

PARENTS INVOLVEMENT IN SEX EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN SCHOOLS

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SUMMARY

This study was aimed at establishing the extent of parental involvement in their children's sexuality education. The researcher selected four schools of Xhosa-Speaking learners in the Umtata district of the Eastern Cape. Four teachers, one from each school, were interviewed together with four Xhosa-Speaking learners and their parents. The method of data collection used was a semi-structured interview aided by tape recording of the session per interviewees' agreement.

The findings were that Xhosa-Speaking parents are not involved in their children's sexuality education due to being embarrassed by discussing sexual issues with their children. Learners seem not to like parental involvement in sex education programmes in schools. Teachers would like to see parents involved in school programmes and communicate with their children on sexuality matters at home.

Key words :

Parents' involvement

Sexuality education

Parent sexual knowledge

Family values

Sex education programmes

Parent-child relationship

Parental styles

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I declare that

PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN SEX EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN SCHOOLS is

my own work and that all the sources that I used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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28/11/01

DATE

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Geoff, children, Zikhona and Sisa and grandchildren, Inenceba, Inathi and Unathi.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The researcher, both as a high school teacher and as someone working with adolescents in many fields, has observed sexual or sex related problems experienced by adolescents for many years. A wide range of sexual behaviours have landed many of them into serious problems, guilt-feelings and even depression.

According to the results of the research done by the researcher (Swana 1995:1) on the attitudes of student teachers of the Transkei College of Education towards sex education in secondary schools, sexual related problems have resulted in an increase in the number of unmarried adolescent mothers, victims of sexually transmitted diseases, street abortions resulting in deaths, prostitution, sexual abuse, HIV/AIDS and other diseases. Even after the late 1990's when HIV/AIDS awareness programmes and sex education had been introduced in schools by the government, the rate of sexual irresponsibility among adolescents has been increasing rather than decreasing (Swana 1995:1).

Children are curious by nature, sexual curiosity is awakened early in the child and sexual development is a perfectly normal aspect of one's total development (Rocheron & Whyld 1983:263). As a result of these, various kinds of behaviour were noticeable among adolescent children the researcher interacted with. These behaviours led the researcher to consult with their families. For example, one adolescent tested HIV positive and confined his agony to the researcher yet he refused to let his parents know when advised to do so. His argument was that his parents, who were religious, would ostracize and excommunicate him from their church. For almost all the sex-related stress these children suffered, fear of the parents' reactions was always mentioned. The response was always negative regarding the

involvement of parents in sexual matters. These negative responses, however, seemed to differ according to the socio-economic status of parents, marital status, parental style, gender, educational level and their religious beliefs.

According to Ramphal (1989:85), radical changes have taken place in the patterns of family life, values, culture and traditions, resulting in a movement away from parental over-protectiveness towards an environment of permissiveness.

Against this background the researcher thinks that it would be important to look at the involvement of parents towards sex education programmes of their adolescents.

1.2 ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

This includes awareness, investigation and statement of the problem.

1.2.1 Awareness of the problem

The researcher, as an educator and a lecturer in the Umtata District in the Eastern Cape became aware of the fact that children who came from well educated and liberal parents, tended to report that they felt easier in discussing sexual matters with their parents than those who were from more conservative, traditional and less educated parents. Most adolescents, both girls and boys, reported to be more comfortable in talking to mothers than fathers on topic pertaining to sex. The majority of black students that are from a low socio-economic background and religious homes would not like to discuss sex-related matters because at their homes, sex is regarded as a taboo and a sin.

After having had many informal discussions with pupils, the researcher has concluded that many adolescents in the Umtata District are generally ignorant about many aspects of human sexuality.

According to Lesch (1999:14) sex education of young girls in the communities often consists of some basic facts about the mechanics of sexual intercourse, but mostly it consists of warnings to look out for themselves and to obtain contraception when necessary. The warning tends to be vague “beware of men, you may be used or fall pregnant”. Exactly what should be feared is not made clear. The interviewed respondents in Lesch’s study (1999:15) indicated that they would never tell their mothers about their sexual activity. They will rather risk pregnancy or disease than the anticipated fury of their mothers.

The lack of correct information and knowledge about human sexuality can lead the adolescents to unplanned and unwanted pregnancies. Rakel (1990:716) mentions that contraception is consistently used by only a small minority of teenagers due to a combination of developmental factors, including misinformation, poor ability to plan for the future, risk-taking behaviour as well as ambivalence in the female about the outcome of pregnancy. Due to the neglect of sex education by parents and confusion, which overwhelms the adolescents regarding their sexuality, they turn to their peers for information and this has contributed to the decline of moral standards in the society of today.

Mayekiso and Twaise (1993:21) in their research have the following statistics, which shows various sources of sexual knowledge gained by adolescents in the Umtata District: -

- 45,8% of the sample gain sexual knowledge from peers.
- 18,5% of the sample gain sexual knowledge from family members other than parents.
- 16,7% of the sample gain sexual knowledge from schoolteachers.
- 14,2% of the sample gain sexual knowledge from parents.
- 4,8% of the sample gain knowledge from the media.

As may be observed, the statistics given above explain the distortions regarding sex information among adolescents. Thompson, Fraser & Anderson (1993:63) maintain that peer group pressure during adolescence is enormous

and adolescents are rebellious against society's moralistic views. One would probably ascribe this to the fact that parents are seen as either passive or evasive to the emotional and sexual needs of their adolescents. Among the black communities specifically in the Umtata Districts, sex-related matters are not discussed openly by the parents and their children. Sex is regarded rather as a sensitive issue.

1.2.2 Investigation of the problem

Research has consistently shown that there is a lack of sexual knowledge among adolescents and this contributes to their sexual irresponsibility. Sex education has been seriously neglected in our communities with the notion that the less teenagers know about sex, the less likely they are to experiment with it (Lerner & Spanier 1980:320).

According to Rakel (1990:715) sexual experimentation among today's children is common and occurs at earlier ages than ever before. Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (1999:200) state that problems related to patterns of sexual behaviour in South Africa are of great concern. In an article in the Sunday Times (April 16, 2000:12) there was the following statement:

"Sex sense. Did you know...

- That 15 million South Africans are under 15 years of age?
- At the current rate of increase in HIV infection, most will not reach 40 years?
- 1 700 South Africans are infected with HIV everyday, most are under 20?

How will your children know about sex? Talk about it ... Love life."

The above statement is also confirmed by the HIV/Aids statistics from January to May 2001 as recorded in one of the referral hospitals in the Umtata region.

| Month | No. of Tested | No. of Positive | Percentage of Positive |
|----------|---------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Jan 2001 | 218 | 116 | 53% |
| Feb 2001 | 191 | 89 | 46% |
| Mar 2001 | 205 | 106 | 51% |
| Apr 2001 | 280 | 134 | 47% |
| May 2001 | 315 | 160 | 50% |

The realities of the above statement is further confirmed by the huge sum of money the government had budgeted (80 million) for the fight against Aids (Fraser-Moleketi 1998:2).

The figures associated with the escalation of Aids victims in the country, according to Fraser-Moleketi (1998:2) places South Africa in the forefront as the fastest growing Aids epidemic in the world. She states that 1500 new infections occurred daily in South Africa and predicts this figure will rise to 4,5 million by the year 2005. This statistic does not only suggest lack of knowledge about sexuality matters but shows a high degree of ignorance regarding the danger posed by Aids. In an article in the Daily Dispatch Newspaper of February 28, (2001:1), there is a statement which shows that HIV infection among 15 to 19 year olds increased by more than 65% during 1998 and this suggests more than 50% of South Africans under 20 years could die of AIDS-related diseases before they are 35 years old. Another article in the Daily Dispatch March 23, (2001:1) states that the AIDS pandemic will slash the life expectancy of South Africans within the next 10 years dramatically.

South Africans had an average life expectancy of 57,1 years between 1996 and 2001 and it is estimated that by the period 2011 and 2016 the average life expectancy will drop by 12% to 50,3 years. The estimated infant mortality rate will rise from 50 to over 60 per 1 000 between 1998 and 2008 due to babies born to infected mothers (Daily Dispatch, March 23, 2001:1).

Although the literature fails to specifically focus on teenagers or adolescents, it does suggest that their attitudes vary from “it won’t happen to me” to “I am not sure if STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) are real.” Nkosi (1999:17) commented that many people think that sexually transmitted diseases (STD) may affect others but not them. This sounds true of the adolescents who appear to be quite sceptical about listening to or accepting any information related to sex. Hence Potelwa (1999:3) commented “our effort should be directed at ensuring that effective programmes and mechanisms are developed and everybody should act in a responsible manner”.

Young people have a right to accurate information about human sexuality to enable them to understand their sexuality effectively and creatively in adult roles (Haffner 1992:54). According to Mouldon & Luker (1996:19) it is very difficult to quantify the effects of sex education programmes. The truth is that many parents and adults find it difficult and embarrassing to talk about sex and parents do not want to take the responsibility of teaching their children about sex. According to Bundy & White (1990:322) parents are unwilling to pursue sex education for fear of discussing moral-laden topics with their children and this is common among black communities, who believe that necessity for sex education is an influence of western culture (Evian 1991:33). This concurs with Hubley (1990:70) who states that more sexual freedom today is due to the influence of western culture. These conservative attitudes and cultural inhibitions have hindered meaningful communication between parents and their children.

Santell, Warren, Lowry, Sogolow, Collins, Kann, Kaufmann and Colentano (1997:261) in their research hold the view that in all age groups, adolescents have the highest risk of infection with sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and the largest share of unattended pregnancies in the United States of America and yet despite this risk, adolescents who engage in sex are less likely to use condoms. Concurring with this argument, Gohel, Diamond & Chambers (1997:280) state that despite ongoing efforts at prevention, the United States of America continues to have high rates of pregnancies and births among adolescents.

Michand, Sharma & Narring (1996:235) cite several reasons for adolescents' failure to use condoms and these include the fear that parents would discover their sexual activity. This, then, shows that there is a general lack of communication and trust between parents and children regarding sexual matters throughout the world.

Reports indicate that if adolescents do communicate, they prefer mothers than fathers in discussing matters pertaining to sexuality (Kim, Kotchick, Dorsey, Forehand, & Ham, 1998:218). Grady, Tanfer, Billy & Lincoln-Hanson (1996-221) also indicate a difference between father-child and mother-child relationships in that fathers themselves are less likely to take responsibility for effective contraception and that makes it difficult for them to discuss contraceptives with their adolescents. This makes it impossible for adolescents to make a balance in sexual behaviour because there is a lack of open communication between parents themselves regarding contraception.

In Salus (1995:20) it is also mentioned that a parent is in the best position to help a child make wise choices about sex. In the above argument, parental style seems to have a role to play especially in determining sexual behaviour among adolescents. Abma, Driscoll & Moore (1998:13) hold the view that adolescents of authoritative parents who monitor the behaviour of their adolescents closely are at lower risk than other adolescents who live apart from their parents. Abma et al (1998:13) also believe that adolescents of parents who drink heavily or who use illegal drugs are more likely to experience difficulties in sexual matters. From this assertion, one is tempted to assume that morality and values in particular family or society are also determining factors of sexual behaviour among the adolescent children. To this thought, Abma et al (1998:13) adds by mentioning religious participation as a determinant of sexual behaviour. In their findings, the college students who attended religious services relatively less often were found to be more likely to report experiencing coerced sex than those who often attended. Glover (1985:49) claims that the plight of the adolescent is made worse by the influence of religion and the explosion of the media has created an

opportunity for low moral standards and causes uncertainties among adolescents, leading to the urge to try everything in search of sexual identity.

According to Buga, Amoko and Ncayiyana (1996:95) the reasons for early initiation of sexual activity and high level of unprotected sexual activity have not yet been adequately elucidated in rural Transkei. This statement indicates the need for further research in this area in the Umtata District.

1.2.3 Statement of the problem

Sexual activities among the adolescents are placing them at risk due to lack of correct information and knowledge about sexuality, hence the following questions can be formulated: -

- Do parents involve themselves in matters pertaining to the sexuality of secondary school learners?
- Do learners need parental involvement in matters pertaining their sexuality?
- Are there factors that affect parent-child relationship concerning sexuality matters?

The above questions can lead to the formulation of the following assumptions which are tested during this research project: -

- There is lack of parental involvement in sex education programmes in schools.
- Lack of communication between parents and adolescents have an influence on irresponsible sexual patterns among school learners.
- Parenting styles affect the parent-child communication with regard to sexual matters.
- Family values and socio-economic background of parents have an effect on how the adolescents behave sexually.

With regard to the above assumptions, the concluding research questions are to investigate the involvement of parents in sex education of school learners.

1.3 AIMS OF RESEARCH

This includes general and specific aims.

1.3.2 General aim

The aim of this study is to determine: -

- The involvement of parents in the sex education programmes of school learners in the Umtata District.
- The extent of parental communication with regard to sexuality.

1.3.3 The specific aim

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the extent and nature of parental involvement in matters pertaining to sexuality of secondary school learners, to find out about the learners' attitude towards parental involvement in the school sex education and to identify the factors related to parental involvement in the school sex education programmes.

1.4 RESEARCH METHOD

Research Method includes review of literature and empirical study.

1.4.1 Review of literature

For the purpose of this study a broad overview of literature will be done by consulting both primary and secondary sources in books and articles in journals and periodicals with the aim of investigating the following topics: -

- Involvement of parents in the sex education programmes

- Nature of communication between parents and their children
- Factors affecting the parent-child relationship that leads to lack of effective communication.

1.4.2 Empirical study

The aim of the empirical research is to: -

- Investigate the extent to which parents talk to their children pertaining sexuality matters.
- Find out about the adolescents' perception and attitude towards parental involvement in sex education.
- Identify the factors that may be the cause of irresponsible sexual behaviour among adolescents and the extent to which the parents are involved in the sex education programmes. For the purpose of the above data, the qualitative research method with semi-structured interviews will be used and justification of using the above type of research method will follow.

1.5 DEMARCATION OF THE RESEARCH

The main purpose of the present research is to find out about the parental involvement of parents in sex education programmes of their adolescents. The researcher intends to investigate this phenomenon among the Xhosa-speaking learners in the Umtata District in the Eastern Cape Province.

The intended research group of the study will be limited to the 14-18 year age group of learners and their parents.

1.6 CLARIFICATION OF THE CONCEPTS

Some of the concepts that will be mainly used in this dissertation need to be clarified, namely: -

1.6.2 Parental involvement

This refers to the active participation of parents whose children form the part of this study. Their involvement in this case include the nature and the extent to which they communicate with their children.

It is also proper to further see if the research done by Swana (1995:60) which revealed that parents were not communicating with their children on topics pertaining to sexual matters still holds. In that study, recommendations were made that parental workshops be conducted and parent-teacher-student associations (PTSA) be formed where such matters are discussed by all members of the community. The role of schools in sex education should not be over emphasized at the expense of what happens at home.

1.6.3 Sex education programmes

Sex education can be referred to as an instruction in and discussion of various aspects of sexuality and human sexual behaviour and the social roles of males and females in society and in relationship with each other (Hacker 1994:20; Greathead, Devenish & Funnell 1998:91; Harilal 1994:20; Encyclopedia Americana 1982:640).

The programmes referred to in the present study are interventions done by schools to combat or minimize the rate of teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS. In the researcher's previous study (Swana 1995:59) the findings were that the teachers shift the blame of teaching sex education to parents whom they feel are responsible for teaching their children at home. The present study, therefore, investigates the parents' involvement in the sex education programmes of their children in schools. According to Hilu (1967:11) and Gordon (1974:xvii), parents should be involved in the formulation of such programmes. One needs to look at Xhosa-speaking learners in relation to their parents.

1.6.4 Xhosa-speaking learners

There are many ways in which the term Xhosa-speaking learners can be described, but for the purpose of this study, it refers to those learners whose cultural origin has to do with the Xhosas as a group. Learners are the participants in educational programmes at a school setting and in this case it means learners at schools where Xhosa is a dominant language in Umtata district in the Eastern Cape region. An example of such a region is the Eastern region in general and Umtata district in particular.

1.6.4 Umtata District

This is the region in the Eastern Cape Province, which used to be known as the Transkei. The majority of people in this region are Xhosa-speaking, hence the focus of this study is on Xhosa-speaking learners in the Umtata District.

1.7 RESEARCH PROGRAMME

The programme of this study takes the following format: -

- Chapter 1 is an introductory orientation. The statement of the problem, aims and definitions of key concepts were dealt with.
- Chapter 2 focuses on the involvement of parents in sex education programmes and the content of communication with their children.
- In chapter 3 the research design of this study is described. The researcher will explain which research methods are used and how the research is approached and the empirical research stated, showing guidelines formulated from the literature.
- Chapter 4 contains a discussion of the results, findings of the study, recommendations, limitations and suggestions for further research.

