth insight into the manifestations of reality.
- The focus is on the everyday and natural experiences of the respondents. The researcher should strive at all times towards gaining feelings and impressions and experiencing the circumstances of the real world of participants by living alongside them, and by interpreting and sharing their activities. For qualitative researchers, it is only by getting close to their subjects and becoming an insider that they can view the world as a participant in that setting.
- In order to be able to ascertain the real meaning of people's behaviour in particular situations, it is of the utmost importance that the researcher study and know the customs, lifestyles and contexts of the respondents in a culture-sensitive manner.
- The particular role that the researcher will take is of the utmost importance. The observer's involvement varies from no participation to full participation. It is however, maintained that the emphasis should fall on participation instead of observation, to allow the researcher to gain first-hand experience of the daily living experiences of people.
- Participant observers do not generally test predetermined ideas and do not develop hypotheses prior to the inquiry; instead, an open-ended and naturalistic approach is followed.

- As a participant observer, the researcher becomes part of the situation being observed and even contributes to it.
- All the senses are used in participant observation and the researcher should become an instrument that absorbs all sources of information.
- Reliability and validity can be of serious concerns for the researcher engaging in participant observation. It is impossible to arrange for exactly the same situation in order to reach the same results as the original study and, therefore, reliability is hard to achieve.
- Participant observation focuses on explaining the natural occurrence of a phenomenon and thus the results may be of a high standard.
- The results of such a study may be of a particular practical importance for society at large.

Data gathering in participant observation refers to the actual observation and taking of field notes (De Vos et al., 2005:281; Mahlangu, 2008:67). During fieldwork the researcher makes notes, usually in an unstructured manner, about what s/he sees and hears. De Vos et al. (2005:281) advise that accurate and systematic notes be written as soon as the observation session has ended, with loose notes and jottings converted into field notes as soon as possible, at least at the end of every day. Mahlangu (2008:67) maintains that field notes should be both descriptive and analytic. When recording the findings of detailed events, the observer should always strive for accuracy and assume a judgmental stance. Those aspects that can be included when field notes are prepared include the physical environment; the context and behaviour that the setting encourages, permits, discourages or prevents; subtle factors such as unplanned activities; the symbolic and connotative meanings of words and non-verbal communication, such as dress code, physical space; and what does not happen, especially if it ought to have happened (Mahlangu, 2008:67).

3.5.2 Interviews

Also a main method employed in this research, the interview is a conversation between the researcher and the respondent, with the aim of gaining certain information (Lowe, 2006:78). De Vos et al. (2005: 78) define qualitative interviews as attempts to understand the world from the participants' points of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences and to

examine their lived world prior to scientific explanations. For Punch (2009:144), as the most prominent data collection tool in qualitative research, it is a good way of assessing people's perceptions, meanings, and definitions of situations and constructions of reality. It is also a powerful ways of understanding others. In this study, the researcher used individual semi-structured in-depth interviews to uncover and understand the attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of the principals of the three selected schools regarding the phenomenon under study. The interviewer prepared an interview schedule to ensure that the salient, most pertinent aspects of the research were covered, not as a blueprint to direct the course of the conversation but to allow interviewees to raise issues of concern regarding the topic (see Appendix).

3.5.2.1 The semi-structured interview

According to De Vos et al. (2005:296), the researcher uses semi-structured interviews in order to gain a detailed a picture of a participant's beliefs about, or perceptions or accounts of, a particular topic. The method gives the researcher and the participant much more flexibility, with the researcher able to follow up particular avenues that emerge and the participant able to give a fuller picture. The participant shares more closely the direction the interview takes and can introduce an issue the researcher had not thought of. The participant should be regarded as an expert and should be allowed maximum opportunity to tell his or her story, and for this reason open-ended rather than closed-knit questions were preferred.

Mahlangu (2005:70) suggests the researcher inform the interviewees about the purpose of the interview, how long it will take and (if appropriate) that it will be tape-recorded. The researcher should also tell the respondents that, when completed, it will be transcribed verbatim and that a part of has said might appear in articles. Importantly, the interviewer will inform the participants that their individual identities will be protected.

3.5.2.2 Focus group in-depth interview

The focus group in-depth interview is also referred to as semi-structured focus group interview, referred to by Punch (2009:146) as 'group interviewing', in which the researcher works with several people simultaneously, rather than just one. The author adds that the role of the researcher changes in a group interview, functioning more as a moderator or facilitator,

and less as an interviewer. He adds that the group interaction is directed by questions and topics supplied by the researcher, which implies that particular skills are required of the interviewer in this case (Punch, 2009:147).

De Vos et al. (2005:299) view focus groups as group interviews, and a means of better understanding how people feel or think about an issue, product or service. Participants are selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic of the focus group. The researcher created a tolerant environment in the focus group that encouraged participants to share perceptions, points of view, experiences, wishes and concerns, without pressurising them to reach a consensus. Six members of the SGBs and six teachers of each of the participating schools were included in the focus group interviews. The principals were deliberately left out so that both the SGBs and teachers should not feel threatened by the presence of principals, thereby such influencing or inhibiting them. Ethical considerations also applied to these interviews, all of which were tape-recorded and later transcribed to ease the process of data analysis.

3.6 QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is a process that involves organising what has been seen, heard and read, so that the researcher can make sense of it (Mahlangu, 2008:95). When working with the data, the researcher must describe it, create explanations, pose hypotheses, develop theories and link the study with other stories. This is achieved through categorising, synthesising, searching for patterns in and interpreting the data collected. Qualitative data analysis is also primarily an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among the categories. It involves a relatively systematic process of coding, categorising, and interpreting data to provide explanations of a single phenomenon of interest (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:367). For De Vos et al. (2005:334) it is a process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data, searching for general statements about relationships among categories of data and building grounded theory.

The inductive nature of qualitative data analysis implies that the researcher starts the analysis from the specific, concrete, raw data then striving towards higher levels of abstraction that are more general in nature. Punch (2009:170) concentrates on the study of human behaviour and social life in natural settings. Its richness and complexity mean that there are different ways

of analysing social life, and therefore multiple perspectives and practices. In a search for regularities in the social world, induction is central. Concepts are developed inductively from the data and raised to a higher level of abstraction, then their interrelationships are traced out (Punch, 2009:172).

Another important feature of qualitative data analysis is that it cannot be separated from the process of data collection. The researcher who is employing a qualitative paradigm would continue to analyse the data while busy collecting more data that is relevant to the phenomenon. Suter (2006:327) contends that qualitative data analysis is less linear but more iterative, having evolved throughout the research project. It is clearly not summarised by a simple number, such as a p-value. McMillan et al. (2010:167) concur that analysis in qualitative research is started during data collection as well as after all the data have been gathered. Analysis is an ongoing part of the study, with collection and analysis interwoven and mutually influencing. For Springer (2010:283), qualitative studies tend to incorporate multiple measures that yield substantial amounts of information. Some analysis and interpretation may take place while a qualitative study is still underway, with analysis conducted through organising, coding and interpreting.

The richness and complexity of social life suggests that a multiplicity of approaches which may be employed by different qualitative researchers in their endeavour to understand the world. Punch (2009:173-174), for instance, refers to the Miles and Huberman's framework for qualitative data analysis, which comprises data reduction, data display and drawing and verifying conclusions. McMillan et al. (2010:369), on the other hand, suggest that qualitative researchers may follow the following steps of data analysis, described as follows.

3.6.1 Data organisation

Organisation of data is an essential step whereby a large amount of data is organised into workable units to facilitate coding (McMillan et al., 2010:369). Managing (organising) data is the first step in data analysis away from the site, and begins with an inventory of what the researcher has gathered (De Vos et al., 2005:336). This helps the researcher to get a sense of the whole, whilst transcribing interviews and typing field notes provide the researcher with an opportunity to become immersed in the data, an experience that usually generates emergent insights. McMillan et al. (2010:369) list five sources that may assist in the organisation of

data, namely, i) the research question; ii) the research instrument, such as an interview guide; iii) themes, concepts, and categories used by other researchers; iv) prior knowledge of the researcher or personal experience; and v) the data itself.

3.6.2 Data transcription

There are essentially three kinds of data in qualitative studies, i.e., notes taken during observation and interviews; audiotape-recorded interviews; and visual images. Transcription is a process of taking these notes and other information and converting them into a format that will facilitate analysis. For field and interview notes it is useful to make brief summaries that can be expanded immediately after the observation or interviews (McMillan et al., 2010: 370).

3.6.3 Data coding

Codes are tags, names or labels, and coding is the process of putting assigning these to the pieces of the data. The pieces may be individual words, or small or large chunks of data (Punch, 2009:176). For McMillan et al. (2010:371) data coding begins with identification of small pieces of data that stand alone. These data parts, or ‘segments’, divide the dataset, as a text that is comprehensible by itself and contains one idea, episode, or piece of relevant information. A ‘code’ is a name or a phrase that is used to provide meaning to the segment, and can be an activity, quotation, relationship, context, participant perspective, event, process, action or idea. Labels that use participants’ wording are called ‘vivo codes’.

Three types of data coding are identified in qualitative research, as follows.

3.6.3.1 Open coding

Open coding, according to Springer (2010:384), is used when a researcher writes notes in the margins of observation or interview schedules about their implications or the comments of participants on the transcripts. It constitutes a first level of conceptual analysis, with the analyst beginning by fracturing or breaking it open. The aim is to open up the theoretical possibilities and conceptualise the data (Punch, 2009:83,185).

3.6.3.2 Axial coding

The second operation of analysis, when the main categories emerging from open coding are interconnected, axial coding involves interrelating the substantive ones. The researcher makes use of theoretical codes (coding paradigm) to bring about the interconnection (Punch, 2009:186). For McMillan et al. (2010:376-377), it is a process of forming categories (or themes) as entities consisting of grouped codes. A single category is used to give meaning to codes that are combined, representing major ideas to describe the meaning of similarly coded data. The codes can be used in more than one category, and represent the first level of induction by the researcher. Similar codes are put together to form the category, which is then labelled to capture their essence.

3.6.3.3 Selective coding

Selective coding is a process of identifying the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships and filling in categories that need further refinement and development (McMillan et al., 2010:343).

3.6.4 Interpretation

Interpretation tends to proceed inductively (Springer, 2010:384), with the researcher employing rules of logic that proceed from specific statements to a summary generalisation (McMillan et al., 2010:9). Interpretation of qualitative data is a necessary step that follows or occurs concurrently with what Punch (2009:179) refers to as ‘memoing’, followed logically by the drawing and verification of the findings. This suggests deeper level concepts than the coding has so far produced and may point towards new patterns, and a higher level of pattern coding. It also relates different concepts to each other. The ultimate goal of qualitative research is to make general statements about relationships among categories by discovering patterns in the data. A pattern is a relationship among categories (McMillan et al., 2010:379).

3.6.5 Drawing and verifying conclusions

Punch (2009:175) writes that conclusions drawn in the form of propositions need to be verified. In this study, analysis of data began during the literature review and took place

continuously throughout the participant observations at schools A, B and C during the interviews with principals, teachers and members of the SGBs. The conclusions will be drawn in the final chapter.

3.6.6 Summary

The researcher followed the procedures of qualitative data analysis as described in the preceding sections. The other most important point to note in qualitative research is validity and reliability, as discussed in the following section.

3.7 VALIDITY

The validity of research requires interpretation of the research results with confidence and generalisation. It involves employing two concepts simultaneously, which are the extent to which the results can be accurate and the extent to which the results can be generalised to the population and the prevailing conditions. The former concept is referred to as *internal validity*, the latter as *external validity* (Mahlangu, 2008:88). McMillan et al. (2010:330) write that validity in qualitative research refers to the degree of congruence between the explanations of the phenomena and the realities of the world. It addresses the questions: Do researchers actually observe what they think they see? Do inquirers actually hear the meanings that they think they hear? That is, validity of qualitative designs is the degree to which the interpretations have mutual meanings between the participants and the researcher. Thus, the researcher and participants agree on the description or composition of events, especially on their meanings. Validity pertains to the trustworthiness of the research and should be incorporated into the research design as well as in the midst of data collection. It is the truth, in terms of the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomenon to which it refers (Mahlangu, 2008:89).

According to Punch (2009:315), internal validity refers to the internal logic and consistency of the research and the isomorphism of findings with reality, i.e., the extent to which they faithfully represent and reflect what has been studied. It has two criteria:

1. Has the research internal consistency? Do all the parts fit together and themselves have internal consistency and coherence?

2. Are the ways in which propositions have been developed and confirmed described, including the elimination of rival hypotheses, the consideration of negative evidence, and the cross-validation of findings with other parts of the data?

Mahlangu (2008:89) adds that the internal validity of a qualitative design is the degree to which the participants ascribe a mutual meaning to concepts and the interpretations of the research.

The questions about internal validity are therefore: How internally consistent is this study? What threats are there to internal validity, and how have those threats taken into account? (Punch, 2009:316).