1.8 SUMMARY

Chapter one has served as an introductory orientation to the present study, the problem to be researched, aims, methods and course of the investigation. This chapter also defines some of the concepts dealt with, so as to clarify their meaning within the research. The next chapter reviews the literature on parental involvement in sex education programmes of their children in schools.

CHAPTER TWO

PARENTAL COMMUNICATION AND INVOLVEMENT IN THE SEX EDUCATION PROGRAMMES OF THEIR ADOLESCENTS IN SCHOOLS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The family is the principal unit of socialization for children and, thus, it plays a powerful role in the sexual development of the children. As seen by Staton (1990:1), socialization is the comprehensive and consistent induction of an individual into the objective world of a society or a sector of it. This socialization begins in childhood when the individual becomes a member of the society. Primary socialization, as this is called, is a process rather than an event and it occurs until the individual becomes a functioning member of the society (Staton 1990:1).

The foregoing argument clearly indicates the fact that what the child will become in the society is a responsibility of the family or parents. It is their God-given duty to bring up the child in the way that will make him or her a responsible citizen in society.

For the child to behave in a sexually responsible way when he reaches adolescence, will depend on the amount of communication that takes place at home among family members. According to Miller, Kotchick, Dorsey, Forehand & Ham (1998:218) parents and other family members are in a unique position to help socialize adolescents into healthy sexual adults, both by providing accurate information about sex and by fostering responsible sexual decision-making skills.

Parents are the primary teachers of their children. They influence how children learn to think, use language, feel about themselves and others and organize experiences (Bundy & White 1990:322). However, research on the role of parents regarding the sexual development of their children, yields inconsistent results in that many parents assume that sexual development is

unimportant or irrelevant until at least the onset of puberty, but when this time comes they are unable or unwilling to talk to them (Miller et al 1998; Baldwin & Bauer 1994).

This chapter provides insight on the extent to which parents are involved in sex education and on the nature of communication with their children about sexuality matters and their attitudes towards their adolescents sexual behaviour.

2.2. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SEX EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

Parental involvement means different things to different people. According to Jennings (1992:63) the term “parental involvement“ may refer to parent advocacy or empowerment or may be defined in terms of school visitations and volunteer services. Some schools may define it as home learning activities conducted by parents, such as reading to their children, helping them with homework, discussing current events, etc. A successful programme for parents should therefore incorporate all the components of parent involvement. It should provide occasional workshops on topics that are identified by parents. Jennings (1992:67) goes on to say that the success of a parent involvement program is related to the extent to which parents, teachers and administrators agree on common objectives and are able to develop and implement interdependent strategies to meet their objectives. Bundy & White (1990:321) on the other hand state that the schools have to prepare parents for their role as sexual educators of their children.

Simanski (1998:41) and Jennings (1992:64) assert that parents are more powerful than any clinic, any teacher or any peer and they go on to say that parents could be the key to help adolescents make smarter decisions regarding their reproductive health. When parent’s messages are consistent with those given by teachers, children are far more likely to absorb them (Jennings 1992:64). Bundy & White (1990:321) suggest that schools are there to supplement parents' efforts. Schools should promote partnerships, which will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the

social, emotional and academic growth of children (Osborne & De Onis 1997:20). Salus (1995:4) states that, though sexual education is primarily the task of parents, it is also the responsibility of all persons who have contact with children and is only part of the total integrated education for living. School counsellors can extend their pro-active and primary prevention programmes to assist parents in fulfilling their role as the foremost sexuality educators of their children.

Family Life Education in Natal Education Department (1990) suggests that the programme offered by schools should reflect the needs and values of the school and the community and the school should discuss both the content and method of teaching sex education with its parent community before implementing the programme. All parents have their own moral, religious and ethical positions on the subject and have the right to know both what is being taught and how it is being taught (NED 1990).

To be involved with something, means to be completely part of it. According to Van Zyl in Jacobs (1985:231) involvement is the person's concern with a particular situation which prompts him to act. It is not possible to be involved with something without having some knowledge about it, thus, involvement demands knowledge and it comes about through perseverance, hard work and dedication.

Parents are expected to be studious and keen to acquire knowledge about and skills of dealing with their children at different developmental stages. Hard work and dedication referred to in this paragraph suggests that parents have to understand problems and challenges brought by developmental stages through which their children undergo and work hard to empower themselves through skills acquisition.

According to Vrey (1993:173-174) parents have the authority to ideally provide the secure basis from which the child initiates other relationships. The child's increasing involvement with the world outside his/her home entails new perspectives concerning his parents. He sees both the world and the

home in a new light. The child at adolescent stage fights for emancipation which may result in the anxiety and conflict which he/she may experience, particularly if they feels rejected by their parents. The emotional bonds of love and attraction, or the opposite, will continue to influence the child. Mutual love is not an isolated phenomenon, but something that eases the relationship. It gives rise to many other positive emotions and shuts out many negative ones. The young who can rely on parental love feels free to take risks, to explore, find themselves, try out their abilities, develop decision-making powers and openly compare alternatives particularly as regards the choice of a career. They should feel free to make the inevitable mistakes without fearing that these will mean total rejection by their parents. Moreover, they should have no destructive guilt feelings suffered by children who are not really loved by their parents. The adolescent who is sure of his/her parent's affection is free to differ from them. He/she can in fact fight for his/her rights, as he/she sees them, without fear of retribution or vengeance.

Emancipation is defined as a child's development towards independence. Successful emancipation according to Vrey (1993:175) is an educational matter in which the maturing youth is supported towards self-actualisation. The parental attitudes that retard emancipation are as follows: -

- Reluctance or refusal to give the child his/her rightful independence. This type of parent takes a wide range of decisions the child is capable of taking for himself, e.g. as regards the clothes the adolescent wears.
- A denial of freedom. Conditions are attacked with the permission to behave, and the parent checks up on the child's compliance with conditions - in other words, the child is not trusted.
- The adolescent is treated like a much younger child by constantly reprimanding or pampering him/her. The adolescent experiences these attitudes as statements that he/she is too young when his/her ambition is to be an adult. The parent can responsibly refuse

freedom only when he/she is prepared to explain his full reasons in a pedagogical encounter. The above assertion indicates that the parent may tend to be overprotective to his/her adolescent child to an extent of destroying the child individuality.

On the adolescent's part, the following attitudes harm emancipation:

- Insistence on a freedom he/she cannot yet responsibly exercise and which may therefore result in mere license.
- Failure to accept freedom and independence. Such timidity results from ineffective education, unsuitable parental attitudes e.g. "I'm not good enough for you anymore", or defective dialogue between parent and child.
- Avoidance of contact, so that there is no fellowship that can produce encounter.
- Adolescent prejudice that rejects everything the parent says and so destroys communication (Vrey 1993:176).

The above can result in the adolescent child to be rebellious towards his/her parents. The parent needs to understand the development of the adolescent child.

Effective parent-child relations are the most important factor in the adolescent's growth to independence. In all his/her uncertainties and in all the tensions and anxieties arising from these, the unconditional acceptance and security derived from his/her parents are the sole stable and stabilising factor.

Though the child as a person initiates his/her own self-actualisation, he/she is dependent on educational assistance if he/she is to realise his/her potential.

2.2.1 Involvement in a psycho-educational perspective

Involvement in a psycho-educational perspective, is concerned with those involved in the educational situation and observes the educational phenomenon from that particular perspective (Vrey 1993:176). This perspective concentrates on a description of the facts in respect of the child as educand and the adult as educator.

When parental involvement is viewed from a psycho-educational perspective, emphasis should be put on the becoming of the child and the role the adult plays in the child's becoming. Attention should be focused on how the child behaves sexually and the role that the parent can play in reassuring the child that the behaviour is a normal phenomenon. Therefore, by studying the becoming and development of the child, his/her needs and relationship structures, a meaningful and purposeful understanding on why the child at an adolescent stage resorts to sexually irresponsible behaviour in certain situations, can be obtained. It is important that both the child and the parent should understand the necessity of parent involvement in the sexual education programmes in school. The essences of psycho-educational theory of being an educand are namely: -

- Meaning attribution
- Involvement
- Experience
- Self-actualisation
- Forming of the self-identity and self-concept

Vrey (1993:28) describes these categories as illustration modes of thought, milestones or fixation points that are essences which ascertain that our information regarding the education will be pedagogic.

This draws ones discussion to what really is met by attribution.

2.2.1.1 Meaning attribution

Meaning attribution is identified as an empirical-education essence, because a child cannot progress towards adulthood unless he/she is able to recognise, know, understand and do things. As soon as meaning has been attributed it directs the person's behaviour. Vrey (1993:36) describes, fundamental components of significance attribution as follows: -

- Significance attribution permits orientation. As soon a person (a child) understands or knows an object, another person, a word, his/her body, etc. He/she is orientated to it.
- Significance attribution is idiosyncratic, it is always a person who finds or understands meaning.
- Significance attribution always relates to other meanings in the cognitive structure.
- Significance attribution always has a logical dimension which permits mutual understanding. It is also called the denotative meaning.
- Significance attribution also has a psychological dimension which is the unique meaning attributed by a particular person. It is also called connotative meaning.
- Significance attribution is discovered and not understood by a process of deduction (Vrey 1993:36).

Meaning attribution is important in the parental involvement because it determines the extent to which the child perceives the necessity of parental involvement, and how he/she assigns the meaning to it. The meaning he/she gives to the parental involvement will facilitate the parent-child relationship. Without the child knowing the meaning of parental involvement constant rebellious behaviour will manifest itself (Vrey 1993:36).

Meaning attribution is an ongoing, dynamic process which is always preceded by involvement.

2.2.1.2 Involvement

Du Toit & Kruger (1991:17) refer to involvement as the human, physical and psychological act of being concerned with, of giving attention to a person or a matter, because a person wants to do so. Vrey (1993:37-38) defines involvement as the psychic vitality or vigour with which a meaningful objective is pursued and achieved. He further refers to involvement as the person's concern with a particular situation which promotes one to act. It is thus an inner force, an urge, a need, a longing for development, folding and self-actualisation and implies 'being there' in the actual sense and being part of the event (Vrey 1993:38). Accordingly, only study guide for OSV403 –R:21, a child forms identities on the strength of his/her involvement with people, things and him/herself. His identity as a child who undergoes adolescent stage will only develop when there is a close parent-child relationship.

Parental involvement therefore requires the parents to be concerned about their children and what is taught to them with regard to sexuality matters.

Experience is, therefore, an important aspect of the child's development. This is, however, a subject of the next paragraph.

2.2.1.3 Experience

Experience is related to the emotional or affective dimension of being human. Experience never occurs in a vacuum, but is related to a person's situation. Experience influences involvement in every significant action as well as the quality of the relationship formed (Vrey 1993:42). The child needs to experience his/her own potential which only develops in his/her interaction with significant others, including parents.

How a child behaves sexually will be greatly influenced by the educational support he receives and how he/she experiences the parental involvement will be unique to that particular child. His/her experience of his/her own potential may lead to the development of self-actualisation.

2.2.1.4 Self-actualisation, self identity and self-concept

This refers to the individual's deliberate endeavours to realise the latent positive potential of his/her self-hood (Vrey 1993:43). Although self-actualisation begins with genetically determined components, actualisation or realisation of this latent potential cannot take place without the individual's will to do so, without deliberate participation in the process, or without educational help.

Both the self concept (I think I am) and the identity concept (I know I am) influence self-actualisation (that is the outcome of a person's becoming what she can become, wishes to become and ought to become). The child should be supported by the educator to attain full self-actualisation (Vrey 1993:43).

The above mentioned categories of psycho-educational essences are distinct but not separate. The child as a person is always involved as a totality in each act of self-actualisation. According to Vrey (1993:48) the assignment of meaning, demands involvement and the quality of meaning is determined by experience. As meaning increases, involvement intensifies and experience is clarified, meaning in turn is intensified and becomes more finely differentiated.

Meaning attribution, involvement and experience, influence the child's self-actualisation and his/her building of a positive self-concept. These factors also influence his/her intra-psychical structure of the I, the self, the identity and the self-concept in a reciprocal manner. All these factors put together will determine how the child behaves and what leads the child to behave irresponsibly (Vrey 1993:43).

The knowledge about the child's becoming can be of use during parental involvement in sex education programmes at school.

According to Du Toit & Kruger (1991:3) both the child's parents (primary educators) and his/her teachers (secondary educators) have the greatest

share in the child's education and the quality of his/her becoming. The educator is an adult who knows and understands him/herself and how his/her world of other people, ideas and objects work. He/she is a person who can make choices, decisions and accept responsibility. The adult is a self-sufficient, autonomous and responsible person who realises the meaningfulness of his/her existence (Du Toit & Kruger 1991:3). He/she is responsible for the creation of an educational climate which is conducive for learning.

It is vital that parent and teacher assist and encourage each other, rather than be in conflict with each other.

2.3 PARENT-ADOLESCENT COMMUNICATION ABOUT SEX

The term "communication" is defined as the exchange of ideas or expressions to enhance mutual understanding between people (The Random House Thesaurus 1984:147). Tubbs & Moss (1991:6) regard communication as 'the process of creating a meaning between two or more people'. Through communication, then, the partners involved are constantly suggesting meanings in their relationship which convey certain messages to both of them. Among the three forms of communication mentioned by the above authors (1991:6), there is a transactional form of communication which entails not just a two-way flow, but numerous other process, both verbal and non-verbal, occurring simultaneously. Lauer & Lauer (1994:255) refer to verbal communication 'what' is said and to non-verbal communication as how it is said. In the communication of parents with their children about sexuality matters the 'how' it is said, becomes the problem. The majority of parents believe in 'moralising' their children.

Communication between parent and children about sexuality matters seems to have a negative connotation. Viewed from the perspective of the above paragraph the "how" communication is done by parents is a matter for deeper scrutiny.

Parental messages to adolescents about sex are perceived to be basically disapproving (Moore & Rosenthal, 1991:98). Some parents may feel that to talk about sexuality matters to adolescents gives an unspoken approval to adolescent sexual activity. Rice in Swana (1995:10) assumes that the parents feel threatened in talking about sexual issues with their adolescents, thinking that sex education has an effect of arousing curiosity among their children, thus creating a desire to experiment with sex. This assumption seems to be that the less adolescents know about sex, the less likely they are to practise it. The inability of parents to communicate with children about sex, causes them to be the victims of inaccurate sex information from their peers and thus getting them to become victims of, for example HIV/AIDS.

Another view about the lack of parent-adolescent communication, is that parents fear discussing value-laden topics with their children (Bundy & White 1990:322; Evian 1991:33). This may be due to the cultural norms in black societies, specifically among Xhosa-speaking people, which prescribes the type of behaviour acceptable and according to them sex is a forbidden subject that cannot be discussed. Hence it becomes very difficult for most parents to permit sex education in schools.

Research proves that adolescents express the desire for parents to be their primary sex educators (Mueller & Powers 1990:470; Nolin & Petersen 1992:72). Sensing their parents fears in discussing sexuality, adolescents also express the need for parental sex education so as to be knowledgeable in dealing with their concerns and to create better parent-child sex communication (Snergroff 1995:49; Baldwin & Bauer 1994:169).

Jaccard, Dittus and Gordon (1998:247) has characterized the communication process between parents and their adolescents in terms of five communication dimensions: -

- The extent of communication (measured in terms of frequency and depth).
- The style or manner in which information is communicated.

- The content of communication.
- The general family environment (e.g. the overall quality of the relationship between parent and teenager) in which the communication takes place.

The five communication dimensions listed above, clearly indicate that not all communication make sense to the child. Factors such as time, place, content and the manner in which communication is made, are all important factors. This brings one to the next paragraph on factors that influence effective communication.

For effective communication between the parent and the adolescent, the abovementioned dimensions, should be observed and taken into account. This, in turn, brings the discussion to the factors influencing effective parent adolescent sexual communication.

2.4 FACTORS INFLUENCING EFFECTIVE PARENT-ADOLESCENT SEX COMMUNICATION

Parent-child communication about sexuality is set to have potential positive influence on adolescent sexual attitudes and behaviour however certain factors hinder it, as listed below: -

- Parent-child relationships.
- Parent sexual knowledge.
- Parenting styles.
- Parental values and their socio - economic status

These issues are discussed in turn.

2.4.1 Parent-child relationship

Parents seem to be unable to initiate and maintain a conversation about sex with their adolescents (Pick & Palos 1995:668) fearing the encouragement of

sexual activity. Parents prefer to teach their adolescents values such as respect and honesty in the expectation that they would be applicable to sexuality rather than imparting a rigid sexual value system that the child might reject (Nolin & Petersen 1992:71).

According to Whitbeck, Conger and Kao (1993:263) the quality of the parent-child relationship can affect the adolescents' sexual behaviour indirectly by increasing the likelihood of depressed affect, making adolescents more vulnerable to peer influences and likely to create early sexual activity. There is a view that suggests that adolescents who view their parents as warm and supportive, are less likely to be sexually active (Moore & Rosenthal 1991:197; Whitbeck et al 1993). If the parent-child relationship is warm and supportive, there is a high probability that parental values, whether liberal or conservative regarding sexuality, are more likely to be transmitted to their children. Unsatisfactory family relationships result in adolescents becoming sexually promiscuous and increasing the relative importance of peer group associations. For adolescents, sexual expression, is one means of negotiating for emotionally supportive relationship (Jay & Wilson 1998:521; Whitbeck et al 1993:275).

According to Baldwin & Bauer (1994:163) sexuality is a natural, normal element of individual development, which is shaped by the family. Families transmit messages of acceptable sex roles and gender specific behaviours and this can only be achieved through appropriate interaction between the parents and their children. Snergroff (1995:49) declares that children need a caring, personal and reliable source to help prepare them for the physical, psychological and social changes that they will experience in their teenage years. Hence, there should be open lines of communication between parents and their adolescent children.

Another variable in parent-child relationship is where there is lack of balance in the way both parents relate to their children. Adolescents of both sexes prefer their mothers as being the more appropriate parent with whom to discuss sexuality matters (Nolin & Petersen 1992:72). Mothers are more

likely than fathers to discuss certain topics of sexuality with both sons and daughters. Sons are less likely than daughters to learn about sexuality with the same sex parent (Nolin & Petersen 1992:68; Mueller & Powers 1990:470). Fathers are said to be more comfortable talking to their sons than their daughters due to historical incest taboo (Simanski 1998:35).

King & Lorusso (1997:58) assert that mothers are more likely than fathers to have meaningful discussions with their daughters. The same is true about the communication between fathers and their sons, hence, it is important that both parents should communicate at the same level with their adolescents. Many fathers like to excuse themselves by shifting the responsibility of talking to children, to the mothers. Research has also found that mothers generally play a greater role than fathers in the transmission of sexual information to their children (King & Lorusso 1997:58; Hutchinson & Cooney 1998:186; Raffaelli, Bogenschneider & Flood 1998:316). Shapiro (1989:145) concurs with this statement in saying that parents, especially fathers feel awkward talking with their children about sexual issues and in trying to communicate. They provide little information that adolescents find unhelpful. Mothers are often viewed as more emotionally expressive, more likely to answer questions about sex and, as a result, more approachable (King & Lorusso 1997).

Taris & Semin (1998:69) assume that families where parent-child relationship is characterized by warmth, openness and mutual understanding, the adolescents' transition to non-virginity seems to be delayed and levels of adolescent sexual permissiveness and parent-child disagreement about sexual issues are lower in such families. This asserts that the parental styles affect adolescent sexual behaviour.

One tends to agree with this view especially when the influence of the background of children is considered. In this regard, the ensuing paragraph on the parent knowledge of sexuality will be clarified.

2.4.2 Parent sexual knowledge

According to research (Mellanby, Phelps & Tripp 1992:455; Simanski 1998:33; Reis & Seidi 1989:247; Baldwin & Bauer 1994:165) many parents would like to provide the information on sexual issues to their own children but find themselves hindered by their own uncertainties or lack of knowledge. These parents need more information themselves before they can increase their involvement in sex education. Some parents believe that they do not know enough about sexual topics to discuss them with their children because their own parents were usually not the primary source of their sex education. As a result, they lack a familial model (Benshoff & Alexander 1993:288). Green & Sollie (1989:152) and King & Lorusso (1997:58) support this statement by saying that due to lack of knowledge, parents feel uncomfortable talking with children about sexual topics. Simanski (1998:33) asserts that adolescent's sexuality may be threatening to adults who may not have resolved their own sexuality issues.

On the study by Hodson & Wampler (1986:13) parents prefer and expect to be the primary sources of information to their children in spite of the fact that they reported that their own parents provided them with little information on the sexual topics. Only for the non-sensitive topics, like birth, menstruation and body differences did a higher percentage of parents report receiving most of their information from a parent (Hodson & Wampler 1986:16).

Pick & Palos (1995:668) emphasize that the parents: -

- Need to think carefully about their own attitudes and what they want to transmit to their children.
- Should know clearly if their intentions match their attitudes.
- Need to talk more openly about sex.
- Need to resist the tendency to be afraid of what their children may hear.
- Must recognize that they are only one source of information for their children.

According to the above points, parents are the main source of information regarding sex and can help enlighten their children. All these however, depend on the particular parenting style a parent demonstrates.

2.4.3 Parenting style

Research has shown that parental rearing styles namely, authoritative parenting style, authoritarian, indulgent and disengaged or neglectful parenting styles, as will be discussed in turn, are related to adolescent sexual behaviour (Taris & Semin, 1998:69, Lamanna & Riedmann 1994:399, Benschhoff & Alexander 1993:288). As used by Lamanna & Riedmann (1994:400), Baumrind's typology of parenting, tries to clarify the problem surrounding child rearing in society. This draws the discussion to the said typology of parenting.

2.4.3.1 Authoritative parenting

According to Chess & Thomas (1987:41) authoritative parenting is both nurturant and demanding. The necessary parental warmth and love yearned for by all adolescents are provided. This brings about a sense of security and openness among children. Problems are freely discussed and views are exchanged between parents and children. A homely environment emerges and when this occurs, sexual issues normally arise and are dealt with as they arise.

This parental style is viewed as ideal for raising balanced, independent and disciplined young adults who easily can differentiate the wrong from right, reality from fake and good from bad. Through the nurturant element of authoritative parenting style, the demands that go with it are not too hard. Demands for high moral standards, upholding family values, aiming and settling for the best in life and improvement on self-concept. Children from such parents tend to be competent and productive citizens. Adolescents make responsible sexual decisions and, they become successful in life. The fact

that questions from adolescents are received with a positive attitude, sex related issues are easy to raise. It is as a result of this style of parenting that stress, which often besets all adolescents, is minimised or lessened. Unlike other parenting practices, this one produces learners who believe in themselves, value and respect themselves and are confident about what they will become in life.

This draws the analysis to the next parenting style, the authoritarian.

2.4.3.2. Authoritarian parenting

When parents begin to shape, control and evaluate the child's behaviour in accordance with pre-established absolute standards, this is referred to as authoritarian parenting style (Chess & Thomas 1987:41). Characterising this type of parenting style is harsh and stern commands to the children. Fear grips the adolescent and causes withdrawal. Communication breaks down and no questions are asked, thus forcing the child to appeal to his or her peers for answers and suggestions. Decisions about sex are kept secret and, more often than not, are irresponsible.

This is the kind of parenting style Lamanna and Riedmann (1994:387) refer to as autocratic discipline. According to them, children brought up by such parents fall victim to teenage pregnancy and sexual promiscuity. There is fear and tension at home but away from home there are friends, bits of advice and recognition from peers. Some parental styles are worse than others, but the one discussed above is destructive in all of its processes and, in various ways, produces undesirable characters among the children. Equally dangerous is yet another extreme style called "indulgent" parenting, discussed below.

2.4.3.3 Indulgent parenting

Unlike the authoritarian parenting style which treats the child as a robot, the indulgent style is frivolous, affirmative and permissive. It is described by

Lamanna & Riedmann (1994:386) as nurturing, but with few demands. Parents seem to adopt a laissez-faire attitude. Children are allowed to set their own goals and establish their own rules. Guidance from parents is insignificant and the child may either swim or sink. The result of this style is that children cannot distinguish between a morally incorrect and prudent behaviour. They grow up like birds or some other form of animals which fend for themselves to survive.

Worse still, comes the disengaged or neglectful style which will be explained in the next paragraph.

2.4.3.4 Disengaged or neglectful parenting

This type of parenting according to Black, Ricardo & Stanton (1997:176) is neither demanding nor nurturant. Parents become apathetic and children of such parents normally turn to sexual partners for their unmet intimacy needs. No one seems to be interested in offering sex education to the children born to this type of a parental style.

According to Lamanna & Riedmann (1994:389) the ideal parent is the authoritative parent who demands maturity and effectively punishes forbidden behaviour after having clearly stated the rules, but who listens to the child's point of view, respects the child and encourages the child's self-development and independence. As children reach adolescence, limits can be based more and more on democratic discipline, whereby all family members involved have some say. Both parents and children should attempt to compromise whenever possible. Negotiations and conflict resolutions are important components of communication that can be practiced within families.

Miller, Forehand & Kotchick (1999:87) assume that less parental monitoring and more permissive parental values about adolescent and sexual behaviour would predict more frequent intercourse by adolescents, more sexual partners and earlier ages at first intercourse. Black et al (1997:189) concur with the above statement in saying that monitoring communicates parental care and

concern while limiting exposure to environmental threats or challenges. According to Jay & Wilson (1998:521) sexual permissiveness and intercourse are related to parental discipline and control. Simanski (1998:35) observes that children who perceive their parents to be friendly and attentive, report less sexual activity throughout their high school and college years. Parents who monitor their adolescents' activities are more vigilant about teaching safer sex practices.

In conclusion, parents have to come together to share ideas regarding sexual education. Some sexual problems experienced by adolescents stem from how they are being brought up. Parental guidance can be the answer to the sexual problems in our country. Parental values and socio-economic status may also have a negative influence on the child's sexual behaviour, hence this also needs to be discussed.

2.4.4 Parental values and socio-economic status

Parental values and socio-economic status of the family have an influence on the adolescents' sexual behaviour. Jammot & Jammot (1992:194) state that permissive parental attitudes and values have been related to earlier sexual activity among teens. Adolescents who seem to perceive that their parents disapprove of sexual activity have been less likely to be sexually active.

According to Lottes & Kuriloff (1994:204), parental values which are the predictors of adolescents' sexual behaviour are influenced by the family's ethnic and religious background. Jaccard, Dittus & Gordon (1998:249) assert that religiosity leads to more supportive family relationships, which may increase communication between parents and teens, thereby leading to greater awareness of sexual activity.

Research has cited religion as an important influence in sexual standards and behaviour (Jay & Wilson 1998:521; Lottes & Kuriloff 1994:206). Regular religious participation might provide adolescents with a value system that encourages responsible sexual behaviour in the form of abstinence (Abma et

al 1998:13; Jammot & Jammot 1992:197; Jay & Wilson 1998:527). In their study, Heaton & Jacobson (1994:293) compare Catholics to those with no religious preference and assert that those with no religious preferences are less likely to marry, more likely to divorce and initiate sexual activity at a younger age. The religious participation of parents therefore, lessens the rate of sexual activity among adolescents.

Another factor that leads to lack of communication between the parent and the adolescent, is the socio-economic status of the family. Rice (1992:35) asserts that the lower socio-economic status families tend to have hierarchical rigid parental relationships with adolescents. The parents are repeatedly seen as closed or inaccessible to the adolescent's communication. The home atmosphere is one of imperatives and absolutes, physical violence and psychological distance, if not rejection, by the adults (Rice 1992:35). In such environments, parents cannot discuss sexual matters with their adolescents. If it is done, it would be more prescriptive and value laden.

The family structure also has an influence on the parental communication and thus leads to adolescent's sexual activity. According to research (Jay & Wilson 1998:86; Black et al 1997:174; Miller et al 1999:86). Family influence can be divided into two categories viz: - family structure variable (e.g. single parenting or absence of parents) and family-process variables (e.g. parental behaviour and attitudes in the socialisation of adolescents). Structural family variables are said to be static and are not immediately susceptible to change through intervention. They have not played a prominent role in understanding adolescent sexual behaviour. Parental behaviour and attitudes are considered critical in the socialisation of adolescents. Kotchick, Dorsey, Miller & Forehand (1999:101) support the assertion that family is an important source of influence during the sexual socialization of adolescents. Adolescents who have single parents are predicted to be more sexually active. Young, Jensen, Olsen & Cundick (1991:978) support this statement by referring to family structure as an important variable which correlates with sexual attitudes and behaviours.

In the studies quoted above, the adolescent females from divorced and female-headed families, showed a higher incidence of sexual activity, involving a greater number of sexual partners and with a higher probability of unwanted pregnancy. They further say that a two parent family is an important factor in lowering entry into sexual experience, because in the two-parent home there are two adult role models available for guidance, emotional support and greater financial stability (Young et al 1991:983).

Peer pressure poses a threat to parental values. Peers more commonly fulfil the role of parents as sex educators by frequently providing basic misinformation and perpetuating myths about sexuality (Baldwin & Bauer 1994:162 ; Benshoff & Alexander 1993:289). Peers are notorious for being sources of sexual misinformation and it is often very difficult to dispel the sexual myths that are likely to espouse sexual values that conflict with parents' values.

Furstenberg (1998:249) mentions economic development as a factor that affects the parental values by promoting the youth's autonomy, decline of parental authority and an increase in gender equality through the extension of education and these, then, foster higher rates of sexually activity among the young. This is likely to be accompanied by a drop in age of the menarche which results in the increase of earlier sexual behaviour and risk of unintended pregnancy for the sexual active adolescents. According to the above research (Furstenberg 1998:249) economic changes give rise to a transformation of culture that also makes sexual activity more appealing and acceptable. Access to western media appeals to a youth's age group identity through music, dress and language and promotes a message of liberation, self development and marginality from traditional ways of life and these messages, directly or indirectly, encourage sexual freedom without simultaneously encouraging responsibility for sexual behaviour (Furstenberg 1998:249). Economic development in the form of educational systems increase opportunities for contact between the sexes beyond the scrutiny of elders and this leads to the rise in incidence of sexual intercourse among teenagers (Furstenberg 1998:249).

Political pressure also poses a threat to parental values (Furstenberg 1998: 151). The right to prostitution, homosexuality, abortion and contraception has a probability of increasing sexuality activity among adolescents. The availability of contraception and abortion as a means of reducing the risks of teenage pregnancy and child bearing, increase the sexual irresponsibility among adolescents.

The abovementioned influences are widespread in our society. In the Xhosa traditional culture, adolescents and youths are taught that it is a shame and disgrace to have sexual intercourse before marriage and the youth who infringed this norm were ostracised by peers and became objects of ridicule, but nowadays, black communities have become westernised and adolescents' sexual behaviour have been influenced by modern technological innovations. The changing demands of society have created new problems since the cultural norms and values of a particular group of people are not always being upheld and adhered to. Griessel, Louw & Swarts (1991:192) refer to this shift of values as "a total onslaught on the traditional norms of a particular society" This has given rise to a transformation, in among other things, of sexual values, attitudes and behaviour (Mussen, Conger, Kagan & Huston 1990:586). According to Jennings (1992:64) these social changes have led to lack of adult supervision and authority and have developed "latch-key" children whose parents are all at work when they come back from school and who, then, have to fend for themselves.

The Xhosa norms have been eroded by these social changes and the Xhosa-speaking adolescents have been as affected as other adolescents from other ethnic groups or races. Political changes in South Africa that permit abortion have also affected our youth. The higher divorce rate and increased prevalence of stepfamilies or one-parent families are some of the relatively new social realities that may have an effect (Young, Jensen, Olsen & Cundick, 1991:978). This concurs with what Furstenberg (1998:249) has said about the effect of economic changes on adolescents. It confirms the fact that the factors that affect American adolescents or adolescents of any culture, are

the same as those affecting Xhosa-speaking adolescents, hence there is a need for sex education programmes in their schools and involvement of parents in such programmes.

Sex education in schools does not intend to replace the moral teachings of parents. It is designed to give adolescents the facts and knowledge about human sexual relationships. Research (Miller et al 1999:53) has shown that students who participate in sex education programmes, delay their first intercourse compared with their peers and they are also found to behave more responsibly sexually. Page (1990:66) suggests that educators must work as partners with parents in the delivery of sexuality education to children. A sex education programme affords participants the opportunity to pose questions, increase their level of sexual information, evaluate their attitudes, rectify myths and inaccuracies, evaluate options and make decisions in a non-judgemental environment (Miller et al 1999:53).

Wilson (1991:66) has the following strategies for parental involvement in school sex education programmes: -

- Teachers should find some opportunities to interact with a range of parents from a variety of backgrounds, listen to them and learn from them.
- Teachers should inform parents ahead of time about the specific content, aims and underlying values of the programme.
- Parents should be involved as members of an ongoing advisory committee that reviews programme content and approves all print and audio-visual resources.
- Invite parents to a meeting so that they can find out more about the programme and view a sampling of the films planned to use.
- Give parents the opportunity to “opt their children out” of the programme. There are some people who, for religious or personal reasons, prefer not to have their children participate in discussions of sexuality outside their homes. These parents believes must be respected.