According to Mahlangu (2008:89), strategies that increase internal validity are when continual analyses, comparison and corroborations are carried out. Participant language is used during the interviews, and care must be taken that it remains less abstract than that of many data instruments; the interviews were therefore conducted in a deliberately conversational tone. A lengthy data collection period must also be employed, for the current research a period of three years.

External validity refers to the way in which the conclusions of a case study can be generalised to similar situations and the results generalised to similar cases (Mahlangu, 2008:90). It is, according to Merriam in (Mahlangu, 2008: 90), the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations, and refers to how generalisable the results are. The study must be internally valid because meaningless information cannot be applied generally to the population from which the participants were drawn.

McMillan et al. (2010:330-331) assert that claims to validity rest on data collection and analysis techniques. Qualitative researchers use a combination of any 10 possible strategies to enhance validity, but the following seven were found considered to be most useful to this study.

3.7.1 Prolonged and persistent fieldwork

Participant observation and in-depth interviews are conducted in natural settings to reflect lived experience. The lengthy data collection period provides opportunities for interim data analysis, preliminary comparisons and corroboration to refine ideas and to ensure the match between evidence-based categories and participant reality (McMillan et al., 2010:331). The

researcher spent three weeks in each of the research sites as a participant observer, collecting as much data about the buildings and other resources as possible. The researcher also observed the relationships which were permitted between teachers, parents and learners, and also behavioural patterns which were encouraged or discouraged. Prolonged and persistent fieldwork was important in that it could later be corroborated.

3.7.2 Multi-method strategies

Most qualitative researchers employ several data collection techniques in a study but usually select one as the central method, either participant observation or in-depth interviews. To some extent, participant observation, open observation, interviewing and documents are an interwoven web of techniques. How each of these strategies is used varies with the study. Multi-method strategies permit triangulation of data across inquiry techniques. Different strategies may yield different insights about the topic of interest and increase the credibility of the findings (McMillan et al., 2010:331). Triangulation enhances the validity of collected data, in this case participant observation and interviews as complementary techniques to enhance its validity.

3.7.3 Participant language and verbatim accounts

Interviews were phrased in the informant's language, not in abstract social science terms, as researchers are sensitive to cultural translations, that is, informants who translate their words into social class terms (McMillan et al., 2010:331). Not all the participants could express themselves in English, with only the principals and teachers not having a problem using it as a language of communication. The parents were drawn from various linguistic backgrounds and the researcher realised that preferred to use their own languages, Sepedi, Setswana, Isizulu and Xitsonga. This was permitted but their ideas were later translated into English, with care taken to preserve the original meaning.

3.7.4 Low inference descriptors

Concrete, precise descriptions from field notes and interview elaborations are the hallmarks of qualitative research and the principal method for identifying patterns in the data. Low

inference means that the descriptions are almost literal and that any important terms are those used and understood by the participants. Low-inference descriptions stand in contrast to the abstract language of the researcher (McMillan et al., 2010:331). The researcher used a simple language that could be easily understood by the participants. During casual interviews the researcher also allowed them to communicate in their own languages, a strategy that helped gain trust and lessen inhibitions. The aim of using this technique is to collect as much data as possible from participants in their natural settings.

3.7.5 Mechanically recorded data

Tape recorders, photographs and videotapes provide accurate and relatively complete records. For the data to be usable, situational aspects that affected the data record are noted, for instance, failure of equipment, angles of videotaping, and effects of using technical equipment on the context (McMillan et al., 2010:331). The researcher used the tape recorder when conducting interviews, to give the interviewees his full attention when conversing about what they knew concerning the topics being discussed. The tape recorder prevented the researcher from having to worry about data being lost during the interviews and so pay greater attention to the participants.

3.7.6 Member checking

Researchers who establish a field residence frequently confirm observations and participants' meanings with individuals through casual conversations in informal situations. Member checking can also be done within an interview as topics are rephrased and probed to obtain more complete and subtle meanings (McMillan et al., 2010:331). The researcher used the strategy during observations when conversing informally with participants about the research topic. It helped in that the researcher was able to note participants' rich descriptions of the topic within the natural settings. The strategy was also employed during interviews when questions were rephrased to suit the participants' understanding. Probing questions were used to encourage them to continue to talk.

3.7.7 Negative and/or discrepant data

Researchers actively search for, record, analyse and report negative cases or discrepant data. A negative case is a situation, a social scene or a participant's view that contradicts the emerging pattern of meanings. Discrepant data presents a variant to the emerging pattern (McMillan et al., 2010:331). Employing the technique during data analyses each time data had been collected proved rewarding in that it helped the researcher to interpret the data so as to help draw valid conclusions.

3.8 RELIABILITY

Reliability of the research includes the extent to which studies can be replicated, a concept that applies to both procedures and results. If the study is reliable another researcher who uses the same procedure, variables, measurements and conditions should obtain the same results. Reliability is the consistency of the researcher's interactive style, data recording, data analysis and interpretation of participants' meaning from the data (Mahlangu, 2008:92). For McMillan et al. (2010:332), the concepts of reflexivity and extension of findings are the most common criteria for evidence-based inquiry in qualitative research.

3.8.1 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a broad concept that includes rigorous examination of one's personal and theoretical commitments to see how they serve as resources for selecting a qualitative approach, framing the research problem, generating particular data, relating to participants and developing specific interpretations (McMillan et al., 2010:332). It is rigorous self-scrutiny by the researcher throughout the entire process, an important procedure for establishing credibility. Qualitative researchers thus do not deny human subjectivity, but rather take it into account through various strategies. The researcher employed the following two strategies suggested by McMillan et al. (2010:334-335), to check on the impact of reflexivity in this study.

3.8.1.1 Peer Debriefing

A peer debriefer is a disinterested colleague who discusses the researcher's preliminary analysis and next strategies. Such a discussion makes more explicit the tacit knowledge that the inquirer has acquired. The peer debriefer also poses searching questions to help the researcher understand his or her own posture and its role in the inquiry. In addition, this dialogue may reduce the stress that normally accompanies fieldwork. A colleague assisted in proofreading all pieces of data on paper and discussed the content thereof with the researcher. The supervisor also played an important role by posing searching questions relating to the researcher's role in the inquiry.

3.8.1.2 Ethical considerations recorded

Researchers make strategy choices in the field, some of which are based primarily on ethical considerations. A record of ethical concerns helps to justify choices in data collection and analysis. The ethical principles which were followed in this study are discussed in the next paragraphs. The researcher made a concerted effort to follow each one of them as in the manner that they are discussed in the next paragraphs.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All researchers in education must adhere to legal codes and conform to ethical guidelines in the conduct of their research (Suter, 2006:79). Since human beings are the object of study in the social sciences, unique problems emerge that would not be relevant in the pure clinical laboratory settings of the natural sciences. These ethical issues are pervasive and complex, and data should not be obtained at the expense of human beings (De Vos et al., 2005:56).

As noted in Chapter 1, the researcher observed the principle of informed consent by making an application to the DoE to conduct research in certain specified public secondary schools in Tshwane West district, Gauteng. The purpose of this research and the potential risks were discussed with potential participants, who were also informed that they were at liberty to withdraw at any time during the course of the research if they felt uncomfortable participating (De Vos et al., 2005:58). All those who voluntarily chose to participate were asked to (and did) sign an informed consent form that was also used as security for both the researcher and the participants in this research.

The researcher handled the principles of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality by discussing them with potential participants before data could be collected and promising that their privacy would be protected throughout the duration of data collection and afterwards. Anything discussed would be kept strictly confidential and the findings would be in the form of a report that would be made available on request. The participants were also assured that neither their real names nor those of the respective sites would be made explicit in the report. They were informed that pseudonyms would be used to protect them from being identified by members of the public. The information about the principles of protection of the privacy of participants, confidentiality and anonymity were included in the informed consent form which all the participants were asked to (and did) sign.

The researcher took every reasonable step in this study to ensure the safety and protection of all participants from any physical, mental or emotional discomfort. A pilot study was undertaken which helped to eliminate any aspect that might cause discomfort in the main study. A debriefing interview was conducted immediately after an interview session as a diagnostic endeavour to gauge if participants had been negatively affected by any of the issues discussed (De Vos et al., 2005:58; McMillan et al., 2010:119).

De Vos et al. (2005:60-61) refers to 'deception of subjects' as a deliberate misrepresentation of facts in order to make another person believe what is not true, violating the respect to which every person is entitled. It involves withholding information or offering incorrect information in order to ensure participation of subjects when they would otherwise possibly have refused it. The researcher thus avoided intentionally misleading subjects by way of written or verbal instruction, the actions of other people, or certain aspects of the setting. The researcher considered how open the research process could be, and was aware that deception can prove to be counter-productive in the long run as well as unethical (Burton & Bartlett, 2009:34).

It is an important principle that any final report or submission of findings be presented to the respondents or at least made accessible to them. Seeking confirmation from respondents is part of the validation process, as well as strengthening the validity of the findings (Burton et al., 2009:34). Feedback from those involved was an important part of this research process.

3.10 SUMMARY

This chapter has provided an overview of the research design and methodology employed in this study, with characteristics of qualitative research discussed. Observation was the central and basic data collection strategy for the study, with semi-structured individual interviews, as well as semi-structured focus group interviews also employed to collect supplementary data. Qualitative data analysis was also discussed, and the various facets of analysis such as data organisation, coding and memoing, categorisation and interpretation, discussed.

In the next chapter, the findings derived from the data collected and analysed as well as the discussion of the findings will be presented.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the findings from the data generated through participant observation, interviews and casual conversations are presented and discussed. The researcher spent one week at each of the three selected schools, observing parent participation in the activities of schools in and around Soshanguve. The rationale for the selection was to ensure that the whole community became part of this study. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with principals and focus-group interviews with three teachers and three members of the SGBs of each of the sampled schools. A total of 21 participants were involved. All the interviews were audio-taped, transcribed then analysed and interpreted. Most of the participants were comfortable with the use of English during interviews, but the SGB members preferred to use their mother tongue. There were also some educators who were code-switching between English and their mother tongues, but as the researcher was conversant in all languages in the interview this was not problematic. During transcription the researcher ensured that every reasonable precaution was taken, including member checking, to convey the original meaning of the participants, especially when during translation to English.

4.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOLS IN SOSHANGUVE

This section presents generic information of schools in the study. School A differs from the other two sampled schools in that it has the capacity to accommodate well over a thousand learners, which explains why it has more educators than the other schools. School A was functioning as an ABET Centre, whereas the other two were not. Being an ABET Centre it received special attention, because the researcher observed the extent to which the school could collaborate with the community in which it was situated.

One of the six types of parent involvement, according to Epstein (2001:44), is to collaborate with the community (see sect. 2.2.2.6). The researcher noted that, apart from the members of

the community benefitting from education at the school, the school also benefitted in being secured from burglars. Once the parents realised that the school benefitted them personally they began to value it more.

TABLE 4.1: Generic information about sampled schools

SCHOOLS	A	B	C
Number of learners	1119	931	861
Number of educators	40	32	30
Number of classrooms	34	26	24
School as ABET	Yes	No	No
Staffroom	Yes	Yes	Yes
Administrative block	Yes	Yes	Yes
Telephone	No	No	Yes
Running water	Yes	Yes	Yes
Flushing toilets	Yes	Yes	Yes
Electricity	Yes	Yes	Yes
Computer (Internet)	No	Yes	Yes
Photocopier	Yes	Yes	Yes

As depicted in Table 4.1 (above), Schools A and B did not have telephones and School A does not have Internet access, with only school C indicating that it had such facilities. This finding raised the question of how those schools without them communicated with parents. Research has shown that effective two-way communication between school and families or teachers and parents is one of the important pillars upon which effective involvement of parents can be built (see sect. 2.2.2). Constantino (2003:98) maintains that “a healthy partnership between teachers and families begins with frequent two-way communication.”

4.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

The characteristics of participants determine their overall outlook on life, and as Michael (2004:75) asserts, the personal attributes of any individual influence the role that he or she plays in any situation. The personal attributes of participants are important in understanding why they behave as they do, or why they give certain responses to the interview questions.

4.3.1 The principals

Table 4.2 (below) presents the relevant background information of the principals at the sampled schools.

TABLE 4.2: Biographical details of the principals

PRINCIPALS	I	II	III
Age	56	53	60
Gender	Male	Male	Male
Marital Status	Married	Married	Married
Home Language	Setswana	SiSwati	Sepedi
Highest Qualification	MA	PGDE	BEEd
Number of years as teacher	33	29	38
Number of years as principal	14	08	16
Workshops on parent involvement	No	Yes	Yes

Key: MA Master of Arts
 PGDE Postgraduate Diploma in Education
 BEEd Bachelor of Education

All principals were male married adults aged between 50 and 60, with extensive experience in teaching that included more than five years experience as principals. The data presented in Table 4.2 (above) depicts that they all became teachers long before the inception of the country's democratic dispensation, and thus would be able to compare the previous education system with the present one.