- Assign homework that children can complete together with their parents. Homework activities can balance the roles of home and school by supporting the parents as primary sex educators of their children. The simple act of doing homework together results in increased family communication about sexuality. If the homework assignment is designed the right way, that communication will involve active listening and opinion sharing on both sides.
- At the end of the programme, send home an evaluation form designed to get parents' input about the effectiveness of the program.
- Offer programs directly to parents to help them become more effective sex educators (Wilson 1991:66-67).

The above mentioned strategies can serve as guidelines to any school sex education programme and can improve communication between parents and their children. Since parents remain a reliable source of sex information for their children, such programmes can provide them with skills in order to perform their duty. Workshops on sex education, parent-teacher associations and HIV/Aids awareness campaigns could form part of the strategies geared towards equipping parents with the required skills.

2.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused on the importance of communication between the parents and their adolescents. Factors that hinder adolescent-parent relationship were highlighted. The necessity of involving the parents in school sex education programmes was also discussed.

Chapter three will describe the research design of the study.

CHAPTER THREE

EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the research design is outlined. Reference is made to the aim of the study. The previous chapter is part of this chapter because it is based on the findings gathered from the literature review. Chapter 2 resulted in some specific questions that need to be answered by the study and which research design will be appropriate for the purpose of the study.

3.2 THE AIM OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

This research consists of the general and specific aims. These are discussed in turn.

3.2.1 General aim

The general aim of the empirical research is to look at the extent of the parental involvement in the sex education programmes of their children in the secondary schools in the Umtata District.

3.2.2 Specific aim:

The specific aim of this study is to: -

- Investigate the extent and the nature of parental involvement in matters pertaining to sexuality of secondary school learners.
- Find out about the learners' attitude towards parental involvement in the school sex education.
- Identify the factors related to parental involvement in the school sex education programmes.

The aim is to help parents and teachers in dealing with sex education programmes in school.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As indicated earlier on, the investigator will use interviews of varied kinds e.g. unstructured as well as literature review.

3.3.1 Research design

The researcher chose to follow a qualitative type of research, making use of interviews and literature review.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the extent to which Xhosa-speaking parents are involved in sex education programmes in the secondary schools of their children.

3.3.1.1 *Definition and nature of qualitative research*

A qualitative research design seeks to understand human experiences from the perspective of those who experience them. It is directly concerned with experience as it is lived or felt. Cresswell (1994:6) points out that qualitative researchers interact with those they study and as such these studies are value-laden. He furthermore points out that the language of a qualitative study becomes personal, informal and is based on definitions that evolve during such study. De Vos (1998:11) further clarifies this point by saying that categories emerge from informants or participants rather than being identified prior to the study by the researcher. This ultimately provides rich "context-bound" material and information that leads to theories that help to explain a phenomenon (De Vos 1998:11).

This qualitative research is descriptive and open-ended. According to Wilson (1993:11) the purpose of descriptive designs is to obtain complete and accurate information about the phenomena. This study aims primarily at

describing the parental involvement and obtaining accurate and complete information about the extent of involvement of parents in sex education programmes in schools of their children.

The following characteristics of the qualitative research are produced by Sherman & Webb in Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Gardener, McCormack & Steinmetz (1991:4):

- Events can be understood adequately only if they are seen in context. Therefore, a qualitative researcher immerses him/herself in the setting.
- The contexts of inquiry are not contrived. They are natural. Nothing is predefined or taken for granted.
- Qualitative researchers want those who are studied to speak for themselves to provide their perspectives in words and other actions. Therefore, qualitative research is an interactive process in which the persons studied teach the researcher about their lives.
- Qualitative researchers attend to the experience as a whole, not as a separate variable. The aim of qualitative research is to understand experience as unified.
- For many qualitative researchers, the process entails appraisal of what is studied (Ely et al 1991:4).

The above characteristics show that qualitative research focuses on process as well as content and also applies holistic and interactive approaches in a natural setting. This approach is concerned with interactions among people and what they mean. The relationship between theory and data in qualitative research is often formulated in terms of grounded theory which refers to 'an inductive process of discovering theory from data' (Rubin & Babbie 1993:359).

The aim of this study is to find out whether parents do involve themselves in school sex education programmes or not and whether they do communicate with their children about sexuality matters. By using qualitative research, the purpose is to make parents and children to speak for themselves and teach the researcher about their lives in regard to sexual matters.

3.3.1.2 Rationale for using qualitative research methodology

As has been said, a qualitative research design seeks to understand human experiences from the perspective of those who experience them. In this study the researcher wants to understand the views of parents, teachers and learners about sex education which would determine their extent of involvement in the sex education programmes in schools. Since this study is value-laden there is a need for a researcher to be the primary tool for data collection and analysis. The qualitative research, therefore provides an opportunity for interaction with those that are studied at the same time confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained.

The qualitative research method provides flexibility to different responses from the respondents since the qualitative interview is being non-directive with open-ended questions (Allan & Skinner 1991:203). This allows participants to tell their own story rather than to answer researcher's predetermined questions about their situation. A questionnaire or survey therefore, would be totally inadequate, too inflexible and might produce superficial data instead of the feelings and experiences of those involved. According to Dickson (1995:105) the qualitative research emphasises the uniqueness of individual's lives and experiences.

- The use of questionnaire or survey, therefore, would more suitable. The qualitative research methodology is not only descriptive, but it is also empirical and interpretive. That means that the researcher's understanding and insight arise out of experiential learning. There is a dynamic interaction between the researcher and those being researched. It is also concerned with values in the behaviour and the language of the people studied. Since the study is exploratory, descriptive and interpretive in nature, the aim is to capture what people say and do, that is, the products of how they interpret the world and the task of the qualitative researcher is to capture this process of interpretation (Maykut & Morehouse 1994:18). To do this, requires an

empathic understanding or the ability to reproduce in one's own mind the feeling, motives and thoughts behind the actions of the others.

Each participant is expected to have a unique response depending on one's understanding of one's situation. According to Maykut & Morehouse (1994:18) we create our world with words, we explain ourselves with words, hence the task of the qualitative researcher is to inspect while at the same time staying as close to the construction of the world as the participants originally experienced it (Maykut & Morehouse 1994:19). The purpose of a qualitative study is to accumulate sufficient knowledge to lead to understanding (Maykut & Morehouse 1994:74).

The research questions, data collection and analysis are simultaneous and ongoing activities that allow for important understandings to be discovered along the way and then pursued in additional data collection efforts.

3.3.2 Description of the research sample

For the purpose of this study, the research sample are four parents, four teachers and four learners within the age limit of 14-18 years from four secondary schools in Umtata District in the Eastern Cape that are selected randomly. A purposive sampling has been used. According to Rubin & Babbie (1993:369) in the purposive sampling you select a sample of observations that you believe will yield the most comprehensive understanding of your subject, of study, based on the intuitive feel for the subject that comes from extended observations and reflection. The sample is drawn for a previously specified purpose, thus the term purposive sampling is used.

3.3.3 Research instrument

An interview was chosen as a research tool. Cohen & Manion (1994:27) defines the research interview as a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information and focused on content specified by research objectives of systematic

description, prediction or explanation. It is an unusual method in that it involves the gathering of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals. As a distinctive research technique, Cohen & Manion (1994:272) further say that the interview, as a distinctive research technique, may serve three purposes, namely: -

- It may be used as the principal means of gathering information having direct bearing on the research objectives. By providing access to what is “inside a person’s head” it makes it possible to measure what a person knows (knowledge or information), what a person likes or dislikes (value and preferences) and what a person thinks (attitudes and beliefs).
- It may be used to test hypothesis or to suggest new ones, or as an explanatory device to help identify variables and relationships.
- The interview may also be used in conjunction with other methods in a research undertaking. It might be used to follow up unexpected results, for example or to validate other methods, or to go deeper into the motivations of respondents and their reasons for responding as they do (Cohen & Manion 1994:272).

There are four kinds of interviews that may be used specifically as research tools: the structured interview, the unstructured interview, the non-directive interview and the focus or semi-structured interview. For the purpose of this study a semi-structured interviewing technique was chosen.

3.3.3.1 *Semi-structured interview*

The distinctive feature of semi-structured interview, according to Cohen & Manion (1994:273) is that it focuses on a respondent’s subjective responses to a known situation in which he/she has been involved and which has been analysed by the interviewer prior to the interview. He/she is thereby able to use the data from the interview to substantiate or reject previously formulated hypotheses. Bailey (1982:200) commonly calls it a ‘focused interview’.

The semi-structured interview differs from other types of research interviews in certain respects. Merton & Kendall in Cohen & Manion (1994:289) identify these differences as follows:

- The persons' interviewed known to have been involved in a particular situation.
- By means of the techniques of content analysis, elements in the situation which the researcher deems significant have previously been analysed by him/her. He/she has thus arrived at a set of hypothesis relating to the meaning and effects of the specified elements.
- Using his/her analysis as basis, the investigator constructs an interview guide. This identifies the major areas of enquiry and the hypothesis which determine the relevant data to be obtained in the interview.
- The actual interview is focused on the subjective experience of the people who have exposed to the situation. Their responses enable the researcher both to test the validity of his/her hypotheses and to ascertain unanticipated responses to the situation, thus giving rise to further hypotheses (Merton & Kendall in Cohen & Manion 1994:289)

In view of the above analysis of the interview structure, it is reasonable to conclude that the interview approach to data collection is deliberate, free and trustworthy since participants are volunteers and are not coerced.

According to Mitchell & Jolley (1992:467) a semi-structured survey is constructed around a core of standard questions. The interviewer may expand on any question in order to explore a given response in greater depth. They mention the advantages and disadvantages of a semi-structured questionnaire. The advantage is that it can yield accurate and comprehensive data and be able to probe, for underlying factors or relationships that may be too elusive for the structured survey. Another advantage is that it provides new information that may be useful for future studies.

The disadvantage is that it is difficult to compare participants' responses when different participants are asked different follow-up questions. In giving the interviewer more freedom to follow up on answers, you may be giving the interviewer freedom to bias the results. Which answers are probed, how they are probed may affect subsequent answers to fixed items.

The questions that are used in the semi-structured interview are open-ended for a number of advantages: -

- They are flexible.
- They allow the interviewer to probe so that he/she may go into more depth if he/she chooses or to clear up any misunderstandings.
- They enable the interviewer to test the limits of the respondent's knowledge.
- They encourage co-operation and help establish support.
- They allow the interviewer to make a better assessment of what the respondent really believes (Bailey 1982: 200; Cohen & Manion 1994:277).

Bailey (1982:200) further asserts that the flexibility that is provided by open-ended questions, can result in questions that are really a long series of probes which can go deep into the subjective areas of the respondent's mind in an attempt to discover his or her feelings about the topic.

Questions that will be elaborated on later, were asked to try to answer the following formulated assumptions.

- There is a lack of parental involvement in sex education programmes in schools.
- Lack of communication between parents and adolescents have an influence on irresponsible sexual patterns among school learners.
- Parenting styles affect the parent-child communication with regard to sexual matters.

- Family values and socio-economic background of parents have effect on how the adolescents behave sexually.

3.3.4 Procedure

The carrying out of the study involved the following steps: -

- Selection of subjects.
- Criteria used in selection.
- Access to the subjects.
- Composition.
- Interviewing schedule.
- Analyzing and interpretation of data.

3.3.4.1 Selection of the subjects

The researcher has restricted him/herself to purposively selected parents of four learners from four different secondary schools in Umtata district, guidance teacher from each of the four schools and learner whose parents were interviewed.

In selecting the sample aims of the study were considered so as to be relevant for the purpose of the research.

a. Criteria used in selection

The persons selected to fulfill the purpose of this study had to meet the following criteria: -

- The teacher had to be responsible for the life skills or guidance in a secondary school. Such a person can be in a position to deal with sex education as part of the life skills curriculum.

- The learner had to be in the school where guidance teacher had been interviewed and within the age limit of 14-18 years. A person of this age limit is an adolescent. According to Black, Ricardo and Stanton (1997:174) adolescence is a period of experimentation with risk behaviours which can be seen as part of the developmental process in which youth regard risk taking as part of their goal to establish independence and autonomy. Adolescents as Ferron (1990:177) states, develop feelings of the members of the opposite sex and need to find ways of expressing them. He further says that an adolescent male may want to exploit his female partner on the premise of being in love with her (Ferron 1990:177).
- The parent had to be one whose child had been interviewed, regardless of socio-economic background or religion.
- All the subjects had to be willing to participate in the study.

b. Access to the interviewees

The researcher visited the four secondary schools in Umtata District and interviewed the guidance teachers, via the principals, about the intention of the study. He/she in turn, interviewed the parents and learners.

c. Composition of sample

Since this study specifically sets out to research about the involvement of parents in sex education programmes in the schools of Xhosa speaking learners, the researcher visited schools where Xhosa is a dominant language or culture.

3.3.4.2 Interview procedure

Since the nature of the research is exploratory, a semi-structured interview was used due to its flexibility. Allan & Skinner (1991:203) give a detailed account of the qualitative interview and summarise it as being non-directive with open-ended questions. For the purpose of this study the questions had to

be open-ended so as to accommodate as complete a response as possible and allow the participants to be free to give their perception on parental involvement in school education programmes. A brief explanation of the questions had to be done for interviewees where necessary to avoid irrelevant responses and for greater clarity.

The researcher prepared a semi-structured questionnaire that guided the interview as follows:

FOR TEACHERS

- What topics are you dealing with in sex education programmes?
- Do you involve parents in deciding what topics to be dealt with in sex education programmes?
- Are there other ways in which parents are being involved by the school?
- What suggestions can you give to the parents as regards their children's behaviour?

FOR PARENTS

- Does the school involve you in what is to be taught to your child pertaining to sex education?
- Would you like to be involved in what is taught to your child by the school?
- Do you discuss what your children are taught at school with regard to sex education? If not, why not? If yes, what sort of topics do you prefer talking about?
- How does your child react when you talk about sexual matters?
- As a parent, what suggestions could you give to the learners with regards to their sexual behaviour?

FOR LEARNERS

- Which topics does your guidance teacher normally deal with in sex education?
- Which topics do you enjoy more, sex education or guidance?
- Are your parents being involved by the school in sex education programmes? If not, would you like them to be involved? If yes, what role do they play?
- Do you communicate with your parents about sexuality matters? If yes, how do you communicate?
- With whom are you free to talk to with topics pertaining to sexual matters?
- From whom did you get your first information about sexuality?

According to Miles & Huberman (1994:34), the rationale that governs the type of question used in an interview is based on knowing what you want to find out and how to get the best information from the participants. In the semi-structured interview, according to Mitchell & Jolley (1992:476) the interviewer may expand on any question in order to explore a given response in greater depth which can yield accurate and comprehensive data. The semi-structured interview has the advantage of being able to probe for underlying factors or relationships that may be too elusive for the structured survey.

The information gained from the interviews had to be preserved by note-taking and tape recordings.

3.3.4.3 Interviewing

The researcher made appointments with the interviewees on times convenient to them and made personal appearance so as to have the opportunity of explaining in person what was expected and assured them that confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained. Fears concerning access to the notes and tapes were dealt with. This helped the participants to have more

confidence in the procedure and thus become more open about their feelings and experiences.

Each interviewee had the prerogative to choose the venue and time that best suited him/her for the interview. Allan & Skinner (1999:208) emphasise the importance of a non-threatening environment in which to conduct interviews. All participants were thus fully able to express themselves because they felt comfortable in the environment. They were also given an option to choose between using Xhosa or English as the language in which to conduct the interview.

The data was recorded by the use of a tape. Tutty, Rothery & Grinnel (1996:68) recommended the method of using a tape recorder as the best method for data collection. The only limitation of this method is that all non-verbal cues are not recorded. Therefore note taking was done concerning the behaviour and mannerisms of the interviewees in order to match them with the tape transcript later.

Transcriptions of the recordings were made immediately after the interview while the events surrounding the interview were still fresh in the researcher's mind. Verbatim transcriptions are included as appendix at the back of this dissertation.

After this, comes the analysis of the data thus collected, a subject of the following paragraph.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Wilson (1993:15), data analysis should be consistent with the objectives and the design of the study. The data that had been thus collected had to be reorganized so that the researcher could make more sense of them in relation to the study questions and research objectives.

The following guidelines are suggested by Hycner in Cohen & Manion (1994:292) for data analysis:-

- 1 **Transcription:** having the interview tape transcribed, noting not only the literal statements but also non-verbal and paralinguistic communication. This is especially important as it enables the interviewer to identify any possible contradictions between statements and general behaviours of the subjects which are corrected on the spot.

- 2 **Bracketing and phenomenological reduction:** This means to suspend or bracket as much as possible the researcher's meaning and interpretations and enter into the world of the unique individual who was interviewed. The researcher thus set out to understand what the interviewee is saying rather than what he /she expects that person to say.

In other words, no stereotypes on the part of the interviewer; the session is client-driven and interviewee-centred.

- 3 **Listening to the interview for a sense of the whole.** This involves listening to the entire tape several times and reading the transcription a number of times in order to provide a context for the emergence of specific units of meaning and themes later on.

The importance of this lies in the fact that interpretation becomes clearer especially when viewed against the background of interviewee being directly observed during the session.

- 4 **Delineating units of general meaning:** This entails a thorough scrutiny of both verbal and non-verbal gestures to elicit the participant's meaning.

If the world of the client was entered, his/her feelings and emotions correctly understood, the meaning will make sense.

- 5 Delineating units of meaning relevant to the research question:** Once the units of general meaning have been noted, they are then reduced to the units relevant to the research questions.

Looking at the responses and relations to the predetermined assumptions facilitates the understanding of whether or not these assumptions were confirmed.

- 6 Eliminating the redundancies:** The researcher checks the list of relevant meanings and eliminates those clearly redundant to others previously listed.

The interviewees do repeat points or emphasize certain ideas sometimes. When this is noticed the researcher should eliminate some of these repetitions.

- 7 Clustering units of relevant meaning:** The researcher now tries to determine if any of the units of relevant meaning naturally cluster together; whether there seems to be some common theme or essence that unites several discrete units of relevant meaning.

It is, perhaps here where the term "chunking" becomes relevant as concepts of a similar nature or meaning are put together to denote a better meaning.

- 8 Determining themes from clusters of meaning:** The researcher examines all the clusters of meaning to determine if there is one (or more) central theme(s) which expresses the essence of these clusters. Similarly, clusters of units will be formed out of chunk of information with mutual agreement as to meaning and purpose.

- 9 Writing a summary of each individual interview:** It is useful at this point that the researcher focus on transcription and write a summary of the interview incorporating the themes that have been elicited from the data.

This helps to bring the whole information together.

- 10 Identifying general and unique themes for all the interviews:** The researcher now determines the themes common to most or all the interviews as the individual variations. The first step is to note if there are things common to all or most of the interviews. The second step is to note when there are themes that are unique to a single interview or minority of interviews.

It is helpful to analyze findings at this stage for placing them in context.

- 11 Contextualization of themes:** At this point it is helpful to replace these themes within the overall context or horizons from which these themes emerged.

Generally, information must be capsulated in its relevant context.

- 12 Composite summary :** The author considers it useful to write up a composite summary of all the interviews which would accurately capture the essence of the phenomenon being investigated. Such a composite summary describes the "world" in general, as experienced by the participants. At the end of such a summary, the researcher might want to note significant individual differences.

The summary could further portray a clearer understanding on the part of the researcher.

The above guidelines gave a clear indication of the steps to be followed by the researcher but it was not possible to follow all of them as they are because some were not applicable to the study.

All the information obtained from the transcribed interviews and field notes were utilized as a database.

Interviewees were keen to express their views on parental involvement on sex education programmes at school. All participants were concerned about the communication of parents and their children about sexuality matters. Teachers and parents were concerned about the parental involvement by the school, while learners were more concerned about their parents' communicating with them on sexuality matters.

After the transcriptions were done the views of all the interviewees were grouped under the following themes: -

- Availability of sex education programmes in Umtata schools for Xhosa-speaking learners.
- Involvement of parents in sex education programmes by the school.
- Parent-child communication about sexuality matters.
- Necessity of parental involvement in school sex education programmes.

Clearly, the above themes indicate a dire need for the availability of sex-education programmes in the Umtata district schools. This topic is discussed shortly.

3.4.1 Availability of sex education programmes in Umtata schools for Xhosa-speaking learners

Feedback from teachers revealed the following:-

3.4.1.1 Teachers

All the teachers stated that sex education programmes are not properly organized in Umtata Schools. School guidance is not part of the school

curriculum since life skills were introduced by the Government. Life skills are supposed to be taught in every grade, but the majority of teachers seemed to be scared to include sex education lessons, except in Biology lessons which is part of the syllabus. Teachers prefer to ask people from outside of the school to come and address learners on sexual issues. The following statements by the four different teachers from the four different secondary schools in Umtata District have been analyzed:-

Teacher 1 "There are no guidance teachers at the school. I volunteered to do it in the afternoons and my main function is to deal with career guidance and personal counseling. There are life skills teachers for each grade but I'm not sure whether they have dealt with sex education in the class except for the Grade 12 teacher who is teaching Biology"

Teacher 2 " We are not dealing with sex education formally. We deal with it as the need arises and we deal with learners' problems individually. Individual teachers do their own task in their different class. We have tried to invite people from CPU (Child Protection Unit) to come and address the school, but so far they have not yet come. Here at school our timetable does not cater for guidance or even lifeskills for that matter... We are concerned with finishing up the syllabus, there is just no time for school guidance..."

Teacher 3 "Sex education is not part of our curriculum as such at the moment. We do not have teachers for sex education but what the school does is to invite relevant people time to time... Lifeskills are being dealt with at specific levels but do not include sex education. We get people who are skilled for such topics to speak and deal with questions pertaining to that."

Teacher 4 " In sex education we are dealing with HIV/AIDS but later on we discovered that in our school the teenage pregnancy rate is escalating and we are trying to deal with such topics as teenage pregnancy and abortion, though in lower classes (Grade 8-9) they become so embarrassed and take it as a taboo. In upper classes (Grade 11-12) it is the part of Biology lessons. We sometimes call people from outside school like social workers."

From the experiences of these four educators, one would conclude that the sexuality subject is seriously ignored. However, it must be noted that a drive or desire to offer help at individual class teacher level deserves appreciation.

3.4.1.2 *Learners*

According to all four learners from the four different secondary schools, sex education programmes are normally dealt with by outside people and not by their teachers or parents. Only one of the schools where there is a guidance teacher, were any attempts made to teach about boyfriend/girlfriend relationship and how to behave sexually and how to relate in an acceptable manner with the opposite sex. The following statements were made by the learners regarding sex education programmes: -

Learner 1 "Sex education at school is normally done by people from AIDS and Pregnancy Centres, not by the teachers. There is no guidance nor lifeskills in my school".

Learner 2 " We do not have sex education programmes at school. The school usually call outside people to come and talk to us and tell us how to abstain from sex".

Learner 3 "There is no sex education in my school. Outside people, like social workers, usually come and tell us not to have sex and if one has already had it one must go for HIV test".

Learner 4 "Our guidance teacher sometimes talk to us about relationships with the opposite sex and how to deal with sexual feelings otherwise social workers do come and talk to us at school".

A look at the statements by the learners reveals a clear relationship with those made by teachers. It is also noticeable that actions are taken by outsiders to

get learners informed. Just how accurate and reliable that information is, is a matter for further investigation.

The following paragraph attempts to examine the involvement of parents in sex education of their children.

3.4.2 Involvement of parents in sex education programmes by the school.

Feedback from teachers is now going to be discussed.

3.4.2.1 Teachers

Since there are no properly organized sex education programmes in schools , under investigation, parents are rarely involved. Their involvement is only concerned with their children's academic performance or behaviour.

Teacher 1 "Only when there is a problem at home that is affecting the performance of the child at school do we involve parents... it is difficult to get parents in ... they do not make time for their children".

Teacher 2 "...we involve parents only if we have a specific case and call them in ... parents are not interested at all. You call a parent because the child is underperforming, the parent will hardly come. Parents are too busy to attend to the welfare of their children".

Teacher 3 " ...we talk to parents at the Parent Teacher Association (PTSA) meetings in order that parents should be aware that there are people from outside the school that are going to come and address their children on sexual issues, but so far we do not have any parent who has come...".

Teacher 4 "...we do not involve parents, but we do invite people from outside or from the society (some of them are parents) to come and deal with topics pertaining to sexuality".

There is a clear indication from the teachers that parents are passive and not active participants when it comes to matters pertaining to their children's school. To the complete dismay of teachers and learners, parents are waiting for the school to call them. There appears to be a dire need for parental involvement on the part of teachers to ensure that they are also empowered on sexuality matters.

This brings one to the feedback from parents.

3.4.2.2 *Parents*

All the four parents interviewed agree that the schools do not formally involve them in sex education programmes of their children, except for one parent who serves in the school governing body and another parent who is indirectly involved is always informed by his/her child. The following statements support this notion: -

Parent 1 "Through talking to my child I know what is done at school pertaining sexuality, otherwise I was never invited by the school".

Parent 2 "I was never involved and I'm not sure of what is being taught to my child at school, pertaining sexuality".

Parent 3 "Our schools do not involve us as parents. Only children in the schools for whites that are being taught about these things and we Xhosa-speaking parents ought to copy this example".

Parent 4 "Sometimes the school calls us in to be involved when necessary, more especially parents who are in the School Governing Body".

According to these statements, parents are blaming the schools for not involving them and those that are involved, it is only for administrative purposes. Seemingly, parents and schools live and operate as separate entities. When talking to teachers, the researcher gathered that parents do

not show interest in their children's school work and do not take part in the sexual education or any other school programmes. If this is true, it explains why sexuality education is not done at any one of the schools selected.

Views from learners will clarify this.

3.4.2.3 *Learners*

According to the learners, parents are not involved by the school, except for one school where the learners are asked to discuss what has been taught by the outside people from outside school.

Learner 1 "No, they are not involved".

Learner 2 "Yes in a way. The school encourages us to talk to our parents about the sexual issues after we have been taught by outside people".

Learner 3 "I have never seen them called to school for such things".

Learner 4 "My school does not involve my parents and I would not like them to be involved...".

Parents and learners as well as teachers at the above setting, agree that there is no parental involvement at school. Also related to this is the fact that parents and learners do not talk about sexuality issues. One, however, notes the fact that parents accept the fact that people from outsider school talk to their children about sexual matters and that learners feel satisfied with the information from other people rather than their parents, hence they would not like them to be involved.

This draws to discussion to parent-child communication about sex.

3.4.3 Parent-child communication about sexuality matters

Feedback from teachers.

3.4.3.1 Teachers

Teachers agree that parents are not communicating with their children about sexuality matters.

Teacher 1 "Parents do not communicate with their children about sexuality. For instance, pregnant learners usually come and talk to me instead of talking to their parents".

Teacher 2 "... there is no communication at home. Parents do not talk to their children... they do not even bother to know that the child is sexually active".

Teacher 3 "...sex is a taboo in some homes... among us Blacks it is still a problem. It is not something we can discuss with children. We are affected by our culture and our upbringing".

Teacher 4 "Parents do not communicate with their children. For example, in my case, my father never talked to me about sexuality. The only time my mother taught me about sex education was when my friend fell pregnant when I was 13 years old and in Std 6. She was only moralizing me and now it is also difficult for me to share these ideas. In my home sex was taboo. It is really difficult for Xhosa parents to communicate sexual matters with their children".

Several research findings in this study have indicated that no communication takes place between children and parents at home and these findings are supported by the interviewed teachers. Mothers seem to attempt speaking to their daughters but no support from fathers is forthcoming. Some teachers seem to be like parents who are affected by culture and upbringing with

regard to talking about sexuality matters. Training needs to be conducted to alleviate the pain of ignorance among parents and perhaps among teachers.

3.4.3.2 Parents

Some parents do communicate with their children although they do admit that it is very difficult for them as Xhosa-speaking parents to discuss the subject due to their culture and religion (Christianity).

Parent 1 "According to our culture a parent does not discuss such things with children, but it's now time that we learn from Whites because they communicate with their children. We like to take our children to the schools manned by whites and our children are influenced by their culture. We are really frustrating them if we do not talk about these things".

Parent 2 "I talk to my child about boyfriends and dating. I tell her that if she is sexually active she must use a condom, but I emphasise abstinence and assertiveness which means that she must be able to say "NO" to sex and concentrate to on her studies. I also try to adjust to modern ways of life because during our childhood times, as children parents would not talk to us about such issues and would not even permit us to go out with a date, but I am trying to adjust, more especially she is in a multiracial school where they are taught these things. I do not want to frustrate my child. In reality our culture does not permit us as parents to talk "amanyala" (taboo) with our children but we should adjust to western culture for the sake of our children."

Parent 3 "Most unfortunately, I never discuss such issues with my daughter. We are not open to one another. I leave that responsibility to her mother, but normally I talk to my boys".

Parent 4 "I do talk to my children. I talk about the whole range of relationships and teenage pregnancy. My children are open to us as parents.

They ask questions and we discuss issues and they sometimes give us their own understanding of these things".

Concerning the above, there appears to be confusion among parents. Some claim to talk to their children about sex while others perceive culture as a stumbling block preventing them from achieving this. Change in times, according to this parent has created an alarming generation gap which can only be closed through intensive training and workshopping of parents.

3.4.3.3 *Learners*

According to the data collected from all the participants, the majority of Xhosa-speaking parents do not communicate effectively with their children. Xhosa culture and religion (Christianity) have been identified as the barriers to effective communication between a parent and a child. Mothers, as compared to fathers, are trying their best to talk to their daughters.

Learner 1 "Parents do talk at home, more especially my mother, but only in a moralizing way, saying that I am not supposed to have a boyfriend before age 21 or before marriage and she will talk about menstruation and give me no other information."

Learner 2 "On many occasions my parents and I talk a lot and they ask if I have a boyfriend. My mother started talking to me when I told her about my friend who got pregnant and that day she gave me a formal lecture. By then I already had a lot of sexual information from TV (Take 5 program) and magazines. Xhosa parents are very traditional. They do not talk to their children about sexual issues. I do not know where they think their children will get such information from. Their tradition collides with modern things. Today we talk of HIV/AIDS, condoms, dating, etc. and we need to hear that from them."

Learner 3 "When I communicate with my parents they tell me not to involve myself with sex until I'm old enough to get married. They tell me that I must

have goals and not waste my time with boys. I got the first sex information from social workers at school and friends. At home it is usually my mother who is free to talk to me about sexuality".

Learner 4 "We talk a lot with my mother, otherwise I cannot be free to my dad. At least my mother is a female as I am. My mother started talking to me when I started menstruation, otherwise I got a lot of information from friends. When she talks to me about these things, she will not forget quoting from the Bible."

The fact that all the learners interviewed indicate passivity on the part of their fathers with regard to sexuality talks, needs attention. Research in this study seems to concur with these learners' views concerning the inability of parents to communicate sexuality information to their children. It is also clear that those who communicate, do so rather late after the child has acquired some scanty information from various other sources and the method they use is not approved by their children.

3.4.4 The necessity of parental involvement in school sex education programmes

3.4.4.1 Teachers

All the teachers would like the parents to be involved in the school sex education programmes.

Teacher 1 "When outside people are invited, parents also should be involved or be invited to school and talk to learners about sex education, though I doubt if they would turn up, because if they are called for parent meetings, only a few turn up".

Teacher 2 "Parents should be involved and not shift their responsibility to the teachers. Some learners are having sexual relationships with teachers. If parents are taking their full responsibility about their children, this bad habit

should be dealt with. Sexual irresponsibility of learners starts with communication breakdown between parents and their children. Parents must talk to their children. Some parents do not want to co-operate with teachers. For example, I am a volunteer for the Child Abuse Action Group. If you tell the mother that the child is sexually abused by the father, the mother pretends as if it is not happening and will tell you that the father is the breadwinner at home and we should keep it as a secret. Unlike in Umtata High School or Zingisa schools, our parents do not co-operate".

Teacher 3 "Black parents are affected by their culture and upbringing. I think that a lot of learners experience sexual problems due to lack of communication with their parents. Involving them in school programmes, would be of advantage because parents need to be workshopped before they can talk to their children about sexual issues. Most of African parents feel uncomfortable in discussing such things with their children. The first people that need to be educated, are the parents".

Teacher 4 "Parents need to be involved and get educated in order to deal with sex education. Black parents should be called for workshops, though they are always "too busy" to attend school meetings. Maybe, it would work if workshops are arranged on a monthly basis and parents who are experienced in dealing with such topics should be invited to address other parents."

It is, indeed, imperative that parents be called for workshops regarding the whole concept of parenting. Having said that, one wonders if attending these workshops would be possible given the poor socio - economic status of parents in general and those from the rural areas in particular. Due to poverty, some parents decide to keep incest as a secret rendering their children victims of sexual abuse.

3.4.4.2 *Parents*

All parents were of the opinion that they ought to be involved by the schools in the sex education programmes of their children.

Parent 1 “ With me it is very difficult to adjust, but ever since our country became independent in 1994, it permitted a lot of democracy whereby children have their rights. Xhosa parents should gradually adjust to the modern ways of doing things and that we should be involved in whatever is taught to our children, even to watch TV with them at home and discuss the soapies like “Days of our lives” and “The Bold and the Beautiful” with them. What I can say to Xhosa parents is that “Masikhululeke “ (let us be open-minded), these days are different from ours. After all, in Xhosa culture parents used to communicate with children at adolescent stage by doing customs like “*intonjane*”(female initiation) when a girl started menstruating. Boys together with girls were attending parties like “*imitshotsho*” and “*iintlombe*” (overnight traditional parties for boys & girls) and they were permitted by parents to go. When Christian religion came it changed our culture and caused us too be embarrassed to talk about sexual issues and labelled them as things of heathen people (abantu ababomvu). Uneducated people who are not religious are communicating better with their children as compared to educated people who are Christians. We have complicated life for our children and even the church is continuing this by emphasising that sexual relationships are sinful. We need to work together with schools, churches and homes. Let us pray God to guide us in a right direction because these days are evil”.