Their experience and academic status, with all having postgraduate qualifications, suggested they could lead effective parent involvement programmes in their respective schools. Two stated that they had attended at least one workshop on the subject. The researcher understands that the DoE has begun to realise that the management of parent involvement in secondary schools, especially those in the previously disadvantaged communities, must begin with the school principals being given the appropriate knowledge and skills to implement it effectively. Constantino (2009:58) writes that when cultivating family engagement to bring about enhanced student learning, perhaps the most important element is the principal's belief

in it. As with any other reform measure, if leaders do not embrace the concept there is little hope that anyone else within the organisation will.

4.3.2 The educators

Three educators per school were included in this study and formed focus groups. The researcher considered the role they were playing qualified them as information-rich participants. Their characteristics are summarised in Tables 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 (below).

TABLE 4.3: Educators at School A

EDUCATORS	I	II	III
Age	64	39	43
Gender	Female	Male	Male
Marital status	Divorced	Single	Married
Home language	Sepedi	Sepedi	Tshivenda
Resident in the area	No	No	Yes
Highest qualification	B.Ed.	B Tech	Hons (B.Ed.)
Teaching experience	40	16	16
Workshops on parent involvement	Yes	No	Yes

TABLE 4.4: Educators at School B

EDUCATORS	I	II	III
Age	40	38	48
Gender	Female	Female	Male
Marital status	Married	Single	Married
Home language	Sepedi	Setswana	Setswana
Resident in the area	No	No	No
Highest qualification	Hons (BA)	Hons (B.Ed.)	B Tech
Teaching experience	17	16	20
Workshops on parent involvement	No	No	No

TABLE 4. 5: Educators at School C

EDUCATORS	I	II	III
Age	43	47	52
Gender	Female	Female	Male
Marital status	Married	Married	Married
Home language	Sepedi	IsiZulu	Setswana
Resident in the area	Yes	Yes	Yes
Highest qualification	Hons (B.Ed.)	BA	STD
Teaching experience	17	18	23
Workshops on parent involvement	No	No	No

Key:

STD - Senior Teachers Diploma

B Tech - Bachelor of Technology

Hons (B.A.) - Honours Bachelor of Arts

B.A. - Bachelor of Arts

B.A. - Bachelor of Arts

Hons (B.Ed) - Honours Bachelor of Education

B.Ed. - Bachelor of Education

Of the nine educators the majority were women. Only one was resident in the area in which the school was situated, with the rest having to commute 25 to 30 kilometres every day. The eldest was a female teacher with extensive teaching experience, but although all were well qualified as teachers, only one had attended a workshop on parent involvement. Of the nine educators interviewed, four were Sepedi-speaking, three had Setswana as their home language, one was a Zulu and the last indicated that he was Venda. This aspect pointed to the linguistic and cultural diversity present in those schools the researcher had selected. Participants said that they could communicate in any of the languages listed in the tables.

All the teachers were interviewed in the afternoon in designated classrooms prepared for the purpose, so as not to interfere with normal contact time in the schools.

For the child to become successful in his or her schoolwork a parent must play a role as the primary educator, but it is as important for the teacher to assume his or her responsibility as a secondary educator at school. A proper connection between the family and the school can only be realised if teachers have knowledge and skills to involve parents in the education of their children. Epstein (2001:404) argues that the social interaction between the families and schools may be enacted and studied on two levels: i) *institutional*, for example, when a

school invites all families to an event or sends communication to all families, and ii) *individual*, for example, when a parent and teacher meet in a conference or talk on the telephone. The perceptions and attitudes of teachers are therefore important in the management of parent involvement in the education of their children. Three teachers were randomly sampled to participate in the study.

4.3.3 The parents

Nine parents serving on the SGB were selected because they were involved with school governance and therefore considered to be in a better position to discuss matters concerning the management of parent involvement. Characteristics of SGB members are summarised in Tables 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8 (below).

TABLE 4.6: Parents on SGB at School A

PARENTS	I	II	III
Age	48	56	47
Gender	Female	Female	Male
Marital status	Widow	Married	Married
Highest grade passed	10	12	9
Number of children at this school	1	1	2
Currently employed	No	No	Yes
Number of years on SGB	3	3	3
Position held on SGB	Treasurer	Secretary	Add. member
Workshop on parent involvement	Yes	Yes	No

TABLE 4.7: Parents on SGB at School B

PARENTS	I	II	III
Age	30	58	46
Gender	Male	Female	Female
Marital Status	Single	Married	Married
Highest grade passed	10	10	Bed (Hons)
Number of children at this school	1	3	1

Currently employed	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of years on SGB	3	3	3
Position held on SGB	Chairperson	Secretary	Treasurer
Workshop on parent involvement	Yes	Yes	Yes

TABLE 4.8: Parents on SGB at School C

PARENTS	I	II	III
Age	64	30	44
Gender	Female	Male	Male
Marital Status	Widow	Single	Married
Highest grade passed	Grade 7	Grade 11	Grade 12
Number of children at this school	2 grandchildren	1 own, 2 siblings (Younger sisters)	3 own children
Currently employed	Pensioner	Unemployed	Employed
Number of years on SGB	2	3	1
Position held on SGB	Secretary	Chairperson	Treasurer
Workshop on parent involvement	No	Yes	No

Of the nine parents interviewed, five were females and four males. Two of the female interviewees were widows and one had a child of her own attending School A, whereas the other was a grandmother of three children attending School C. The other three female participants were married. Of the four male participants, two were married and the other two single. Four parents (two in each of Schools C and A) said that they had attended school up to Grade 7 and 9 respectively, all the others having gone beyond Grade 10. Four of those parents were employed and the other four unemployed. One parent in School C reported that she was receiving a state pension. Five of those parents indicated that they had attended a workshop on parent involvement at least once during their term as SGB members.

The above-mentioned definitions of the concept ‘parent’ are applicable to the manner in which life is led in historically disadvantaged communities today, especially in Tshwane West district, where the majority of children are not cared for by their own biological parents. The majority of learners in historically disadvantaged secondary schools are taken care of by their brothers, sisters, foster parents, grandparents and even by some community structures.

Cox-Peterson (2011:81) writes that children are living in homes with one parent, with grandparents, stepparents, two mothers or two fathers, adopted parents and foster parents. Family structures are diverse and vary within every community. According to Lemmer et al. (2004:262), teachers should co-operate with non-traditional caregivers, for example, grandparents, other relatives and older siblings. Many children in disadvantaged communities in South Africa are cared for by grandparents or other relatives.

School A's SGB members were interviewed on a Saturday afternoon, after a meeting on the appointment of a general assistant. The researcher was fortunate to be invited to attend such a meeting as an observer, and to learn how the meetings were conducted. The interview was held in one of the classrooms which been prepared for the purpose. School B's SGB members were interviewed during school hours, with the principal informing the researcher that they had agreed to be interviewed after they had solved a problem of a burglary over the weekend. The interview was held in the principal's office, although there was, for a while, a disturbance caused by police officers making forensic investigations into the burglary. The SGB members of School C were interviewed on a Sunday, with all parents allowed to communicate in the language of their choice. Sepedi, Setswana, IsiZulu and occasionally Xitsonga and Tshivenda were consequently used interchangeably. The researcher enlisted the assistance of others with Xitsonga and Tshivenda linguistic competence to help translate, so that the original meanings were not lost.

4.4 PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings presented in this section should be understood in the context of the whole discussion. Chapter 2 presented the literature study on the concept of parent involvement and in Chapter 3 it was noted that the literature study as well as the empirical study would be employed to elicit data concerning the management of parent involvement, especially in historically disadvantaged secondary schools in Tshwane West district. In this section the researcher will refer to the literature as confirming or refuting the findings.

4.4.1 Perceptions of parent involvement

The responses of participants on the concept of parent involvement varied, with some defining it within their own frame of reference. When asked what parent involvement meant,

the principal of School B responded: “Parental involvement refers to the parent being involved in the education of his child which means to have interest, to know the teachers, to know the school and to support the learners so that the child ultimately becomes successful.” On close scrutiny, this response suggests that the principal did not take into consideration what the parents should actually be doing, either at home or in school, to ensure that the child becomes successful in school.

When asked what the concept of parent involvement meant to her, a teacher from School C answered:

I think that parent involvement means a lot of things. They may be involved in funds, they might be involved in a panel of choosing teachers and then they might be involved in decision-making as far as resources are concerned, like LTSM [Learner Teacher Support Material]. That is to say that they are involved in many things.

This definition is one-sided, with the participant emphasising the roles that parents might assume in school, without also looking at those that parents must assume at home, which are geared to improving or enhancing the overall scholastic achievement of their children at school.

A member of the SGB in School A responded: “parental involvement is when every parent is playing a role at school, like attending meetings and regularly coming to the school to ask the teachers about the academic progress of his or her child.” This definition is also unilateral in that the parent is emphasising the communication that must be there between the parents and the teachers, whereby the parents visit the school on regular basis, to find out about the performance of their children in school.

In spite of the different viewpoints which were arrived at by participants on the question of what parent involvement might mean to them, each of whom emphasised a particular aspect about the concept, the perception of the chairperson of School B’s governing body was broadly encompassing, indicating the active involvement of parents in a wide range of activities at home and in school, with the aim of increasing the level of academic performance of their children at school. He responded to the question by saying:

Parent involvement refers to the role played by parents in making sure that teaching and learning takes place in the school, and this involvement of parents in the

education of their children begins at home whereby there are things that they do, which assist a child at school.

He added:

The parent lays the foundation for teaching and learning. Then, constantly, during the stages of development as the child grows older, parents are always there. They give support in terms of completion of homework, in terms of the resources which are needed in the school and in terms of making sure that there are no other challenges which might derail a child from the right track, which is education.

In spite of a wide range of knowledge that the participants had about the concept of parent involvement, from a variety of perspectives, they expressed dissatisfaction about the extent to which parents were involved in the education of their children. When asked to what extent parents were involved in their children's education, a teacher in School A responded:

I think that we really have a poor parental involvement or low levels of parental involvement in this school. For example, since the beginning of the year, there was never a parent's meeting either for the learners in Grade Twelve or the new learners who have been admitted, to give them rules and statutes of the school. Therefore, parents are not participating.

The principal of School B also expressed his dissatisfaction with the extent of parent involvement in his school:

It is very minimal. They are not that much involved because you call parents meetings, you can hardly get thirty, forty per cent of the parents who are able to come to the school, so, they only come to the school when they come to collect reports at the end of the year, or when they come to complain.

Despite the level of dissatisfaction expressed by the participants with the low level of participation by parents in the education of their children, they did say that parents were an indispensable determinant of learners' academic success at school. When asked whether parents were important in their children's education, the principal of School A answered:

Parents for me, they are important in the education of their children for obvious reasons. I would expect my child to become a responsible adult of tomorrow, and the child needs my guidance to become a responsible adult of tomorrow. If parents are not next to their children, especially at school-going age, when they go to the other levels

of education like tertiary levels, they are adults now. There is very little influence that you can think about at that level.

In support of the above assertion the teacher in School C responded:

Well, I think that there is a difference between a child who is supported by parents and a child who doesn't have support. There is a difference between a structured family and an unstructured family. In a way you can see kids who come from a family with structure and you can see children who come from a family which is loose.

Although all participants were in agreement that parents' contribution was important to improve the quality of their children's academic performance in school, there were many problems being faced by schools in their endeavour to involve the parents in the education of their children. According to Vandegrift and Green (cited in Michael, 2004:85), schools do not always know what parent involvement means. Given that each individual participant gave their own version of what parent involvement meant, this is an element that impedes proper and effective implementation of parent involvement programmes in schools. All participants expressed dissatisfaction with the extent of parent involvement in their respective schools. Michael (2004:86) adds that the definition of parent involvement may be a barrier and suggests that the definition be clarified and an agreement be reached on exactly what the concept means, so that the needs of the community can be satisfied.

4.4.2 A formal school policy on parent involvement

There was lack of evidence to indicate that any of the participating schools had a written policy on parent involvement, though most participants said that they had an unwritten policy, so knew what to do to ensure that parents were involved in their children's education. For instance, when the principal of School A was asked what the policy of the school on parent involvement was, he answered:

The policy of the school on parent involvement is not written. OK! But we have a manner on how we deal with parents, that they should fetch the results of their children, that they should engage with teachers after collection of such reports, that whatever concern they have they need to raise, that they should also be concerned about the discipline of their children at school. If a child misbehaves, a parent would be invited to the school to discuss that particular learner.

Nor did the principal of School B have a written policy on parent involvement:

Basically I wouldn't say we have a policy per se, but then we encourage parents to participate in the education of their children, starting from the learner code of conduct policy that we distribute to learners. We expect the parents to sign the document, acknowledging the receipt of the document. That is how they are involved. Sometimes, when we write some quarterly examinations, they get reports, those children that have poorly performed; we invite their parents to come to school.