Parent 2 "It is very important for us as parents to be involved in what is taught to our children at school. It would be quite appropriate for the school to have sex education programmes, because teachers can have better ways in dealing with these issues. Learners should take precautions not to be involved in sex. They must get proper guidance from school and parents. We, parents, also need to be helped by the school, because in my case, I'm very traditional. The only thing I say to my children is to abstain from sex until marriage, there is just no other information I can give them. As traditional parents we must face the reality that our children are sexually active and a high percentage of them are HIV positive, because they do not get proper guidance from parents. The schools must organize workshops for us as

parents and teach us skills on how to talk to our children about sexuality, because we have been affected by our culture. Our parents taught us that there are words which are “*amanyala*” (taboo) and cannot be said to a child. These words cause us to be embarrassed and shrug our shoulders. They are better said in English. Christianity also played its part in making us feel guilty about sexuality because we are told that a converted person is not allowed to say such words. We really need to be changed”.

Parent 3 "I would like to be involved by the school, though I would suggest that communication about sexual matters should start at home. It should be the responsibility of the parents to give the child first-hand information about sexuality. As she/he goes to school she/he should already know the family values regarding sexuality. Due to this high rate of HIV/Aids, parents should establish a clear relationship with their children and learn to communicate sex-related facts with them. Parents should work hand in hand with schools."

Parent 4 "I strongly advise parents to get involved in school programmes and learn to discuss sexual issues with their children. There should be seminars to equip them with skills so that they can talk openly to their children on sexuality issues. Our culture is holding us back. We are unable to talk sex sense to our children. I would like teachers to advise learners that true love waits and abstinence is the best solution to the sexual problems we are facing today, otherwise HIV/Aids will continue to kill and destroy the young people”.

Although the problem seems to be with parents who do very little if anything to inform their children, some of the parents interviewed, place the blame at the door-step of the schools which fail to create programmes for educating them. When one examines these points critically, it is not difficult to sense that communication breakdown is not only between the children and their parents but it exists between parents and schools as well.

3.4.4.3 Learners

Learners stated that the involvement of parents would not be necessary if parents would be able to communicate with their children at home about sexuality matters.

Learner 1 "I would prefer my parents to talk to us as at home. They should talk to us on a one to one basis and not to all of us at the same time. I would not like my parents to be involved in sex education programmes, because some of the topics that are dealt with by social workers are quite embarrassing to be heard by my parents."

Learner 2 "Parents should talk to their children at home without being physically invited to the school. After all, the school is involving them in a way when we are asked to discuss what has been taught at school with our parents. The problem with Xhosa parents is that they do not want to adjust to modern ways. They stick to their culture and their religion. I really pity the children who are from very religious backgrounds. For example, one friend of mine who was only 15 years old, got pregnant and sought abortion without her parent's knowledge. The reason was that she was unable to talk to her parents about her sexual problems or anything pertaining to "boyfriend issues". I want to believe that she would not have become pregnant if her parents had time to tell her the realities of life without just moralizing her about their Christian values. As a parent you should be honest with your child and give him/her a chance to decide for him/herself".

Learner 3 "If parents should talk to their children at home, there would be no need for them to come to school and it would be very embarrassing when you are taught sexuality matters in front of your parents. Some parents do talk to their children, but peer group pressure becomes too much too hard for the child to hold on to his/her family values. My advice to learners is that they should use condoms if they are unable to stick to their family values or abstain from sex".

Learner 4 “I would not like my parents to be involved, because some of the things we are taught at school by outside people are very embarrassing. As a child you feel so ashamed to even talk about them to your parents. Maybe the school should organise workshops for our fathers so that they can be able to talk to their daughters.”

The word, parents will be "embarrassed" if sex education were to be taught in their presence, further complicates issues. Learners feel that parents do not have to involve themselves in school sex programmes, their responsibility is just to talk to their children. This, of course, continues to open the gap between what is taught at school and what is said at home. A normal situation however, would result when the home opens up opportunities for children to learn more about sexuality issues. In this case parents would be responsible for educating their children while the school continues to enrich what the home had started.

3.4. CONCLUSION

The researcher's primary aim in this study was to explore the extent of parent involvement in the sex education of their children at school. To get more information on this aspect we had to look at the perspectives of parents, teachers and learners on this issue. Chapter 3, therefore, was devoted to analysing data from these different participants and comparing their understanding and opinions about this issue of parental involvement.

Chapter 4 will be a concluding chapter that deals with the findings, summary, recommendations and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter was devoted to the empirical research analysis of data collected from literature review and interviews held with parents, teachers and learners of a few carefully selected Umtata high schools. It was the purpose of the researcher to compare the information gathered in order to see if anyone of the schools selected had a meaningful sex education programme which involved parents.

According to this study, a meaningful programme would be one which fully involved parents, teachers and learners alike.

The participants to the study did indicate the extent to which parents were involved in the sex education programmes in schools. From what transpired during the interviews conducted, one would deduce that parents and teachers were no less that strangers to one another. Not only were they strangers to one another but they also operated as separate entities in that teachers allowed certain members of the public to teach sexuality matters to learners without the parents being aware of it.

Coming up quite clearly in the study also, was the fact that learners and parents did not discuss any sexuality matters and therefore, be seen as apart from one another. The learners gathered pieces of information regarding sex education from some members of the community. Neither the teachers nor the parents know the form, method or the precision in which that information is delivered.

The objective of the study as outlined in chapter one was, however, achieved in that data was collected by means of literature review and interviews. These

data were analysed, and given meaning to the result that themes became clearly identified. These themes were discussed in the previous chapter.

In this chapter, summary, findings, and recommendations from both literature study and empirical investigations will be done. Problems encountered with the study will be mentioned and aspects for further investigation recommended.

It is now time to turn to literature summary.

4.2 LITERATURE STUDY

4.2.1 Findings from literature study

A look at the literature reveals that communication between learners and parents is lacking. It also shows that a gap exists between learners and parents, causing the learners to seek whatever information they can find from numerous sources, other than parents. These sources include television and other forms of the media, peer group members and many other unidentifiable suppliers.

Through this lack of communication, the parent-child relationship is destroyed and home becomes a strange world to the learner while the school appears to be the other. For this reason, one cannot avoid noting misbehaviour on the part of child as a result of this gap between school and home.

Studies indicate that parents find it not only taboo to discuss sex education with their children but they also perceive it as embarrassing. They find it difficult to talk about sex and are unwilling to pursue any sex education for fear of discussing the moral-laden topic (Bundy & White 1990; Mouldon & Toker 1996). Although no mention of race is made by the authors cited above, it is clear from the researchers' knowledge of African culture in general and that of Xhosa speaking Africans in particular that such topics are not discussed and are left to the instincts of the child. These values are now

disappearing as a result of their encounter with various other cultures, namely, western culture which tends to confuse children and lead them to taking irresponsible sex related decisions.

A lack of cross-cultural understanding among Black people creates a serious problem in that it allows no room for observing other cultures. This isolates these communities from other cultures and further alienates black parents from their children who seem to enjoy more exposure to a few other cultures including the western one.

Parents in black communities according to Hubley (1990) and Evian (1991), have conservative attitudes and cultural inhibitions that hinder meaningful communication with their children. If true, the foregoing argument explains quite vividly that the gap stated above will continue to widen, unless some form of a cross-cultural exposure is provided and the communities concerned are afforded an opportunity to talk about such topics as sex before marriage, its merits and demerits; self image related talks, their value and so on.

Such talks would help ward off the fear of sexually transmitted diseases, for it has been noted that adolescents have the highest risk of becoming infected, because they are quite skeptical about listening to or accepting information related to sex. It has also been found that young people (adolescents) are less likely to use condoms (Gohel et al 1997 & Nkosi 1999). This could only be attributed to the fact that parents are not well equipped enough to discuss these matters with their children at home and, when these children meet their peers, they act based on misleading information. A person who knows that adolescence is a stage of curiosity and experimentation will understand why learners today are at such risk of drug or substance abuse as well as accidents.

The failure of learners and adolescents to use condoms has been blamed on the fear of parents to talk openly to their children (Michand et al 1996). This blame of the parents is understandable when one considers the four going discussion about poor communication between adolescents and parents;

school and parents. It is therefore unthinkable in the light of this that the concept of use of condom could be discussed by parents and their children.

Since communities in various parts of the world hold different values and customs, literature portrays children as preferring their mothers to their fathers in discussing sex education with (Kim et al 1998; King Lorusso 1997; Hutchinson & Lonely 1998). There are few reasons for this, mothers are always with their children when fathers are at work to provide for the family. Having said this, though, one must hasten to state that parenting style, family values, religion and socio-economic background of parents do also influence the extent of communication between parents and school learners (Abma et al 1998; Glover 1985; Nolin & Peterson 1992; Taris & Semin 1998; Jay & Wilson 1998).

Given the fact that religion is one of the factors that contributes to the poor communication between parents and their children with regard to sex education, it is quite proper to consider the above view. It could also be added that technology, with the change it brings about, further complicates the already worse situation; for example, children are introduced to sex education through Internet, a facility that is not readily available to most parents in black communities.

As it has been mentioned earlier on, literature has opened up new insight into the complexities of parent-child relationship and how these get influenced by culture.

Following are some of the findings from the literature study. These will be presented in the form of themes and then be briefly discussed.

4.2.2 Summary from literature study

2.1 Teachers/schools

- Teachers are there to supplement parents' efforts. They (teachers) must not be seen to be displacing parents, but should be an extension of parenting hence the suggestion previously made that homes need to be changed into schools by making the parent the first teacher before the child actually goes to school.
- Teachers have to prepare parents for their role as sexual educators of their children. The problem, however, may arise when the teachers themselves are not competent in sex education or are, for some reasons, not in touch with the culture of the communities they serve.
- The success of parental involvement in sex education programmes is related to the extent to which parents, teachers and school administrators agree on common objectives and are able to develop and implement interdependent strategies to meet their objectives. Hopefully, this would narrow the gap between the school and home, teachers and parents, parents and children, the school and the community as a whole.

4.2.2.2 Parents

- Parents are unwilling to pursue sex education for fear of discussing moral-laden topics with their children. This further confirms that parents and children live and exist in two different worlds, hence the gap.
- Parents assume that sexual development is unimportant or irrelevant, until at least the onset of puberty, but when this time comes, they are unable or unwilling to talk to their children, the reason for this seems to suggest that children who are introduced to sex education at an early age get corrupted. It is like saying "let the sleeping dogs lie". Parents appear to

be assuming that their eleven year old knows nothing about sex and, of course, this proves to be false.

- Parental messages to adolescents about sex are perceived to be basically disapproving. Some parents may feel that talking about sexuality matters to adolescents gives an unspoken approval to adolescent sexual activity. This derives from the assumption that if no discussion is held and no mention is made about sex, then no child will know anything about it. Of course, this is not true. The reality is that the more silent parents are on the subject the more the children's curiosity gets aroused.
- Parents prefer to teach their children values such as respect and honesty in the expectation that they would be applicable to sexuality rather than imparting a rigid sexual value system. Their approach to this is so dogmatic that the young adolescents feel guilty about their sexual behaviours and desires. No one teaches them to know that sex and sexual desires are natural and that they need to be understood.
- Parents would like to provide sex information to their children but find themselves hindered by their own uncertainties or lack of knowledge about sexuality. Their own parents were usually not the primary source of their sex education and they, then, lack a familiar model. Besides, values constantly change, but black communities fail to recognize this reality.
- Parental values are influenced by the family's ethnic and religious background. When adolescents meet with other learners from different backgrounds and ethnicity, these beliefs are challenged and decisions are made, but hidden from parents.
- Parents from lower socio-economic status demonstrate rigid parental relationships with their children. They are inaccessible to their adolescents which result in poor communication and tension, anxiety and pressure in the adolescent increases. It is alleged that adolescents are more prone to

pressure related problems for the same reasons, they experience severe loneliness and feel aloof as if no one cares for them

4.2.2.3 *Learners*

- Lack of sexual knowledge contributes to the learner's sexual irresponsibility. Because pieces of unrelated information are gathered from peer group members, decisions made are not based on accurate facts about sexual matters.
- Learners are skeptical about listening to or accepting any information related to sex. Their attitude seems to be ambivalent towards sex education. This, probably, is due to the fact that parents are not the primary providers of information regarding sex education - trust is one other factor due to lack of transparency on the part of parents.
- Learners are likely to be victims of the inaccurate sex information they receive. When this happens, no support is offered by the parents of the victim and this destroys the morale of the learner.
- Learners are less likely to use condoms for fear of their parents. Seemingly, parents are not conversant with condoms and they lack interest in any sex related information and as a result, learners treat everything as a secret.
- Learners would never tell their mothers about their sexual activities, instead they would rather risk pregnancy or disease than talking to their parents. What is painful about the whole thing is that parents cherish and entertain the hope that their children know nothing about sex since they are still "young". On the contrary, children believe that their parents know nothing about these issues since they have just been invented or discovered by the peers. The two worlds (adolescents and parents) never meet and so, the gap broadens.

- If learners do communicate they prefer doing so with their mothers rather than fathers. The reasons could be due to the fact that fathers are seldom found at home. African or black culture distances the father from children and the job of raising children is left to the wife. Some people claim that this is due to migrant labour where fathers leave for work and the mother is alone with children. It is also strange to find that even when fathers return from work they remain strangers and are feared by their children.
- Learners express the desire for their parents to be their sex educators but parents should be trained to be knowledgeable about the learners' sexual concerns. This is one feeling that has to be encouraged if progress is to be made in this area.

4.2.3 Recommendations from the literature study

- A successful sex education programme should incorporate all the components of parental involvement, namely, empowerment of the parents, school visitations by parents when outsiders are invited by the school to talk about sex education and parents should volunteer to talk to learners about sexuality.

In fact, parents deserve to know the programme of sex education planned for their children prior to its implementation. It is important, at this stage, to note the fact that parents are not “outsiders” for the school. They, therefore, must demand the detail of what is to be taught to their children.

- Occasional workshops on sexual topics that are identified by parents must be provided by the school. In other words, parents must be given a chance to point out those areas in sex education that are difficult for them and workshops must be arranged to empower the parents. No amount of sex education can help save learners from the current epidemic (HIV/AIDS) if parents are excluded.

- School counsellors can extend their pro-active and primary prevention programmes to assist parents in fulfilling their role as the foremost sexuality educators of their children. No school should be without a school counsellor. Counsellors could form an important link between school and home. If possible, they may visit learners' homes, chat with learners' parents and organize family get-togethers where learners could voice their views.
- Programmes offered by the school should reflect the needs and values of the school and community. The school should discuss both the content and method of teaching sex education with its parent community before implementing the programme.

This, however, can work well if parents are made aware of the importance of “opening up” to the children and giving opportunity to express their feelings and concerns. As a rule, any discussion of content or values must follow this enlightenment of parents.

- Schools should promote partnerships which will increase parental involvement in promoting the social, emotional and academic growth of learners since sex education is only part of the total integrated education for living. This would help draw the school and the community together to operate as a unit.

One has to believe, also, that fathers lack such support, which is why learners report less communication with them compared to mothers. Once the school, through its counsellors, draws families and community to itself, fathers will be interested in this relationship and open up to their children.

4.3 EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

The following is a brief summary of empirically collected data.

4.3.1 Summary from empirical investigation

As presented in the previous chapter, data was collected from teachers, learners and parents. The qualitative research design was used in order to understand their views about sex education, which would determine the extent of involvement of parents in the sex education programmes in schools. Since qualitative interview is non-directive with open-ended questions, flexibility to different responses from the interviewees were allowed. The participants were to tell their own story rather than to answer the researcher's predetermined questions. All the participants were concerned about the lack of communication between parents and their children on sexuality matters.

4.3.2 Findings from empirical investigation

4.3.2.1 *Teachers*

- There are no formally organised sex education programmes in schools.
- Teachers are keen to see parents fully involved in school programmes which could include sexuality matters and are discouraged to note that parents are not eager to participate.
- Parents, on the other hand, would like to see a situation where the school arranges workshops to involve them.
- The schools have not done enough to encourage parent-involvement in the programmes they develop.

4.3.2.2 *Parents*

- Parents do not communicate sexual information effectively to their children.
- Mothers do attempt to communicate although they begin when the child is already in trouble with sexual desires but fathers are unsupportive.