A parent in School C, when asked whether or not there was a policy on parent involvement in the school, responded:

I would say that we have a policy on parent involvement in the school, but such a policy is not written. This is to say that we actually do know that parents must be encouraged to play an active role in their children's education and we always talk about it in our meetings with parents.

A teacher in School A said that they had a written policy on parent involvement which had been communicated to parents approximately ten years previously. He added that such a policy was irrelevant to the present situation, which is why parents were not active in the running of the school or in its affairs. He emphasised: "Yeah! We have the parental involvement school policy which is of course not working, it is not being implemented and then in this regard, it is retrogressive in that it does not help teachers in their efforts to meet parents, yes." Despite there being no written policy on the management of parent involvement in the three participating schools, the participants acknowledged that it was important for parents to be involved in their children's education.

A parent in School A said that it was only in meetings with parents that they were able to inform them that they should be actively involved in their children's education, that they should not visit the school only when there were problems, and that they were at liberty to visit the school anytime to come to meet their children's class teachers and ask about their children's performance.

The chairperson of School B emphasised parents' indispensability in the education of their children:

In our parents meetings we always encourage parents to be actively involved in the education of their children, and we encourage them that if they experience problems

with their children at home, they must bring those problems to the school because you might find a problem which started at home ends up at school and the one which started at school ends up at home, so there is always a relationship of challenges which are there.

On the question of whether the school management team was playing any effective role in the implementation of a policy on parent involvement, the principal of School A commented:

Ok! Personally, in my position as a manager in this school, I'm not happy with the involvement of the management team as far as parent involvement is concerned because, I don't see the management team engaging enough with the parents, especially with regard to learners' academic performance. My way of doing things is such that there should be regular meetings with the parents, about the subjects that the learners have taken, whether there is a crisis or there is no crisis, parents must be taken on board.

In contrast, the principal of School B saw the management team playing an active role in the implementation of a policy:

Normally the SMT is involved because whenever we have to embark on the issue of inviting parents particularly for results, these children that have not performed very well, what we normally do, we share the learners and then and the grades, which every SMT member will be involved with a particular number of classes, as parents come to school, the SMT members will then co-ordinate the activity between the parents and the class teachers.

A formal, written policy on parent involvement is a necessary starting point, guiding the actions and practices of concerned with the management of effective parent involvement programmes in secondary schools. As Epstein (2001:347) argues, policies concerning school, family and community partnerships must not only be clear and comprehensive but also flexible. Such policies encourage state, district and school programmes to account for their starting points in partnership practices on specific school and family goals for students' success.

The evidence from school managers in the three schools points to their being unable to develop formal, comprehensive policies on parent involvement, although they did have theoretical knowledge that it should take place. The onus lies with the school managers, who

are the principals, together with the SMTs and SGBs, to initiate and facilitate consultative meetings with all stakeholders on the question of the development of a comprehensive school policy on parent involvement. As Epstein (cited in Risimati, 2001:83) advocates, a formal policy as well as school and teacher practices are the strongest predictors of parent involvement in school and at home.

4.4.3 The establishment of SGBs in schools

The results of the research indicated that the participants were negative towards the establishment of SGBs, except for one parent in School C, who was able to explain how it was achieved in her school:

I think the governing structure is a statutory body. Yeah! We usually get notices stating when the SGB elections should be conducted and there are always fliers and documents sent to the parents and it is something that is national, and the parents know about it. You find it on media and so on, and that is how it was structured. The parents were informed nationally. They were informed by the school and we had a general meeting of elections and a new governing body structure was established.

Apart from concurring that the governing structure was democratically elected, based on the SASA of 1996, the principal of School B said:

Then we had to postpone the parents meeting once because we could not form a quorum, for the meeting to take place, because most parents did not attend such a meeting. These are some of the problems which we encounter. It is because parents are not there. If they could take charge of the situation, the situation would improve.

When asked what the tasks of the SGB were, the participants responded as follows:

The main task of the governing body is to make sure that the school is running properly, benefitting the learners, benefitting the parents by way of giving them a product that they can be proud of, and making sure that things are run accordingly at that particular school, by making themselves involved in the running of the school.

A parent in School B answered:

The task is to make sure that the educators are here for one thing which is teaching and learning. Governance of the school in terms of the maintenance of buildings,

resources, and so forth, these are the responsibility of parents, because the department did not hire procurement officers as such, as an example. So, at the time when an educator is busy with a procurement process, children are left unattended. So, that is where governance comes in.

The principal of School B said:

One of the duties of the SGB is to ensure that they formulate policies, they support the school, they check the learners' code of conduct, they check the constitution of the SGB, they liaise between the school and the community around to ensure that there is support to the school.

When asked if there was a mechanism in the school to ensure that members of the SGB were trained to fulfil their tasks properly, a teacher in School A retorted: "People are not trained. They don't play their roles. That is why they are not actively involved. They are left on their own to fend for themselves and do these things on their own. Then they end up being discouraged in leaving the SGB."

Principal of School B said:

Normally, after the elections or the by-elections, the district does provide training of the SGB but fortunately because I'm currently with the training of the SGB from Matthew Goniwe School of leadership and Governance, once people are elected, I provide the material and give them a brief review of what is expected.

The principal of School A responded as follows:

The Department does provide such a facility. It is just that unfortunate that it's a mass-driven exercise and as a result, most of pertinent issues are just trapped on the surface. There is no thoroughness in the whole thing, but anyway, I can briefly say that the department provides for the training of the school governing bodies, but for me, I think it is wanting.

On the question of how the SGB assist in getting parents involved in the school, a member the SGB in school C answered:

The SGB basically, they hold those meetings with the principal, and they decide on the date when to call the parents, but the principal is the one who makes sure that letters go out and the kids are the ones to deliver the letters to their parents. The

teachers make follow-ups for learners to return the reply slips, where parents indicate whether they will attend or not.

In so much as it is the DoE's duty to ensure that the financial resources are made available for the purpose of maintaining sustainable and functional SGBs in schools, and to provide training for those who have been elected to serve on them, it is also the responsibility of school managers who are the principals, together with the SMT in collaboration with the SGBs, to assume their leadership roles in planning, coordinating and leading activities. These include convening election meetings, providing the necessary support in terms of sending members of the SGBs to training sessions and dispensing information that will enable the SGBs to discharge their duties correctly (2.10.1).

Research in this study has provided evidence that the inability of the SGBs to function adequately is due to lack of commitment on the part of the school managers to assume their leading roles. Schools B and C have shown commitment to have functional SGBs, but School A has revealed a different view. Dwane (2012:6) expresses concern that parents from former black schools did not participate enough in their children's schooling (*The Times*, 2 March 2012:6). In the same newspaper, Hellen Zille, leader of the Democratic Alliance, was reported as saying it should be of profound concern that an estimated 80% of SGBs in the country were considered dysfunctional by the two major governing body associations (*The Times*, 2 March 2012:6). This, according to this study, may be attributed to lack of decisive leadership on the part of school managers, especially those who participated in this study, to implement effective parent programmes in their schools.

4.4.4 Types of parent involvement

From the research it was discovered that the kind of communication expected to take place in the sampled schools was minimal. When asked how they communicated with parents, the principal at School A said: "We use letters or memoranda which we send through via the children, but I am sceptical about such a method of communicating, since such a communiqué does not reach the parents because most of the parents do not respond positively to the invitations."

The principal of School B asserted that their only method of communicating with parents was through newsletters given to learners, and that: “The only challenge was that sometimes you would give newsletters to a child; the newsletter does not reach home.”

A parent in school C responded that when there was a problem with the learner in the school the parent was invited to visit the principal, the teacher and the HoD to discuss the matter: “When inviting the parents for parents’ meetings, a letter is our first option, but we also use community radio station to announce our meetings to the community.”

When asked if there were opportunities created in the schools for parents to talk to educators, it was found to be possible after the parents had received their children’s progress reports. The principal of School A responded:

Yes, we do encourage our parents to communicate with educators. We have follow-up meetings after collection of reports and tell parents if they could continue engaging with their children, especially if they are not satisfied with their performance. That would help lead children in the right direction.

It was found that very few opportunities were created in the three participating schools for educators to visit the homes of the learners they were teaching. When asked how often they did so, a teacher in School A reported:

Usually such visits to the homes of learners take place if there are complaints and also sometimes we do get deaths and so on. We go as a staff to pay our condolence to family members, or if there is a parent who died, the class teacher arranges that the learners of that class visit the home.

It was also realised that participants were aware that culture plays a paramount role in communication. Except for School A, where a teacher reported that the school did not have a connection with the families in this regard, Schools B and C revealed that they had plans to accommodate the cultures of families of learners.

When asked what mechanisms they used to bridge the gap between the culture practised in the school and that of families, a teacher at School A said: “We do celebrate days in the school where we allow all children to demonstrate their culture and also realise that their languages are also important.”

The findings show that communication between the school and families is not well developed in any of the three schools. Participants reported that the only basic form of communication

between the teachers and the parents was through letters and memoranda, which were sent via the learners. They said that there were challenges related to that form of communication, when such a communiqué was not given to parents in time or the parents did not go through it. Participants also admitted that the teachers did not make home visits, which among other factors would have helped them to understand the socio-cultural backgrounds of the learners.

Effective communication with families involves school-to-home and home-to-school interactions related to children's education and their overall wellbeing. Open communication between all parties is essential to enhance students' learning (Cox-Peterson, 2011: 116). The reason for a lack of effective communication strategies is lack of knowledge and skills on the part of the school managers.

4.4.5 Perceptions and attitudes of participants towards parent volunteerism

The researcher found that there was no written policy on parent volunteerism in the sampled schools. The participants, however, showed some positive perceptions and attitudes towards the concept in that they stated that parents were occasionally invited to perform tasks for the school, without remuneration. In response to the question about a policy on parent volunteerism, the principal of School A said:

This is another area where we do not have a written policy and the level of volunteerism also, is not very much entrenched in the school. We engage with it only during times of need, but I must admit that we are not doing enough on that aspect. Only when the SGB term or when some of them have reneged on their commitment, is then that we call for volunteers to patch up the gaps. So, when we come to volunteerism, honestly, we are wanting in that regard.

When asked in what ways parents become involved as volunteers in the school, the principal of School B responded as follows:

There are many instances when parents really come and help in the school. At the beginning of every school term, for instance, parents organise themselves in what they refer to as "letsema" and they come and clean the whole school, including the school yard, as well as the sporting ground. The school is also aloof from the community and therefore it is prone to all sorts of criminal activities, so some parents would come and look after the school at night and we have realised that such kind of involvement has

helped the school in that burglary has been reduced tremendously. The only challenge is that our parents cannot offer any service for nothing. They would want to see what you put on the table as compensation.

Even though all the participants recognised and acknowledged the importance of parent participation in the school activities as volunteers, they also admitted that this form of parent involvement was not managed in their respective schools. They said that there were no mechanisms employed in their schools to ensure correct and full management of this form of parent involvement. The principal of School A acknowledged such a deficiency by saying: “We don’t have anything like this written but as I say, really this interview should be taken as an eye-opener, so that we should have something like this formalised.”

A parent in school C said:

Because it is something that rarely takes place, there are no systems in place which manage it. Once we begin to do it on a regular basis, then we will be obliged to have systems in place to ensure that we maintain that relationship with parents.

That there was no written policy on parent volunteerism in any of the schools made it difficult for teachers to actively involve parents in the activities of the schools as volunteers. Epstein (2001, cited in Michael, 2004:108) makes three recommendations: i) recruit volunteers widely so that all families know that their time and talents are welcome; ii) make flexible schedules for the volunteers, assemblies, and events to enable employed parents to participate and organise volunteer work, and iii) provide training, match time and talent with school, teacher, and student needs, and recognise efforts so that participants are productive. This would be useful for the school managers in Tshwane West district because they have demonstrated a deficiency in managing parent volunteerism.

4.4.6 The attitudes of participants towards involving parents in home learning

The principal of School A said that they had not entered a process of formally engaging parents over helping their children with learning at home, but said they should help their children in home learning, give them enough time to do their schoolwork, and monitor time of arrival at home and sleeping time at weekends.

The principal of School B said:

Usually the parent becomes a teacher when the child is at home to ensure that the child organises the homework, checks that the child is doing the homework, provides the resources that the child needs for the homework and also signs the book after the child has completed the work. The parent is also responsible to connect with the teacher in case the child is experiencing a problem in the completion of homework.

A parent in School C responded to the question concerning parental engagement in home learning by indicating that he realised there was no formal homework policy in the school. He had attended a parental involvement workshop in which participants were discouraged from doing homework for their children but encouraged to assist them where possible, and, if they realised that the child had a serious problem with a particular subject, to engage with the relevant teacher.

The researcher also realised that there were no formal ways in the participating schools by which parents were trained to support learning at home. The principals said that they would only seize the opportunities in parents' meetings, where they would inform parents as to how they would help their children with learning at home. The principal of School B said:

We are only able to talk with parents about matters such as these in parents' meetings. It is only in parents meetings that parents who would have attended such meetings are able maybe to ask questions so that they can be clarified on matters such as the one that you are asking now. But we have a challenge that many parents do not attend parents' meetings and therefore, they do not get the appropriate guidance as to how they should go about helping their children at home.