- Parents are not formally involved by the schools with regard to the sex education programmes.
- Culture and religion hinder parents from talking to their children about sexuality matters.
- Parents would like to be primary sex educators of their children.
- Parents would like to be involved by the schools in sex education programmes.

4.3.2.3 Learners

- Learners get initial sex information from peers, media and outsiders like social workers, not from their teachers or parents.
- Learners would not like their parents to be involved in sex education programmes at school. The reason is fear of embarrassment as topics discussed by outsiders are never mentioned by parents.
- Learners would like parents to communicate about sexuality matters at home.
- Learners want to continue knowing more than their parents do about sex related matters hence they discourage them from getting involved with sexual lessons occasionally taught by outsiders like social workers.

4.3.3 Recommendations from the empirical investigation

In view of what has been revealed during this study, one would conclude with the following recommendations: -

- Parents must be encouraged to participate in all school programmes and those who do, may receive incentives in the form of recognition during the school functions, rebates on school fees and etc.
- Learners and parents should be encouraged to discuss the various topics offered by sex education programmes in schools. Parents may even be encouraged to list what they have discussed on their children's home work books and jot down their comments or inputs.
- Teachers, learners and parents must come together and decide on the topics that should be included in the sex education programmes.

- Parent guidance is recommended where parents are empowered with skills in dealing with adolescents and given lessons on how adolescents develop sexually and emotionally.
- In addition to a life skills teacher, there ideally should be a school counsellor or school psychologist or social worker based in each school. The aim is to help the individual learners with sexual problems or infected with HIV/Aids and they can also conduct parental workshops which have been recommended by one of the teachers interviewed. A school psychologist can be in a position to do family therapy so as to facilitate communication between the parent and the child and impart social skills for meaningful sexual relationships among the adolescents.

4.4 PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED DURING THE STUDY

Since the approach to selecting subjects to participate in the study was to ask for volunteers, only female learners came to participate. For is reason, the information gathered in this work should be used with caution, as generalization would mask some important issues.

Apart from the above weakness, there is also a question of the sample size. The sample used was small, schools participating in the study happened to be urban - oriented as the cost could not allow a huge sample which would include some rural schools in the study. This situation (inclusion of the rural schools) would have been an ideal situation. It, therefore, makes it even clearer that generalization of the findings of this study is not possible.

Absence of the sex education structure at the schools investigated created problems for the researcher. Each teacher was following her/his own programme the way that suited them without any pre-arranged programme.

Although generalisation of the findings has been said to be impossible, one may justifiably assume that the situation is worse in the poverty stricken rural schools of this region.

The fact that no definite teacher was responsible for guidance in any of the schools investigated, posed a serious problem for the researcher. Working as volunteers in a field such as school guidance was difficult since the volunteers showed no commitment to what they were doing, except to help learners through their own initiative and their official day to day duties and could not provide answers to all the questions asked by the researcher.

Conducting interviews at some schools involved a lot of probing which posed a problem. It was not always easy to use the term 'sex' because of the taboo associated with it in their culture.

4.5 ASPECTS TO BE INVESTIGATED FURTHER

The sample used in this study was taken from Umtata schools that are situated in the urban environment. The findings, therefore, cannot be generalised for rural schools. A study which would focus on the rural schools for Xhosa-speaking learners would be an interesting one.

Some other aspects that need further investigation are as follows:

- To investigate family dynamics in Xhosa-speaking families i.e. relationships between fathers and daughters, mothers and sons, sibling-to-sibling communication and marital relationship between spouses.
- To investigate Xhosa culture as a factor to child upbringing which may be resulting in the increases in HIV/Aids among Xhosa-speaking youths.
- To develop a model that would deal with cultural barriers to communication.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This study has revealed that schools in Umtata do not involve parents in the sex education programmes. The little sex education that takes place in these schools is left in the hands of outsiders like social workers. This study also reveals the fact that parents do not communicate effectively with their children on sexuality matters.

There are various factors that have been highlighted by this study that lead to lack of parent-child communication. Among them, one can mention Xhosa culture and lack of knowledge among parents as a barrier to effective communication. According to Benschhoff & Alexander 1993;288 some parents do not know enough about sexual topics to discuss them with their children because their own parents were usually not the primary source of their sex education and therefore, they lack a familial model. In the empirical investigation, parents admit the fact that they do not feel at ease talking to children about sexuality matters since culture and religion cause them to shy away from such topics.

According to the findings of this study, learners would not like parents to be involved in their school with regard to sex education programmes because they (parents) are embarrassed about the sexual topics that are discussed by the outsiders. From this statement it becomes apparent that children derive satisfaction from the ignorance of parents on sexuality matters and prefer the status quo to be maintained. This reveals that there are problems in family relationships among Xhosa-speaking families that need to be investigated.

The researcher's concern is that parents, with specific emphasis on Black communities, should take up their God-given responsibility to educate their children to become responsible citizens of their country by working hand in hand with the schools.

After all, home is supposed to be the beginning of the schooling career of the child and an extension thereof. Should this be the case, the child will see no difference between the values he learns at school and those at home. The parent-teacher interaction will then be a subsequent result of this correlation between the home environment and the school.

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APPENDIX: VERBATIM TRANSCRIPTIONS OF THE INTERVIEWS

SCHOOL 1: A multiracial school but Xhosa-speaking learners are in the majority

TEACHER 1: A coloured lady teacher who is volunteering as a guidance teacher

QUESTION: What topics are you dealing with in sex education as a part of life skills programme?

ANSWER : You see, I'm just a teacher in the afternoons. I'm not actually a life skill's teacher, as a part of the curriculum some other teachers are doing it. Different teachers are doing it. My main function is basically in the afternoons to deal with career guidance and then personal counselling. So, I've never actually dealt with sex education per se. So different teachers in every grade are just doing a bit of life skills. So I've definitely no idea of how much they have done. What I know Mr who is doing biology lessons in grade 12 has done a project in his class on HIV/Aids. That's how much I know, but with other teachers I'm not sure how much they have gone into that. But we also had nurses from the municipality clinic who came to the school and took a group of our teenagers, mostly girls and trained them to become counsellors but I have not even seen them counselling anyone, I've not heard of how far this programme is growing. What I know they went for this little course and they were given badges which identified them as counsellors but how far they have gone I'm not sure. They were supposed to do peer counselling, if they have done it, I'm not sure.

QUESTION : You mean, as a person you have never dealt with any form of sex education here at school?

ANSWER : No, because, see, there are no more guidance teachers at school, that's why I'm doing it in the afternoons. I volunteered to be there if the child needs me in the afternoon, but it is not the part of the curriculum anymore because of the life skills that have been implemented, but as I've just said for every grade there is a different teacher and I'm not sure of how they have gone or dealt with the topic in class. As I have said the only one is Mr..... who has done a little project on HIV/Aids with his grade 12 class.

QUESTION: Are there no learners who come to you with personal problems on sexual relationships?

ANSWER: With personal problems they do come, but were never related with those issues but only on parental issue like the parent has beaten the child, but they never ask me about what is condom? What is that or contraception, never any kind related to sex.

QUESTION: Do you involve parents in the career guidance?

ANSWER: If there is a problem at home and is affecting a child, I will then call the parent in and we talk about how to improve the situation at home, so there is definitely some parental involvement as such, but in the case where the kids have severely been beaten by their fathers I have, then, actually contacted social workers and the police and they also have come in, and some of the parents is difficult to reach them. They are just unavailable and then I decided

to involve the social workers in some cases and sometimes the parent would come in.

QUESTION: Before you involve social workers do you try to contact the parent first?

ANSWER : If it is a serious case of abuse e.g. one child had blue marks all over his body and I discussed it with the child first, if it is okay with the child then I informed social workers or the police to take the legal actions against whoever the perpetrators are, because that's one of the best ways to stop them from doing it, but then the child must agree to it because you cannot pressure the child because he must trust you and can come back to you.

QUESTION : In the case where the parents agree to come, do they co-operate?

ANSWER : They do, because they come in they want to co-operate and they become of help. I even refer some of them to the psychologists.

QUESTION: As a teacher what advise can you give to the parents about the importance of helping their children or involving them in the school programmes?

ANSWER : The key word I can suggest to them is "communication" If there is communication at the home the child becomes free to tell the parents about his problem or the parent should take an initiative in talking and also probably can talk about sex education and say "look my child this is the " birds and bees 'story we have to talk about ", then good communication start at home. So my advice is that parents should start communicating with their children.

QUESTION : As you have been in this school for so many years do you think parents communicate with their children at home?

ANSWER : I don't think so. Just this morning I've been meeting with people from pregnancy crisis centre because yesterday one of our kids who is pregnant came to talk to me about it. She comes to me because she cannot talk to her parents. If the parents were involved she would have talked to them and not me. I don't even know what the whole story is about. I just said she must come to me tomorrow morning at 8h00.

QUESTION : Are you then prepared to tell her parents about her being pregnant? Because I think at the end of the day parents will find out.

ANSWER : If the child agrees to talk to me then I will be able to convince the child that I'm doing what is best for her, not to embarrass her to feel bad or belittled her, but to help her deal with her problem. If she agrees that to involve her parents is the best way to deal with the problem, then definitely we will involve them. Most of them (kids) if you convince them that to tell parents is the best way for them, they normally agree, but let me be sincere, lot of parents do not involve themselves. I'm not just talking of the parents that are not educated. Some of the highly educated parents whom you think they know what's best for their children when you call them in and tell them about their child's problem, they become shocked and you find out that the child didn't tell them anything and the child can't say anything if there is no communication between the child and the parent.

QUESTION : Are you at the school in a position to help the parents with communication skills because maybe some of them do not have skills to talk to their children.

ANSWER : You know what I was thinking of, but I become so busy I have yet implemented the plan, is to get the pregnancy crisis centre to be involved. One of the doctors, who is a gynaecologist, has agreed to come and talk to the children. The school has tried to call the parents in for some meetings but they hardly come. It is difficult to get the parents in where you can talk to them and inform them about these things. It's always easy to work on one to one basis where you call a parent in, that way, you know, but to extend an invitation to the parents to come to school, probably only 10% of the parents will come, because they don't make time for these things, so it is difficult.

LEARNER 1: A Xhosa-speaking Grade 11 learner who is a 16 years old girl. She preferred to use English.

QUESTION : What topics do you normally deal with in sex education at school?

ANSWER : HIV/Aids and teenage pregnancy.

QUESTION: Who normally talks about sexuality matters in your school?

ANSWER : People from Aids and pregnancy centre normally come to our school. Our teachers never bother talking about such things.

QUESTION : Are the parents involved by the school when there are people from outside school who are going to address you on sexuality matters?

ANSWER : No.

QUESTION : Would you like the school to involve them?

ANSWER : No, because some of these things that are taught are so embarrassing, you would feel ashamed to be heard by your parents.

QUESTION : Do you ever talk with your parents about sexuality matters at home?

ANSWER : Only to my mother, otherwise I cannot be free with my dad. At least my mother is a female as I am.

QUESTION : Is your mother free to talk to you about such issues?

ANSWER : Yes, we talk a lot. We are just free towards each other. She gives me guidelines, but what I don't like is that she sometimes quote from the bible when she is warning me about these things, trying to give me moral lessons. It would be better if she just talks and live out the bible for prayer time or family devotions.

QUESTION : From whom did you get the first hand information about sexual issues?

ANSWER : From friends at school. The only time my mother started talking was when I started menstruating.

QUESTION : Were you free to tell her that you were on periods?

ANSWER : No, my sister did.

QUESTION : Would you like your parents to get some more information on sex education as you have just said you feel they would be embarrassed?

ANSWER : With my mother there is no problem, but my father needs to be educated on how to talk to us as daughters.

PARENT 1: **Xhosa-speaking father who is a teacher. He preferred to use English.**

QUESTION : Are you involved in what is taught to your child at school on sex education?

ANSWER : I'm not involved and I'm not sure of what our children are taught concerning that by the teachers.

QUESTION : Would you like to be involved and know what is taught?

ANSWER : This is very important. I would love to know what is taught to my child.

QUESTION : Do you ever discuss with your child topics on sexuality matters?

ANSWER : Most unfortunately I never discussed with my daughters. We are not open to one another. I leave that responsibility to her mother, but I talk to my boys.

QUESTION : What advices can you give to the school and parents concerning sex education?

ANSWER : It would be quite appropriate for the school to have sex education programmes, because teacher can have ways on dealing these issues. Parents must be open and free to discuss with their children. They should not be traditional and shy about discussing these things to their children. I would also like children to take precautions not to be involved in sex and they must get proper guidance from the school and their own parents and follow what is good regarding sexuality activity. What I can say, because I'm traditional, is to tell learners to abstain from sex until they reach marriage age.

QUESTION : Do you think parents have skills to talk to their children on these matters?

ANSWER : There are parents that are skillful regarding this subject. So if you are a parent who is unable to talk to your child ask other parents to help because it becomes difficult to your own child about sexuality, but the tone has come that our children are sexually active and a high percentage of them are HIV positive because they do not get proper guidance from the parents, we have to face the facts.

QUESTION : Which way can the school involve parents?

ANSWER : The school must have workshops for the parents. I know with us as Xhosa-speaking parents it is very difficult to talk to children, and call the words in our language. These words are better if we say them in English. In Xhosa you become so embarrassed and shrug your shoulders when these words are said. We need to

change our lifestyle and be helped. We need really to do something about it.

QUESTION : What caused the Xhosa-speaking parent to be so ashamed to talk about sex issues?

ANSWER : We were told by our parents that such names are not said and this made one to be afraid to say these things but in these days we need to call a spade a spade because things are getting worse. Young people are being infected with Aids. We are also affected by our religion-Christianity, because we are told that a church person does not talk like this or not allowed to say such and such words. Our culture and Christianity are really colliding but we need to do something about this.

SCHOOL 2 : In this school all the learners are Xhosa-speaking .

TEACHER 2 : Xhosa-speaking volunteering guidance female teacher. She preferred to use English.

QUESTION : What topics are you dealing with in sex education programmes as part of life skills curriculum?

ANSWER : We are not dealing with sex education formally. We do it as need arises. We teach them about Aids, but not formally. We deal with their problems individually. The most prevalent ones that usually come are cases of sexuality abuse. We try to empower them so that they can know what to do when they are faced with such problems. We teach them how to be assertive. They must know that we are there for them and should not hide it. Some of these abuses are done by the teachers. We encourage them to talk about it or go to the police. We

involve social workers. We also encourage our students to look after their siblings because these sexual abuses are done by their fathers sometimes.

QUESTION : If there are children who are experiencing sexual abuse don't you think it is important to empower other learners with sexual skills and by doing that you will then be enforcing sex education?

ANSWER : We are not doing it formally as I said. The individual teacher does it in his or her own class. We have tried to invite people from CPU (Child Protection Unit) to come and address the school as a whole but unfortunately it has not yet materialised. Here at school our timetable does not cater for guidance or life skills. We are concerned with finishing up the syllabus, there is just no time for school guidance. If you are doing it the school sees it as a waste of time or something that does not belong to the school. It is not catered for. I'm surprised when people are thinking that we are supposed to have life skills as being enforced by the Department of Education because with us we are faced with finishing up the syllabus, we do not have time for it. Let alone that it does not even appear in the school timetable. We do that informal thing at our free time.

QUESTION : Do you involve parents in the case of sexual abuse?

ANSWER : It is not easy to call the parent in. I'm a volunteer in Child Abuse Action Group, what I do I just inform the police, because you hardly get cooperation from the parents. Blacks believe that the case of sex abuse must be kept secret, is something that is private. Sometimes the mother pretends as if the abuse is not taking place with

her daughter because the perpetrator is a breadwinner and need to be kept secret. I was once threatened by the parents for reporting abuse to the police, but I always put the interests of the child first.

QUESTION : Do you involve parents in the school matters even if it is not for sex education?

ANSWER : Unlike in Umtata high school or Zingisa Secondary schools where parents co-operate with the teachers, in our school parents do not. When you try to involve parents for a specific case of their child, they hardly come. Parents are too busy to attend to school meetings. Except for the school Governing Body, parents are not interested at all.

QUESTION : Don't you think parents lack skills to help their children or they feel inferior to come to school since some of them are not educated?

ANSWER : They are not feeling inferior, they just don't care. They are shifting their responsibility to the teachers. It does not seem that they lack skills because some of them are highly educated, it's just they are too busy.

QUESTION : What advice then can you give to parents so that they can be involved in the school programmes?

ANSWER : They should try to care by looking at their books and see how their children are performing and what kind of relationship are they having with teachers.

QUESTION : What suggestions can you give parents pertaining the sexual behaviour of their children?