One teacher in School C's approach to the issue was different in that she said that she did have a reading programme:

I give learners a book, a library book, and a school card, where they have to. Parents have to make sure that the child has read the book. In that card, they have to indicate the number of pages that were read, for each day until the book is finished.

The above exposition about involving parents in their children in learning at home revealed that there were no mechanisms employed in the schools to ensure that parents are able to establish enabling environments at home for their children to study effectively. There was no formal, written policy which served to direct all stakeholders on how to involve parents in their children's learning. Most of the participants said that the only time they were able to

inform the parents about how to involve themselves in their children's learning at home was at parents' meetings, which means that all those parents who were unable to attend them for various reasons, were deprived of relevant information. The importance of families' involvement in children's learning at home is emphasised by Cox-Peterson (2011:124), who writes that families are at the forefront in supplementing the educational experiences of their children. Teachers must be proactive in sharing information related to learning with family-based home activities, and communicate learning activities and homework tips through newsletters or emails in a variety of languages.

Family involvement in the learning of their children at home is necessary because it enhances the academic performance of learners, but the responsibility of ensuring that parents do involve themselves in the education of their children lies with the school managers. As Risimati (2001:100) asserts, school managers need to be taught strategies for involving parents in children's homework, which can be done by arranging parent involvement courses for secondary school principals in which homework activities are practiced.

4.4.7 Assisting with parenting tasks

Analysis of data revealed a spirit of communalism among members of communities in which the three schools were situated. When asked what the concept of a parent meant, a parent in School B responded: "In African culture, it takes a village to raise a child. Obviously number one will be a biological parent and then, second choice is any community member who is in a position to carry out the duties of parenting."

It was also noted that there were no clear mechanisms by which parents were trained in their parenting tasks. In School C they relied on the DoE's initiative to organise parents' workshops on parenting skills. When asked how the school assisted the parents on their parenting tasks, one teacher answered:

That depends on what the department offers us. Normally during the course of the year, they will have workshops on parenting and they will ask the school to send them a list of parents who will attend and their contact numbers and that is how we help them acquire parenting skills, and what we do as the school is that we would select those parents whose children have problems.

In response to the question, the principal of School A said:

That is supposed to be handled by the Life Orientation division, but you will understand that there is so much for them to cover in the curriculum, that only through the liaison with the partnership of some institutions, will they be able to talk with such learners, especially those that have already gone through pregnancy, those that are still within pregnancy, we do get some interested parties who would like to come and share with us and those kids about what is to be done.

The principal of School B reported that they were only able to talk with the parents about matters such as those in parents' meetings:

It is only in parents' meetings that parents who would have attended are able to ask questions so that they can be clarified. But we have a challenge that many parents do not attend parents' meetings and therefore, they do not get the appropriate guidance as to how they should go about helping their children at home.

It was also indicated to the researcher that parents were having a problem raising children in their respective communities. When asked if they were doing so effectively, a teacher in School A responded:

I do not think so. The moral fibre in our school is so bad that sometimes you ask yourself what kind of families these kids are coming from. There are those kids who are members of different churches and when they are at school they want to be different people.

The principal of School B said that families were not raising children in the same manner:

This one differs from one parent to the other. My honest opinion is that there are those parents who do play their part in ensuring that their children grow up in a family environment which supports good behaviour, and that we see by the manner in which those children are relating in the school, for instance, we have children who are very respectful and they would always try to use acceptable language when they talk to teachers and parents in the school premises.

A teacher in School C reported that parents in the communities were not raising their children correctly because: "You do find parents who are selling drugs, who are peddlers, and the kids bring the drugs to the school to sell to other learners. So, not all parents are fit to be parents."

Data analysis revealed that the participants maintained a common understanding about the meaning of the concept 'parent', which, is similar to the one which is provided for in SASA

(1996), 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 person referred to in paragraphs above towards the learner's education at school.

It therefore makes sense when the participants considered the uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters and even grandparents as representatives of parents in their respective schools, especially when one considers the socio-economic backgrounds of most of the families who send children to those schools. This state of affairs poses a very serious challenge to the school managers in those respective schools to establish a programme by which to provide assistance to parents and caregivers with their parenting tasks. Cox-Peterson (2011: 116) maintains that parenting involves establishing home environments that support children and youth's social, cognitive, emotional and physical health. She further asserts that in an educational partnership, teachers may offer parenting information to families while parents offer information about their culture, beliefs and educational goals for their children. The goal of positive parenting includes providing a healthy, safe environment so that children may become well-adjusted, contributing members of society.

Principals, as well as their management teams, are therefore, challenged to establish sustainable strategies by means of which they will be able to organise workshops in which all parents can be provided with information on parenting skills. Such workshops will also provide opportunities for parents to share information about their culture, beliefs and goals for their children with the teachers. Epstein (2001:429) writes that activities may include family support programmes, parent education, workshops and parent-to-parent connections that strengthen parents' understanding of child and adolescent development, parenting skills and home conditions that support learning at each grade level. The author adds that such activities also assist schools in understanding families' backgrounds, cultures, parenting styles and goals for children.

4.4.8 Community involvement

School A's report on how community structures were involving themselves in the life of the school was discouraging, in that such structures were not involved in enhancing the quality of learners' performance, but rather in further their own interests. A governing body member reported:

The community structures that you are referring to are only interested if they want to use the school buildings for their own benefit, for instance, if they want to come and hold meetings in the school. Should there be any burglary, there is no one who will come and tell the truth about what happened.

In contrast, the principal said that there were community structures, such as a community policing forum and ward councillors who had shown an interest in collaborating with the school:

The churches were coming to share the scriptures with the learners, but we have not reached the stage where we have a full programme that says, here are the churches, they will come on such and such a day to talk to the learners, but they come on a very random basis.

A teacher in School C said that the community contributed in many ways to the life of the school but one contribution that was appreciated more was that of a church: “We do have a lot of outsiders who are pastors. There is a pastor who visits the school every Tuesday and once a year he comes with his Bible Society and they will offer Bibles to the whole school in all languages.”

The schools’ involvement with the community was also minimal, and vice versa. When asked in what ways the school was involved with the community the principal of School A responded: “Not that much. It is an activity that we have given to the SAPS. But then, since we have patrollers under the auspices of Gauteng Department of Education, once they have given us a full quota, we could use them, as well as the SAPS on matters regarding searches.”

The principal of School C stated that they allowed some parents to sell as hawkers and asked them to pay a certain amount monthly. They also allowed capable parents to have vegetable gardens within the school premises, which he regarded as a way of contributing to the community in that those parents were able to use the food for their families. He added that they allowed the churches to use the school buildings for their church services in return for a minimum monthly contribution for water and electricity consumed during them.

A teacher in School A perceived their school as isolated: “The school is here and the community is there. It is not the school inside the community. The school does nothing for the community.” An SGB member in school C also said that the school was unable to cooperate with the community because of factions created by different political parties that

wanted to own the school: “It becomes difficult because sometimes we have these formations, like for instance, your COPE and the ANC, who do not see eye to eye, who sometimes do not even invite us and so on and so forth. So, it is a problem.”

This type of parent involvement implies that the schools should cooperate with community structures such as businesses, religious groupings, civic and political organisations, colleges and universities, all of which have the potential to bring extra resources to enhance learner achievement in schools. Analysis of research data revealed that this area of parent involvement had not been extensively explored in those schools which participated in this study. The three schools were only able to secure the services of religious groupings, implying that community involvement in the activities of the schools is lacking. Epstein (2001:468) asserts that community activities bring extra resources, programmes, and services from the community to the schools. Connections with small and large businesses, government agencies, cultural, religious, civic, and fraternal organisations, colleges and universities, and other community groups and individuals should benefit students, families or the schools.

It is for this reason that in order for such community structures to be constructively engaged in the activities of schools for the benefit of the learners, principals as well as other members of the school management team should attend workshops on this area of community involvement.

4.5 EXTERNAL INFLUENCES ON THE SCHOOL

A number of societal forces were cited by the participants as factors which impacted negatively on the school’s effectiveness. A teacher in School A cited community members who were acting in an unacceptable way in front of the children as the main factor influencing learners negatively in the school. When asked which societal forces had an adverse effect on school effectiveness, a teacher responded: “Societal members outside are influencing school children adversely. These kids do not have the right role models. Their role models are just bad people and then they want to emulate them.”

The principal of School A cited gangsterism as the major factor impacting negatively on the school, but also referred to gambling. Learner selecting ‘false parents’ on the street to represent them at school was another factor which exacerbated the situation:

Gangsterism could be one major one. Gambling is another problem. False parents, that is, parents who would come here disguised as parents and make you believe that they have understood the problem at hand when in actual fact they were hired by these learners to help them through a particular problem.

A teacher in School C mentioned burglary as the main problem in their school: “Things like burglary are very serious. The Department does not really offer security so much. It is only this year, towards the end of the year, where they talk about security, but all these years we have had burglaries.”

The principal of School C cited vandalism, teenage pregnancy, drugs and alcohol abuse as factors that hampered the education of learners in their school:

Crime is one of them, because they vandalise the school, they steal and that impacts negatively on the education of the child. Teenage pregnancy is another one. You talk about drugs which is another one, because the school does not have the power to control that. Alcohol is another one. They drink these children and the way they behave when they are under the influence of alcohol, it changes them altogether, and those things, they are very dangerous and they hamper the education of the child.

When asked what mechanisms were in place to ensure that these could be eradicated, a parent in School A responded:

What we have done about this so far is that in our parents’ meetings we have indicated to parents that they should talk to their children and ensure that they do not indulge in such criminal activities because, once it is realised that there is any child who is involved in such activities, such a child will be handed to the police. As for teenage pregnancy, it is still the responsibility of parents to ensure that their children are taught at home about the dangers which are coupled with becoming pregnant at such a tender age. Parents must take full responsibility for the life of their children.

The majority of people in historically disadvantaged communities are unemployed, a state of affairs exacerbated by their not having been given the opportunity to attend school and attain the level of expertise required to access the employment market. Consequently, such people, especially those in Tshwane West district, live below the breadline, and so resort to illegal activities, as attested by the responses of the participants. This is consistent with Barbour et

al.'s (2008:72) assertion that members live in inferior housing or on the streets, and face lives frequently disturbed by crime, deprivation, chemical dependency and abuse.

The sale to children of illegal drugs such as dagga and alcohol and cigarettes is an offence punishable by law, while gangsterism and burglary are criminal activities that are discouraged in schools. However, children commit these crimes because they see them being practised in their communities. When children enter school and sell drugs and cigarettes to other learners, such misbehaviour disturbs its normal running. The respondents in this study reported that the only two mechanisms which they employed in their endeavour to reduce such external forces on the effectiveness of schools were to involve the police and to engage parents in talks on matters such as teenage pregnancy.

The problems as outlined above pose a serious challenge to the principals and the SMTs, to develop viable management strategies to reduce their impact on school effectiveness. That such strategies had not been developed at the time of this study suggests that the management teams in those schools lacked the necessary skills in dealing with the problem, and that training is necessary.

4.6 PERCEIVED BARRIERS TO PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The following factors were identified as impediments to effective parent involvement by the school principals, teachers and SGB members who participated in this study.

4.6.1 Time

Time was cited by a number of participants as one of the factors that served as a barrier to parent involvement in schools. A parent in School B said:

The socio-economic environment has changed so much that many parents found it normal to work for abnormal hours and regard many engagements like social gatherings to be more important than the education of their children.

A teacher in School C added that the working hours were the first problem. Parents' working hours do not give them time to become actively involved in the education of their children. The principal of School B said that working parents would tell him that they did not have time, and some returned home only once or twice a month. The parents could not visit the

school even in times of dire need, when they needed a parent to support the child. The principal of School A said: “Work engagements of parents restrict their availability. They knock off late from their different workplaces and there are many of them who work even on weekends.”

This barrier is a very difficult one to overcome, confirming Epstein’s (2001:124) view that working parents have more demands on their time. Helping children at home becomes a more frustrating task when a parent is tired or has many jobs to do. School managers are challenged to look for other family members, for instance, brothers or sisters, uncles or aunts and even grandparents, who are caring for the children during their parents’ absence, and work with them in the interest of the child’ education. School managers may also use text messages to communicate with such parents who are hard to find due to lack of time.

4.6.2 Parents’ lack of interest

The participants revealed that most parents lacked the necessary interest to take care of the education of their children. They said that parents were not committed when it came to the education of their children, a finding consistent with that of Cooper and Crosnoe (2007:375), that economically disadvantaged parents will be less involved in the education of their children if there financial and time constraints that go hand in hand with poverty (1.3). When a teacher in School A was asked what barriers prevented parents from becoming involved in the education of their children, he answered:

Most parents do not want to be responsible, others evade responsibility and others apparently are themselves not responsible, whereby they may have a commitment to become more involved in the education of their children. Then, it ends up in a situation whereby, these parents are dumping out kids.

The same teacher added:

Some of them see themselves as so important. Some of them cannot come, when they are invited to the school. They are busy working out there. So, there are so many problems. But when they are supposed to pay school-fees, they are unemployed. If you call them, no, they are working. You see where lies the problem? This shows lack of commitment ..., lack of commitment.

A parent in School C said: “younger parents are concerned with themselves and they are very ignorant. They tell themselves that children will do the work on their own.”

Parents’ apathetic attitude towards the education of their children poses a serious problem to the school personnel, therefore it is important that the school managers should, through the meetings that they hold with parents or any other communication channel, tap the interests of parents, maybe telling them how important it is to become involved and showing them advantages for the schools, learners and parents.

4.6.3 Illiteracy

Illiteracy was one of the factors that dissuaded parents from becoming actively involved in their children’s education. This confirms Mncube’s (2009:85) finding that illiteracy is an impediment to parent involvement (2.9). DePlanty et al. (2007:362) concur that the less educated parents are less qualified to help their children with homework. As a result, less well educated parents might shift their attention away from school, feeling inadequate when helping with homework (2.9). The participants said that most parents were not educated and this reduced their extent of involvement in the education of their children. The principal of School A said:

The educational levels of parents also act as a barrier to their involvement because most parents that come here, you will realise, are from the far lying provinces. Your Limpopos, your Mpumalangas, mainly, they are the parents that come over to this province and most of them are not literate, and as a result, taking the lead on the education of their children becomes a big problem.

The principal of School C responded: “One, I would say, is lack of education on the part of the parents because, sometimes they don’t understand and unconsciously so, they don’t know and hence an impact.”

A parent in School B added to this:

The older generation of parents, most of them are illiterate and they feel that just because they are illiterate, they cannot play any role in the education of their children. They also do not know what they have to do in order to involve themselves in the education of their children.

All the participants seemed to agree that illiteracy prevented parents from becoming properly involved in the education of their children, confirming the finding of Mbokodi et al. (2004:301), that most parents in historically disadvantaged communities lack the necessary literacy levels for participation (2.12). It is therefore incumbent upon the school managers who experience illiteracy as a barrier to establish strategies to combat it, so reaping the benefits of parent involvement in their respective schools. Mncube (2009:85) writes that, in practice, parent governors are not yet participating fully since many lack the necessary skills to perform the duties assigned to them (2.12).

4.6.4 Parents' lack of education on parent involvement

It was also reported that parents' lack of education on parent involvement was a barrier to their involvement in the education of their children. Ferrara (2009:125) referred to parents' feeling of "un-connectedness" which grows stronger as children move from one grade to another in middle and high school (2.12). When asked about barriers to parent involvement, a teacher in School C reported: "Parents still needed a lot of training. Their lack of knowledge about parent involvement is a barrier. They think that the teacher should do everything. So, this lack of commitment on the parents' side is another problem."

When requested to give barriers to parent involvement, a parent in School B responded: "Yeah! Not knowing what to do is another factor. The older generations, also because of this illiteracy, do not know what they have to do in order to involve themselves in the education of their children." A parent in School A said: "Parents have lack of knowledge about the concept of parent involvement. They think that once a child has been registered as a learner in the school that is it. It becomes the responsibility of the teacher to take his child's education forward."

The above-mentioned illiteracy, prevalent among the community members around the schools, affects the nature and extent of parent involvement in that such parents have inadequate understanding of how to go about it. The educational levels of parents, particularly on parent involvement, mentioned by Mncube (2009:95-96) place the responsibility on the school managers to ensure that parents acquire adequate knowledge and understanding about the concept of parent involvement.

4.6.5 Defective parent-teacher communication channels

Most participants said that the communication between the schools and families was ineffective, because the channel they used was a learner who was expected to ensure that the invitation letters and newsletters were given to parents. It was realised that such a communiqué was not being given to parents and hence the defect. The principal of School A reported: “I would say the stumbling block caused by the very same learners, as I said earlier on, that the letters to parents as invites to parents don’t reach the parents because of these learners.” A parent in School A responded: “Children do not take the information to their parents. That is why parents are far from the teachers in the school.”

The principal of School A said that they communicated with parents through letters or memoranda sent to them via their children, but their observation was that, in most cases they did not reach the parents. He added that the children had a tendency of withholding information either consciously or unconsciously, but the parents were not receiving the invitations. It was either a case of receiving them but not responding accordingly, or not receiving them at all.

From the analysis of research data it is evident that letters and newsletters are the only communication media utilised by schools to connect with families, and such letters are sent through the learners. Epstein (2001:159) writes that communication from the school to the home is sometimes considered as parent involvement, but is usually parent information. Since such a method of communication has proven not to be working it becomes imperative for the school managers to look for more effective ones. Cox-Perterson (2011:117) writes that communication can be formal or informal, both of which are necessary for optimum collaboration. On the other hand, Couchenour and Chrisman (2011:206) maintain that, frequently, two-way communication between home and school is essential. The methods focus on developing on going communication in which both parties are equals, contributing valuable information to the discussion. The authors add that two-way communication has the benefit of being able to clarify misconceptions on the spot. Face-to-face communication allows for non-verbal communication such as gesturing and various demonstrations of empathy and warmth to be observed.

The various forms that promote two-way communication between parents and teachers include post-cards and email, formal and informal classroom visits, telephone contact, home visits, handbooks, homework, bulletin boards, newsletters and websites (Barbour et al.,

2008:292-293). Added to the list are event nights, meet-the-teacher nights, family meetings, family-teacher conferences and family visits to the classroom (Diffily, 2004:84-91). Depending on the specific circumstances of the school, the school managers may employ anyone of the abovementioned methods to bring about two-way communication between parents and teachers.

4.6.6 Changing family structure

Changing family structure was identified as one of the reasons most parents could not become actively involved in the education of their children, confirming Epstein's (2001:26) finding that, in the past decade, two key changes in the family structure have dramatically affected family and school relations. Some participants mentioned child-headed families which were brought about because of the kind of migrant working prevalent in those communities, others the influx of foreign nationals into the country, and others the death of the parents.

A teacher in School C responded:

From where I am sitting, I see one, the child-headed families, where you have learners who do not have parents, and two, the kind of migrant working, where parents work far away and they come home maybe once in three months' time or at the end of every month.

The principal of School B responded:

Generally the misbehaviour which we are confronted with from most of the children that we teach here, would lead you to wonder if the parents or the community are teaching children good morals which support acceptable behaviour. We should however, not lose sight of the fact that some children are raised in blended families like single parent families or child-headed families, and I believe that these are the children who should get the most support from support structures like child welfare.

A teacher in School A said:

This migration of learners from far places exacerbates the problem. The learners don't come with their parents. They come alone, they stay alone. There are foreigners, for

instance, who are cared for by the Jesuits Foreign Association and therefore, most of these learners do not have parents.

Although the participants identified a changing family structure as a barrier to parent involvement, none was able to explain how such a barrier was managed in their respective schools. Diffily (2004:27) advises educators to become familiar with the types of families their students have. If teachers understand the demands faced by different families they can work with them more effectively. It is therefore a challenge to the school managers to ensure that they set up a system by which child-headed or single parent families can receive the support they need and their schools enjoy the benefits of parent involvement.

4.6.7 Unemployment

Unemployment was also identified as a barrier to parent involvement. The principal of School B said:

Some parents do not have jobs and it is not to say that they do not want to support their children, but certain things like the resources, for example, transport, they need money. The child would like to go to the Internet café, but because the parent cannot afford, then the child can't go there. Sometimes such parents do not attend parents' meetings simply because they lack transport fares.

Most parents who had brought their children to those schools were not working, a finding consistent with Barbour et al.'s (2008:72) claim that the underclass comprises individuals and families locked into a debilitating cycle of poverty and despair from which they can find little escape. It is therefore up to the school managers to take the schools to such parents, for instance, by setting up community outreach programmes that will enable them to reach out to parents who find it difficult to visit the schools. As Constantino (2003:90-91) asserts, outreach is an important concept to embrace when creating family engagement programmes. Family engagement programmes designed by schools must include plans to reach families in places other than the school.

4.7 PERCEIVED ADVANTAGES OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The participants in this study were unanimous that the parents played an important role in the education of their children, and that a parent-teacher partnership had benefits for the academic performance of children. In the ensuing paragraphs, a few benefits of parent involvement as perceived by the participants themselves will be discussed.

4.7.1 Improved learner behaviour

Learner misbehaviour and ill-discipline is a disturbing phenomenon in all schools, especially during this era of democracy when increased human rights are often misconstrued as absolute freedom. The participants said that if parents were to become more involved in their children's education, whereby the children would be taught values such as respect and diligence, their behaviour would improve and their teachers would experience fewer disciplinary problems at school. This is consistent with Ji and Koblinsky's (2009:687) argument that parent involvement promotes students' attitude and behaviour (1.2). A teacher at School C said:

Well, I think there is a difference between a child who is supported by parents and a child who doesn't have support. There is a difference between a structured family and an unstructured family. In a way you can see kids who come from a family with structure and you can see children who come from a family which is loose.

In support of the above, a parent in School C responded: "A parent is important in the education of a child in the sense that he provides a foundation for the child to understand that education is important and the child will be motivated to be in school"

The respondent added:

Children who do not have such a parental support go to school having no knowledge of why they should be there. That is whereby you will find them bullying other learners because they do not have a reason why they are there. So, parents are really playing a very important role in shaping the character of their children.

While one may argue that character building is a parental responsibility, it should also be acknowledged that raising an adolescent child is a daunting task, especially during a highly technocratic era in which they are being raised. It has now become the responsibility of the

school managers to support the parents in many ways, through workshops and meetings, so that they may become well equipped to teach their children at home about acceptable behavioural patterns. This confirms Michael's (2004:118) assertion that while managers maintain that parents can assist with learner behaviour they also acknowledge that parents need guidance in this regard. Teaching a child respect is a parenting task and managers should assist parents in this regard.

4.7.2 Enhancing learners' self-esteem

The enhancement of learners' self-esteem was identified as another advantage when parents are actively involved in the education of their children. Learners will develop a sense of self-worth and be motivated to do better in school (1.2). The principal of School B said: "When parents are involved in the education of their children, it gives a child high self-esteem, motivation and then a sense of belonging." A parent in School C said: "There is nothing that the child can do without support from a parent. If a parent does not recognise the hard work that the child is displaying, then such a parent is failing the child."

The principal of School C responded:

The environment in which the child needs to learn is very important in that it may serve either to build or destroy the child. If the environment is conducive for instance, if the child experiences support from the family environment, the way parents talk to children and so on, these bring a sense of belonging to the child and it also boosts the child's self-esteem. I have realised that children who are not succeeding are those who have low self-esteem.

The school managers' role in this regard is to provide support in the school environment through workshops and meetings and to organise motivational speakers and experts in the area of parent involvement.

4.7.3 Parents' awareness of school matters

Parent involvement as a programme in schools also has advantages for parents in that the more they work in close partnership with teachers the more they gain an understanding of how schools are working. as Ji et al. (2009:687) argue, parent involvement gives parents the

opportunity to know and understand what the teachers are doing with their children at school (1.2). In support of this, the principal of School B said: “Parent involvement brings a parent closer to his or her child and the parent then begins to understand some of the problems that his or her child is experiencing and then the teachers will be able to assist him.” A teacher in School C said: “Involved parents have a better understanding about their children’s interests and can contribute better towards subject choices and future career.”

If parents are actively involved in school matters they are a better position to understand the problems teachers and other staff members are confronted with almost daily, and will begin to give the teachers genuine support for the academic success of their children.

4.7.4 Children’s improved scholastic performance

Participants said that if parents participated actively in the education of their children it would tend to improve their scholastic performance, a view consistent with that of Ji et al. (2009:687). A teacher in School A believed that parents who were involved in the school affairs of their children had a positive influence: “The best achievers at school are learners who have been motivated by involved parents who are in constant contact with educators concerning the progress of their children.”

A teacher in School B supported the notion that the level of parental involvement determines the child’s scholastic performance:

Children who come from involved families almost always do better scholastically than those who are coming from uninvolved ones because now, you have contact with the parents. If anything happens with a child, and you contact them, they do come to the school.

Since the learners’ heightened scholastic performance is dependent upon parents’ support of their learning both in school and at home, the school managers and teachers should seek the cooperation of parents in this regard.

4.7.5 Cost effectiveness

Parent involvement is important for schools because they not only become involved in scholastic matters such as helping their children with homework or creating a conducive

learning space for their children at home, but they are also involved in contributing their knowledge and skills for the improvement of school facilities, without any extra costs. Some parents go to an extent of contributing to the finances of the school from their companies.

A teacher at School B reported:

Parents who are involved in school matters for the education of their children can change the face of the school environment by cleaning and renovating the school. Furthermore, they can use their skills such as welding, electrical, glazing, painting and horticulture to save the school from spending money by offering their skills.

The principal of School A added: “Parents who are involved in school matters, who are working for big companies usually would get good sponsors from their companies to benefit the school.”

It is important for the school managers to realise that it is not only the parents and their children who enjoy the benefits of parent involvement, but also the schools, if the programme of parent involvement is properly managed.

4.7.6 Sense of ownership

Schools are established in the communities to cater for their needs. In the same manner, once such communities have realised the importance of having such facilities in their surroundings they will begin to take care of them and do everything in their power to protect and maintain them. Involving parents in the education of their children and other school matters is one way of giving them and communities a sense of ownership of the schools. One parent from School B said:

When parents are involved in school matters, especially the ones who are SGB members, they contribute positively in the running of the school, for instance, they become involved in school financial matters, selection of school resources namely: physical, services and LTSM, to benefit the learners and the running of the school.

According to the principal of School A:

Parents have a positive contribution towards the drawing and adoption of school policies concerning the admission of learners, language policy, finance policy and

even religious policy, gives them a sense of belonging and that leads them to adopting the school as their own.

When parents are involved in schools in this manner they are tempted to remain faithful in their endeavour to cooperate with school managers and teachers to improve the education of their children, and they will attempt to improve their level of involvement so that the school may progress towards excellence.

Previous research has revealed that there are many benefits to parent involvement, as dealt with in Chapter 1 (1.2.2). Benefits include improved scholastic achievement; lower dropout rates; reduced disciplinary problems for teachers; the opportunity for parents to know and understand what the teachers are doing; positive school behaviour; reduced special education placement; increased students attendance; and an increased sense of positive feelings of self.

The participants in this study were able to enumerate, with great precision, a few of these benefits, however, the school managers and members of the SGB should understand that such benefits must be preceded by a well formulated, written school policy on parent involvement, as well as school practices adhered to by all involved.

4.8 SUMMARY

Epstein's theory of parent involvement was followed in this study of the management of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools in Tshwane West district, Gauteng (2.2.1). The results derived from the interviews with principals, teachers and parents show that parent involvement takes place to a very limited extent in the three sampled schools. The participants were unable to demonstrate how the types of parent involvement, such as parenting, communicating, learning at home, volunteering, decision-making and community involvement, were managed in their respective schools.

The participants were able to enumerate a few barriers to parent involvement (4.6), but also revealed that there were no mechanisms to counter them. It was also revealed that none of the participating schools had a policy on parent involvement, making a proper parent involvement programme difficult to maintain. The involvement of parents only became necessary when the situation arose. Clearly, the management skills of organising, leading and monitoring of a proper and effective parent involvement programme is lacking in those schools. Although the SGB is there as a representative of the entire parent body and is

charged with the responsibility of encouraging the parents to play an active role in the education of their children, the principal, together with the SMT, are ultimately responsible for the management of parent involvement (2.10).

In the next chapter, a synthesis of the findings as well as the recommendations will be provided. The limitations of this study will also be presented.

CHAPTER 5

OVERVIEW OF THE INVESTIGATION AND GUIDELINES ON IMPROVING PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The theory underlying parent involvement and models of parent involvement, the role of school managers in parent involvement as well as the context within which learning takes place in historically disadvantaged communities in Tshwane West district, Gauteng, has been given and integrated with the experiences and perceptions of school managers, teachers and parents serving on SGBs, as derived from the data gained during interviews. Recommendations for improving the management of parent involvement are briefly discussed, and the chapter concludes with the identification of possible areas for further research.

5.2 SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The themes uncovered in this qualitative investigation are presented and integrated with prior research in Chapters 2 and 3.

5.2.1 The school managers' lack of understanding of parent involvement

The responses provided by principals showed that they possessed only limited knowledge and understanding of the mechanisms employed to establish and sustain comprehensive parent involvement programmes in their respective schools (4.4.1). Moreover, the absence of a formal, written policy on parent involvement in all participating schools explained why there was limited participation in home-based and school-based activities in those schools (4.4.2). There was also an indication by principals and educators in all the three schools that parent involvement had not been considered or explored as a management area for school improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The responses given by principals revealed that they lacked understanding of the concept of parent involvement. The obvious consequence was minimal involvement of parents in the education of their children and the schools were unable to reap the benefits of it for learners, educators or parents (1.2.2). In order for the schools to have effective parent involvement programmes it is recommended that principals be trained in parent involvement. Constantino (2005:58) argues that when cultivating family engagement to bring about enhanced student learning, the most important element is the principal's belief in it. Any leader who does not believe in the power of family engagement will have little success in leading staff members and communities towards the goal.

Since the study was aimed at investigating the management of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools, where the majority of community members are illiterate, the researcher recommends that school principals and their SMTs and SGB members be trained according to Epstein's model of parent involvement, which aims at involving as many parents as possible in home-based and school-based activities to improve the academic performance their children in schools (2.2). The school managers who are trained according to this model will be able to support parents in their parenting tasks (2.2.2.1), communicate effectively with all parents (2.2.2.2), institute effective volunteer programme for parents (2.2.2.3), teach parents how to support learning at home (2.2.2.4), and support parents in their advocacy endeavour and involve them in decision-making (2.2.2.5). Such school managers will also be able to enlist community resources to enhance the quality of education in their respective schools (2.2.2.6). Such school managers will also have a better understanding of the benefits of parent involvement (1.2.2).

It is further recommended that a module on parent involvement be included as part of the pre-service programme of teacher training in institutions of higher learning in the country, as many of the teachers enter the fraternity not confident that they can handle parent involvement properly. Epstein (2001:9) writes that the professional preparation of educators must include the information they need to understand and maintain school, family and community partnerships. Without this information, resources that teachers and administrators can call on to help students do their best are restricted. On the other hand, Decker, Decker and Brown (2007:81) write that since educators have to receive such training on parent involvement it begs the question why so few schools have implemented comprehensive

family involvement programmes. Part of the answer is that many educators, teachers and administrators, receive little or no training in how to involve families. Diffily (2004:35) writes that training is also a factor in how much family involvement teachers encourage. When questioned, most say that there was little or no attention given to working with families in their college courses. It is therefore, recommended in this study that prospective educators be trained on parent involvement in their pre-service training programmes in institutions of higher learning.

Few of the professionals in the district have had relevant training, and parental interest in their children's education fluctuates. Decker et al. (2007:83) argue that training and staff development is an essential investment, and for school managers this would mean strengthening the school-family partnership with professional development and training for all school staff, as well as for parents and other family members. Both school staff and families need the knowledge and skills that will enable them to work with one another and with the larger community to support children's learning. Epstein (2001:13) writes that the vast majority of practising educators, social workers, school psychologists and others who work with families and children have had no prior formal education in school, family or community partnerships. Therefore, there is and will continue to be a great need for in-service education for practitioners to improve their programmes to involve families and communities in children's education. It is imperative for school managers in South African schools, especially the historically disadvantaged secondary schools in Tshwane West district, Gauteng, to organise ongoing in-service training programmes for all staff members and parents for the successful and effective implementation of parent involvement programmes in their respective schools.

5.2.2 Changing family structure

The participants in this study revealed that many children in the historically disadvantaged community are cared for by people other than their biological parents, for instance brothers, sisters, uncles and grandparents, due to their biological parents having died or having to work far from home and being able to return every day. The participants expressed the opinion that the migration of children to South Africa has created many child-headed families, and reported the existence of various types of family structure, such as single-parent families caused by divorces and blended families caused by teenage pregnancy (4.4.6). Such an ever-

changing family structure caused by a rapidly changing world, also poses a serious challenge to school managers, especially those in the historically disadvantaged secondary schools in Tshwane West district, Gauteng.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A family is a major and primary socialising agent, and no institution can easily supersede or take over the role of a family as the primary education situation of a child. However, as Diffily (2004:16) contends, defining a 'family' can be problematic as children live in a variety of configurations, more than in previous generations, and so require more support. Decker et al. (2007:82) attribute the apparent lack of parent involvement programmes to a changing definition of family, which includes single mothers and children, single fathers and children, grandparents raising children, foster parents, foster grandparents and older siblings responsible for childcare. They add that educators need to change the way they think about children's support systems and devise ways to work with different kinds of family.

It is therefore recommended that school managers create or establish family resource centres within their schools where parents and caregivers would be provided with a repertoire of information concerning the raising of children and their education. Decker et al. (2007:92) write that family resource centres located within a school are often based on a growing belief that schools can be the site of a variety of services available to learners and their families. Parents and caregivers would be able to receive information on a wide range of topics such as homework and child development issues of discipline, communication and the handling of stress. Glanz (2006:25) writes that such centres are usually run by paid school coordinators hired expressly to generate interest among school and community parents. The major premise of the programme is that reaching out to parents is best accomplished by another parent. For Constantino (2003:76), the centres would have a variety of characteristics, such as general support for parents, support for teenage mothers, community-centred service projects, summer enrichment classes and student remedial programmes, the goal of which is to build lasting and effective relationships between families and schools.

5.2.3 Lack of formal, written policy on parent involvement

None of the participating schools had a formal, written policy on parent involvement, as reported by principals and educators, though they did have a way of involving parents in school matters (4.4.2). The lack of consensus or formal policy therefore needs to be addressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Policymaking is a necessary step in the effective implementation of a parent involvement programme. Without a formal, written policy the school managers will not be able to maintain any sustainable parent involvement programme. Constantino (2003:84) asserts that developing a policy is the first step in ensuring that any programme designed to create strong family partnerships with schools and the engagement of families in the educational lives of children will be a reality and will have attainable and measurable results. Since parent involvement is not the responsibility of parents, schools, teachers, community or educators alone (Epstein, 2001:313), policies should be developed in collaboration with all key stakeholders (Decker et al., 2007:84).

It is therefore recommended that school managers develop a formal, written school policy on parent involvement in collaboration with all key stakeholders and other parties who have an interest in academic achievement of learners at school. Such consensus building by school managers will assist in bringing about a common understanding among all stakeholders around the concept of parent involvement.

It was also found that parent involvement as a strategy to bring about school effectiveness was left to individual schools without any explicit support mechanisms provided by the DoE. Lemmer and Van Wyk (2004:275) noted that South African schools do not have an established tradition of welcoming parents as partners and the current direction taken by schools is that parent representation on governing bodies suffices. This shows that there is presently no generic written policy provided by the DoE to guide districts and schools on policymaking on parent involvement, except the establishment of SGBs, which are regarded as representatives of a parent body in a specific school. Epstein (2001:348) writes that although each policy level may work on partnerships relatively independently, programmes are stronger and of higher quality when federal, state, district, and school policies, funding

and technical assistance are linked. It is therefore recommended that the DoE develop a national policy on parent involvement that will serve as a guide to other levels of governance, namely, the provincial, district and school levels, in the development of their own policies on parent involvement peculiar to their own situations.

Since the concept of parent involvement is relatively new, especially in historically disadvantaged communities, it is recommended that the school managers use Epstein's theory of parent involvement (2.2), to guide policymaking, prescribing as it does that as many parents as possible should be involved in as many roles as possible to improve the quality of their children's education in school (2.2.3.7).

5.2.4 Organisational structure tasked with parent involvement

None of the participating schools had an organisational structure tasked with the responsibility of implementing a parent involvement programme, and principals and teachers seemed to be comfortable working directly with parents through their SGBs (4.4.1). Such an approach, however, seemed to be unprofitable to the schools because few parents were actively involved in the education of their children. It was also found that the principals and teachers saw the SGB as the only organisational structure that should deal with the task of involving parents in the education of their children (4.4.3). Except for one principal, in School C, none of the other participants was able to explain what the tasks of the SGB were (4.4.3).

RECOMMENDATIONS

For any effective parent involvement it is important for school managers to work with parents in establishing a comprehensive programme of partnership. It is therefore recommended that school managers establish organisational structures in their schools which will plan, organise, coordinate, lead and evaluate a parent involvement programme (2.10). One such an organisational structure may be what Epstein (2001:416) refers to as an Action Team for Partnership (ATP), and that such a committee would include at least three teachers from different grade levels, three parents with children in different grade levels and one administrator. Other community members who are central to the school's work with families may also be included, such as a school social worker, school psychologist or school

counsellor. Such diverse membership activities will take into account the various needs, interests and talents of teachers, parents, the school and learners.

Another example of such an organisational structure that may be utilised as a team approach is the Parent Community Networking Centre. A parent facilitator, who is paid to be a part time liaison between the school and parents, directs each networking centre. Facilitators' work includes contacting parents and encouraging them to attend meetings, reviewing and translating material sent by the school to parents and conducting surveys to identify needs and concerns of parents (Michael, 2004:129).

One of the key responsibilities of the SGB is to encourage and assist parents to become actively involved and to advocate the education of their children (2.8.2.2). They will not be able to carry out this duty if they are not properly trained to do so, as was the case with schools visited in this study, where participation of parents in their children' education was minimal (4.4.1). It is therefore further recommended that the school managers ensure that the SGB members, especially the parent component, receive appropriate training on parent involvement. This is particularly important in that an organisational structure proposed above should (Epstein, 2001:416) would serve as an action arm of the SGB, with at least one member also being a member. For Risimati (2001:127), this would ensure that parent involvement remains an integral part of the strategic planning of the school.

5.2.5 Lack of effective mechanisms to involve parents in home learning

The responses provided by the school principals showed that they did not have a formal, written policy on home learning (4.4.6), nor had departed from the route of formally engaging parents in supporting their children with their learning at home. They, however, admitted that they were only able to use the opportunity in parents' meetings to inform those parents who would have attended such meetings about their responsibility to support their children with their schoolwork and homework. A parent in School B said that they once attended a workshop in which they were encouraged to help their children at home with their schoolwork but not to do the homework for them. It was also reported that those parents who were unable to attend the meetings were deprived of such information on how to support their children with their schoolwork at home.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important to recognise that learning at home not only refers to homework completion but also encompasses a wide range of academic activities geared towards children's learning at home (2.2.2.4). The responses by principals and teachers revealed that they did not know how to train parents to become increasingly involved in their children's academic matters at home (4.4.6), so it is recommended that training be provided. This may take the form of a series of in-service training programme which is on going, so that they are better equipped to train and support parents to handle and cope with such a duty at home. It is expected that parents would be able to support their children to gain the appropriate social capital and cultural competence to enable them to succeed academically. It is therefore, recommended that the school managers adopt the parent empowerment approach (2.3), the social capital approach (2.5), as well as the cultural competence approach (2.4), in their endeavour to assist parents to support learning at home.

Regarding homework completion, Epstein (2001:511) suggests that the teachers employ TIPS (Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork) as a way of encouraging a dialectical interaction between parents and their children. She writes that it is an interactive homework approach whereby every teacher of every grade and subject can select or design one homework assignment a week or every other week that requires students to talk to someone at home about something interesting they are learning in class. Well-designed activities that are assigned on a regular schedule will enable all families to follow their children's progress in learning. School managers trained in the use of TIPS may in turn be able to support the subject teachers in their attempts to employ the method. Risimati (2001:130) recommends that the emphasis be on the role of the school managers in assisting teachers to help parents to encourage, listen, monitor and discuss, but not teach school subjects at home.

5.2.6 Lack of parent volunteer programmes in schools

The principals' and teachers' responses show that they lacked innovative ways of managing parent volunteerism in their schools. They said that there was no written policy on parent volunteerism in the schools, but that parents were engaged as volunteers in these schools only in times of need (4.4.5). Participants further reported that parents would sometimes organise themselves to clean the school, especially at the beginning of the year, or they would organise

themselves as security guards at night. However, these ‘volunteers’ would later ask for compensation for the service rendered at the school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The above exposition shows that parent volunteerism occurs to a very limited extent in the sampled schools. The reason forwarded was that the schools lacked a formal written policy on the aspect. It is recommended that school managers should develop a school policy on parent volunteerism in their schools. Such a school policy should clearly spell out how parents will be recruited, trained and evaluated. In support of the above, Epstein (2001) cited in (Michael, 2004:108), argues that parents should be recruited widely so that all families should know that their times and talents are welcome, schools should make flexible schedules for the volunteers, assemblies and events to enable working parents to participate and organise volunteer work, provide training, match time and talent with school, teacher and student needs and recognise efforts so that participants are productive. These recommendations are particularly important for school managers in Tshwane West district because they have demonstrated a deficiency in managing parent volunteerism.

Parents may be involved in a variety of ways as volunteers in the school, which should not be limited to cleaning the school at the beginning of the school term or serving as security guards (4.4.4.2). Epstein (2001:452) suggests that the school managers compile a wish list where teachers, administrators and school’s staff are asked how volunteers’ time and talents might be useful. The activities on a wish list might be conducted by volunteers at school, in the classrooms, on the way to and from school, in the community or at home, and whether those activities may be frequent and periodic, or occasional. Such a list would be used to create a talent pool where parents are asked to indicate how they would like to help the school and students, and what their talents, time, area of interests and willingness to help are, and what their good locations for their assistance would be. It is recommended that school managers use such wish lists and talent pools in order to improve the management of parent volunteerism in their schools.

It is recommended that school managers provide in-service training opportunities for teachers to gain skills on how to involve parents as volunteers in a classroom situation. Risimati (2001:131) recommends that parents be involved in classroom activities, such as covering

books and putting out materials that are not directly related to teaching. The use of volunteers at school may be addressed by Swap's Curriculum Enrichment Model.

5.2.7 Lack of effective communication to promote home/school partnership

Participants' responses reveal a lack of honest, two-way communication between the schools and families. Principals and teachers showed that they used written communication, that is, letters, newsletters and memoranda, to communicate. These were sent to parents through learners (4.6.5). Teachers also said that it was not common practice for teachers to visit the homes of learners, and then only if there was a death or a learner was ill. Parents did not have the latitude to visit the school on their own initiative but would be summoned to the school when their child had disciplinary problems (4.6.5). To engage parents in meetings and to use cultural days to demonstrate cultural diversity and understanding among learners is commendable, but the strategies are not enough to promote the kind of honest, two-way communication envisaged for a true home-school partnership.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The schools' use of letters, newsletters and memoranda to communicate with parents is commendable, but such written communication is one way (4.6.5). In order to create an effective two-way communication between teachers and parents, it is recommended that school managers employ multiple communication methods (Cox-Peterson, 2011:92). Communication more importantly involves opening channels so that parents can effectively reach and contact school officials Glanz (2006:40). School managers are encouraged to have scheduled times for parent/teacher contacts spread throughout the year, such as general parents meetings, home visits by teachers, school visits by parents and parent-teacher conferences. Parent-teacher communication may also take the form of telephonic conversations, daily casual conversations, text messages and email. Depending on the availability of financial resources, school managers must be able to adopt most of these communication methods to enhance the nature and extent of parent involvement in their respective schools. The main aim, as Epstein (2001:436) puts it, is to create two-way communication channels from school to home and from home to school, so that families can easily communicate with teachers, administrators, counsellors and other families. It is further

recommended that school managers train teachers and other school staff in the implementation of the abovementioned communication methods. Risimati (2001:129) concurs that educator preparation can equip educators with skills to improve two-way communication between home and school, especially when difficult and sensitive issues have to be discussed.

5.2.8 The effects of families' socio-economic status on parent involvement

The aim of this study was to investigate the management of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools. It was discovered that many of the learners in the sampled schools came from families affected by poverty and led by mothers. They lived in tin houses or shacks. Parents were unemployed and were challenged by their daily struggle for economic survival (4.1). Families living in such conditions were unlikely to have time to assist learning at home or to play a meaningful role in the education of their children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Research has found that parents' socio-economic status is seen as the determinant of their level of involvement in the education of their children (1.2). Children from such a milieu achieve less at school. Barbour et al. (2008:73) write that many children from this class are at risk, which means that nutrition and health care are minimal, and illness, disease, and neglect are common. It is recommended that school managers develop a strategy by which to identify such learners so that they can provide the necessary support to their families, because they learn and develop in the family as well as at school. Risimati (2001:123) maintains that "school support families by providing opportunities to strengthen parenting skills, enhance parent networks and minimise the stresses of parenting. Increasingly, principals have to deal with learners and families challenged by poverty." Because the schools have a responsibility to develop learners to the full, it is recommended that teachers be trained to work in full service schools, which is a multi-agency approach to addressing the diverse needs of children and their families. This means that if teachers have skills of networking with other organisations in the community which can provide services like health care providers and social service agencies, they will be able to refer needy learners and their families for assistance. Decker et al. (2007:60) argue that the schools are among the central participants in

planning and governing the collaborative effort. The services are provided at a school or coordinated by personnel located at a school or site near the school. The role of school personnel is to identify children and families who require services and to link them to the available services.

5.2.9 Barriers to parent involvement

Many barriers to parent involvement listed by the participants during the interviews refer to lack of time (4.6.1), parents' lack of interest (4.6.2), illiteracy (4.6.3), parents' lack of education on parent involvement (4.6.4); and defective parent-teacher communication channels (4.6.5). Other barriers mentioned were changing family structure (4.6.6) and unemployment (4.6.7).

RECOMMENDATIONS

While most of these barriers to parent involvement are valid, school managers should assist parents in meeting the challenging task of supporting their children so that they can succeed in school and later in life. Cox-Peterson (2011:248) writes that all barriers which challenge the development and sustainability of educational partnership will have to be acknowledged, addressed and overcome in order for a partnership to be successful. This implies that for school managers to succeed in the implementation of parent involvement programme in their schools, the identification of potential barriers cited above is a necessary step.

It is recommended that the school managers develop an action plan for involving parents in school activities. This is in consistent with Epstein (cited in Michael, 2004:135), who maintains that with good planning, thoughtful implementation and pointed improvements, effective parent involvement can be achieved. School managers must ensure that educators are trained to acquire a variety of strategies to engage historically disadvantaged parents effectively in the education of their children.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings of this study on the management of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools in Tshwane West district, Gauteng suggest the following priority areas for future research:

- Strategies to involve illiterate parents in the education of their children.
- Communication strategies with historically disadvantaged parents as well as low-income families.
- Educators' ability to involve historically disadvantaged parents as volunteers in secondary schools.
- Pre-service educator training programmes to enable educators to work with parents in secondary schools.
- Ways in which school managers can assist parents to support learning at home.
- The development of policies and programmes to cater for the diverse needs of historically disadvantaged communities.
- Changing family structure and its effect on parent involvement.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study of the management of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools is limited to Tshwane West district, Gauteng.

An obvious limitation of this study was the small size of a sample, which is typical of qualitative research (3.4.5). Since different schools and communities will reveal different findings, the results of this study cannot contribute to the general theory on parent involvement.

This study was purposefully limited to historically disadvantaged secondary schools in Tshwane West district in Gauteng Province. Purposeful sampling was used to select principals, teachers and parents serving in the SGBs for interviews (4.3.1; 4.3.2; 4.3.3). The schools and participants were selected on the ground that they were considered to be information rich sites and this does not preclude different results being obtained in different circumstances. The main aim of this study was to understand the perceptions and attitudes of principals, teachers and SGB members regarding the management of parent involvement. These findings were reported in Chapter 4. Although no attempt was made to generalise these

findings, the problems experienced with parent involvement hold true for other schools outside the district.

The principals' interviews and focus-group interviews with teachers and their parents were conducted in each of the sampled schools. Participant observation was used to clarify the findings arrived at through interviews.

Despite these limitations, the rich data that emerged may be used for further research. This study also illustrated the role played by school managers and educators in the management of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools. Furthermore, certain key themes contributed to a better understanding of the roles of school managers, teachers and SGB members in the management of parent involvement.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The results of this investigation reveal that the management of parent involvement in historically disadvantaged secondary schools in Tshwane West district, Gauteng, occurs to a very limited extent. School managers possess very little understanding of parent involvement, the benefits of parent involvement and the strategies which may be used to involve parents and communities effectively at school. This shows that the school managers lack the support to develop the necessary skills to implement parent involvement effectively in their schools.

It has become evident to the researcher that educators do not receive any training, whether pre-service or in-service, by which they are prepared to work collaboratively with parents to enhance the quality of education in their schools. Thus, most educators depend on their experience in dealing with families. Parent involvement therefore occurs to a very limited extent, more especially in historically disadvantaged communities. This problem of lack of training for educators may be addressed if institutions of higher learning offer elective modules on parent involvement for prospective educators in their pre-service training programmes. This is consistent with Epstein's (2001:8) assertion that the time is right for advancing undergraduate and graduate education with options for required and elective courses in school, family and community partnerships. She further states that it is important to encourage state leaders to improve certification requirements for educators by including competencies in conducting programmes of partnership.

Parents also have a problem involving themselves in the education of their children, because they lack an understanding of what parent involvement entails. Parents want to become involved in the education of their children but do not know how. This is consistent with Risimati's (2001:134) assertion that lack of training from educators is serious as parents are unlikely to become involved without intervention from the school. This need for parents to be trained on parent involvement can be addressed in schools by making use of the different frameworks and models of parent involvement discussed in Chapter 2, and adapting them to each particular school's situation. By adopting this approach, the school managers will be able to organise a series of parent workshops which will enable parents to gain the knowledge and skills of involving themselves effectively in the education of their children, without which a situation of minimal parent involvement would continue to exist.

Finally, it should be stressed that the strongest and most consistent predictors of parent involvement at school and at home are the specific school programmes and teacher practices that encourage and guide parent involvement. When parents perceive that the school is doing many things to involve them they are more involved in their children's education at school and at home (Epstein, 2001:212). School managers and educators should remember this and ensure that they produce action plans for all the activities which involve parents in their respective schools.

5.6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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