ANSWER : It does not start with child's sexual behaviour. It starts with communication breakdown. There is no communication at home. We do not talk to our children. There are two groups of parents. Some are too liberal and some are too conservative. Those who are conservative are not prepared to talk "amanyala"(taboos) with children, yet it is necessary to talk. Those who are liberal or modern do not care how many boyfriends the child have, they do not even bother to know that the child is sexually active and need to be guided. I think we need to revise our original Xhosa culture where mothers used to teach their daughters about womanhood. You know that custom of "intonjane" where the girls were taught when they start menstruating and referred to have reached womanhood. Parents should talk about boyfriends or girlfriends but advise their children not to engage in sexual intercourse before marriage. Today when parents talk they just have "don'ts" without explaining or offering options. Tell your child that she or he must have a relationship but the child should know that premarital sex is wrong as it is said in the bible. Let us look at other options instead of condoms. Condom use has a tendency of promoting promiscuity. We should instil moral values. If you tell your child to abstain, tell him or her the reason for abstinence. Tell your child that it is worth for marriage. Take away the shame or feelings of guilt in talking about sexuality. Sit down with your children because HIV/Aids is here to stay.

LEARNER 2: A Xhosa-speaking learner who is doing grade 12. She is 15 years old. She preferred using English.

QUESTION : What topics are you taught in sex education at school.

ANSWER : There is no sex education in my school. Sometimes outside people, like social workers come and tell us that we should not have sex before marriage. If you are sexual active, then you are tested negative that means you have the second chance to live, so try to abstain from sex.

QUESTION : Do you talk with your parents at home about sexuality matters?

ANSWER : Yes, I do. My parents, who are both nurses and they tell me not to engage in sex until I'm old and get married. They tell me to have goals in life and not to waste my time on boys.

QUESTION : Whom are you free talking to between your father and mother?

ANSWER : I talk to my mother most of the time but I also don't have problems in talking with my father.

QUESTION : From whom did you get the first hand information about sexuality?

ANSWER : From the social workers and other students, but my parents also talked about it, but rather later.

QUESTION : Do you think other parents communicate with their children as your parents do with you?

ANSWER : I think parents do talk with their children but children are being influenced by friends against family values. What I can say is that we, children, should be careful. If we are engaging in sex we are just abusing ourselves. If you get pregnant while you are still a student you are preventing yourself from the chances of becoming a good mother for your child and a good wife for your husband. We must try reach adult stage so as to get good things in life. But if you are unable to control yourself, then use condom.

PARENT 2: **A male nurse and a member of the school governing body.**

QUESTION : Does the school involve you in sex education programmes of your children?

ANSWER : Sometimes the school calls us to be involved where necessary, but majority of parents don't attend the school meetings.

QUESTION : Do you talk with your child at home on topics dealing with sexuality matters?

ANSWER : Yes I do. I talk about the whole range of relationships and teenage pregnancy.

QUESTION : How does your daughter react to you being father who talks about sexuality?

ANSWER : At home all my children are free because we invite questions from them and discuss and they also give their own understanding of these things. You'll find out sometimes their understanding of these things is different from how we were taught by our own parents. So, you have to adjust sometimes as a parent and compromise your own standards.

QUESTION : What advice can you give to other parents?

ANSWER : I'm strongly advising parents to get involved to these discussions with their children with regard to sexual issues. I'll advise them to come up clean and discuss these sexual issues. I think we as parents, need parent seminars to equip us with skills so that we can all talk openly with our children. It's a fact that our culture is a barrier to how we communicate these things to our children. It is really holding us back to talk to our children. The schools should involve parents in compiling programmes that will be relevant to our children and even to us as parents. There should be no generation gap in our understanding of sexuality matters. I would also like to warn learners or young people that it's high time that they should be sexually responsible and we, parents should be cautious not to moralise them. Tell them about options of sexual behaviour. Then, they should know that each option is accompanied by consequences that needs responsibility. Define the options you want them to follow and to what extent the child is prepared to meet the outcomes or the result of that option chosen. The saying that true love waits is an important one and is related to the belief that abstinence is the best solution to the sexual problems, otherwise the HIV/Aids problem will continue to kill and destroy the young people.

SCHOOL 3 : A private school with learners predominantly Xhosa-speaking

TEACHER 3: A coloured lady teacher who is acting as a guidance teacher

QUESTION : What topics are you dealing with in sex education?

ANSWER : Sex education is not part of our curriculum as such at the moment. We do not have sex education teachers, but what the school does is to invite relevant people time to time, people who are involved in the programmes to come to our schools. They come to our assembly on Wednesdays to speak to the children. Life skills have been dealt with at specific levels. We get people who are skilled for such topics to speak and deal with questions pertaining that.

QUESTION : When a student has a problem with relationship how do you respond?

ANSWER : For myself I deal with in the same way I deal with my daughter in such a problem. We do speak to the children sometimes. The issue is abstinence, but you have to open up, say, look if you cannot, this is the option. We are quite aware that we are dealing with children who are sexually active, when the issue comes up, we sit down and talk, not that we are promoting it by teaching sex education. We are in the cruel world, these are the issues we must deal with.

QUESTION : Won't it be better if it is included in the school time table?

ANSWER : It would be definitely nice, but we do not have it at the moment, but due to financial implication it is difficult. Since we invite people from time to time to deal with these problems it shows we are interested in helping.

QUESTION : Do you involve parents before you talk to these people whom you invite to talk to the children?

ANSWER : We talk with parents in PTA meetings, so they are aware. If a parent is not in favour he or she will be free to come and ask us to exclude his/her child from sex education but so far we do not have any parent who has come saying that his or her child was unhappy.

QUESTION : What advice can you give to parents and sexuality matters?

ANSWER : Communication. You cannot, as parent, especially as a mother, be a closed book any longer. Tell your child everything they can handle at his age. Let the child ask questions. You have to communicate and speak the truth. You have to be open and communicate facts he can understand as he grows.

QUESTION : Do you think parents talk with their children at home about such issues?

ANSWER : No. As we talk with children, sex is a taboo in some homes. I was also not taught about sex education by my parents and among us Blacks it is still a problem. We are affected by our culture and our upbringing. I think lot of children experience that problem of not having communication with their parents. Parents need workshops. Lot of African parents cannot talk about sex,

they feel uncomfortable. Parents really need help. We need to do something. The first people that need to be educated are parents so as to help their children.

LEARNER 3: **A Xhosa-speaking 17 year old girl who is doing grade 12. She preferred to use English.**

QUESTION : Which topics are normally dealt with during sex education programmes?

ANSWER : We do not have sex education at school. The school usually call outside people to come and talk to us. They normally tell us how to abstain from sex.

QUESTION : Are parents being involved by school?

ANSWER : Yes in a way. They encourage us to talk to our parents about the sexual issues after we have been taught by outside people. I'm not very sure if they talk to our parents about the meetings.

QUESTION : Do you generally communicate at home about these issues except by informing them of what has been said at school?

ANSWER : On many occasions we talk a lot and ask if I have a boyfriend. My mother started talking to me when I told her about my friend who got pregnant. O! that day, she gave me a whole formal lecture. But, shame, I can say she is now very free with me.

QUESTION : Are you also free with her?

ANSWER : Not with all the questions. I prefer to go to the library and read about topics which I feel uncomfortable with. My mother becomes so curious when I'm reading about these things and will ask me what I'm reading about.

QUESTION : Is there no person that you are free to talk to about topics you feel uncomfortable with?

ANSWER : There is no one particular person that I'm free with but I like to talk to more experienced people like teachers.

QUESTION : From whom did you get the first hand information about sexuality matters?

ANSWER : From T.V. the take 5 program. When my mother talked to me for the first time I had already lot of information, and I got some information from the magazines because I read a lot.

QUESTION : Do you think we, as parents, generally communicate with our children about sexual issues?

ANSWER : I don't think so. Xhosa parents do not talk with their children. I think it's tradition. Tradition collides with modern things. Modern things are Aids, Boys, etc. Xhosa parents do not communicate. I don't know where they think children will get information from.

QUESTION : If you were given a chance to advise Xhosa parents, what would you say?

ANSWER : Guys, try to communicate with your children. These are modern times. Children learn from T.V. if you do not talk to them they will learn from T.V. and friends. Their

friends are going to give them wrong information. You have to be honest with your child and give him or her advise because friends will not give good advise. To my Pals, I can advise them not to engage in sex. Don't start if you are already engaged please condomise due to HIV/Aids or pregnancy. Anyway it cannot be late to stop even if you have already started. Please people let us not die young.

PARENT 3 : **A lady teacher who is a single divorced parent.**

QUESTION : Have you been invited by the school in the sex education programme of your child.

ANSWER : No, but through talking with my daughter I know what is done by the school, otherwise I was never invited, but I talk to my child about boyfriend and dating.

QUESTION : What topics are they dealing with?

ANSWER : They tell them that if they are sexually active they must use condoms, but they emphasise abstinence and assertiveness i.e. to be able to say "No" or they must go to family planning clinics so as to be educated about how to prevent pregnancy. So we talk about those things.

QUESTION : Can you tell me the topics you, as a parent, normally discuss with your daughter pertaining sexuality?

ANSWER : We normally talk about simple things. I first tell her about my own life as a child, that I never had a boyfriend before marriage. I asked her about her boyfriend, if she has one and asking her not to be fearful in telling me. If she has a boyfriend I tell her that she must be able to say "No" to

sex because she will contact HIV and also will be uncomfortable to her studies. What I know is that she is being dated during matric dances and ballroom dancing. I'm trying to adjust to modern life because during our time a parent would not allow you to go out with a date but now one must try to adjust. I don't think my daughter has a boyfriend because she is being dated by different boys, that means she does not have specific boyfriend. I think there is a difference between a "date" and a "boyfriend". Really these things are new to our culture.

I use to tell my daughter that she must tell me immediately she becomes sexually active. I 'm very open with her.

QUESTION : When did you start talking to her about sexuality?

ANSWER : At age 11 when she started menstruating. I was very shocked because she was still young as a result I took her to the clinic where the nurses told me that it was normal and gave me advices in how to help her. I was very worried about my daughter because at ages 13-14 years she was very rebellious, but God helped me because now she is very much okay. What I did, I removed her from the ordinary Xhosa schools to a multiracial school because our children are influencing each other in our ordinary Xhosa schools without any proper guidance from anyone.

QUESTION : How is your child's reaction when you discuss these things?

ANSWER : O! she is very free and open but so far she says she does not have a boyfriend. I put an emphasis that immediately

she has a boyfriend she must introduce him to me so that I can give both of them advices as white people are doing to their children, because our culture does not permit that but we are trying to adjust to western culture for the sake of our children.

QUESTION : Do you think parents communicate with their children at home about these sexuality issues as you do with your daughter?

ANSWER : Not at all. As I have just said with us Xhosa's it is very difficult to adjust to these things. They are new to us, but my advice to other parents is that let us adjust. Ever since our country became independent in 1994 there is just lot of democracy. Children have their own rights. Ngoko ke singabazali masikhululeke (therefore, we as parents must be open minded) , these are the other days that are different from ours. I'm gradually adjusting to the modern ways of doing things like watching T.V. with my daughter discuss the soapies like "Days of our lives or "The Bold and the Beautiful" and we share what we observe together. The problem that our children are facing is that we parents do not want to change with these changing times. We want to stick to our culture and not want to learn from our children. We are really confusing our children. We forget that even in the Xhosa culture parents used to communicate with their children during adolescence by doing customs like "intonjane" when a girl started menstruating and young people, both boys and girls were attending "imitshotsho" "neentlombe". Girls were permitted by their parents to go to these parties with boys. Girls were allowed to have boyfriends. Yiyo ke nalento kwakukho izindlu ekuthiwa "zintanga" (Young girls had their own rooms at home called

“intanga” where they enjoyed themselves with their boyfriends). Girls were taught to watch after themselves and not to have premarital sex, but during our time these customs were not practised by Christian people it was only done by uneducated people who were not church goers. This caused today’s parent to be very religious to an extent of not communicating sexual issues to our children. Kaloku thina sithi asinakuthatha amanyala nabantwana bethu” (we say, we cannot talk taboos with children). Uneducated or non-religious parents are communicating better with their children as compared to black or Xhosa-speaking parents who claim to be educated and religious. We have really complicated life for our children. The church has also a bad practice where males are asked to sit on their side while females are on the other trying to avoid sexual relationships in church, but in this democracy things are changing even in our churches. You sit next to your husband now or where you like and this was not allowed before. If you are a female you know where you stand, you were not even allowed to preach. Christianity has really affected us and our parents had also affected us to an extent that we are unable to help our own children. To talk about the word “sex” was a taboo during our times. Our parents would not talk such things to us, but now we must adjust to the modern life and allow our children to be free but at the same time let us pray to God to guide us to the right direction because these days are evil.

QUESTION : Don’t you think parents need to be helped so as to be able to communicate with their children?

ANSWER : Definitely yes. Workshops for parents can be the solution to this. Schools should organise these workshops where parenting skills can be imparted to us.

SCHOOL 4 : A multiracial school which used to be under a religious school and though now it is a Government school it is still holding to religion. Xhosa-speaking learners are in the majority in this school.

TEACHER 4: A guidance teacher who is a Xhosa-speaking lady.

QUESTION : What topics are you dealing with in sex education as a part of life skill's curriculum?

ANSWER : We started dealing with HIV/Aids in the lower classes, i.e. grades 10 and 11, but we later on discovered that we have problems of teenage pregnancy and those children are seeking abortion at the clinics without their parents, or we as teachers, knowing.

QUESTION : How is the response of learners to sex education?

ANSWER : With majority of them it is interesting but in the lower classes some take it as a taboo. Generally in the upper classes where sex education is part of Biology lessons to them it is interesting.

QUESTION : Do you involve parents in sex education programmes?

ANSWER : We do not involve parents per se but we do invite people from outside to deal with sexual topics. Some of these people are the parents who have the know-how. Sometimes parents do come to us and ask assistance

when they cannot tackle topics related to sex with their own children at home or when they are experiencing sexual problems with children. Then we try to offer some skills and give them lessons on how to deal with a child at a puberty stage. We sometimes call the parents in when we feel that the child developmental stage is affecting his /her academic progress. We immediately inform the parents and we discuss the matter with them. At puberty stage children change, you know. You see the child being so interested to the opposite sex to an extent that school performances deteriorates. It is then that we feel we as the school, should involve the parents. So it is very difficult for me to say we do involve them or we don't because it is only on special cases where we feel we must communicate with them.

QUESTION : How is the reaction of parents towards the sexually activity of their children?

ANSWER : Some parents deny that their children are sexual active. They become so shocked when we tell them what their children at their backs (parents) do. As you continue discussing with parents they later on admit the fact that their children do have sexual relations. You know, parents are confusing us sometimes. They are not aware that as they are trying to deny the facts they invariably confuse their own children. As a guidance teacher I normally suggest the parents to start from an early stage to be well acquainted with their children. The parent should know about the child's relationships and the child should be free to share with you as a parent about his/her relationships. As a parent you can even buy some reading material that arouse their interest on sexual matters and that would make them ready to ask

questions on these issues. The parent must be honest and the truth with his/her child. Give the children answers according to their level of development. Please select the reading material that would be beneficial to your child. It should not be pornographic. If you are a Christian choose reading material with Christian approach on the development of a human being so that your child should maintain the Christian values in his/her relationships and be informed in issues like dating.

QUESTION : Do you think parents do communicate with their children on sexuality matters?

ANSWER : Parents fail to communicate with their children, for instance in my case my father never talked to me about sexuality. The only time my mother taught us sex education was when my friend fell pregnant. We were both doing std 6 and I was about 13 years, then my mother was shocked when she heard about my friend's news and she immediately called my sister and I and told us that we should walk away from boys and had nothing to do with boys. When I started menstruating she also told me again that I should not sleep with boys before I got married lest I fell pregnant as my friend did. So you can see that it was not easy for our parents to share these issues and now it is difficult with to share these things with our own children. As parents we should talk to our children so that as they grow up they can make choices in life. There is nothing bad in having relationship with boys as long as the relationship does not involve sexual intercourse. To have relationship with opposite sex is not always sex as we think but children develop to respect each other as human beings and to gain knowledge about each other not necessarily looking

at a boy or a girl as a sex object. This can strengthen our children's marital relationships. I feel that lack of knowing each other as opposite sexes negatively affects the way we relate as spouses in our marriages.

QUESTION : Don't you think we as parents lack skills and need to be educated in dealing with sex education?

ANSWER : We really need to be educated, more especially we as black parents. For example my daughter is 11 years old in a multiracial school. She seems to have more information on sexual issues than I was at her stage. As a parent, then, I need to know more so as to guide my children to use this information correctly. As Xhosa-speaking parents we used to sleep in the same room with our parents when we were young. Remember some Xhosa homes used to have one hut made of mud and thrashed with grass. Everybody would sleep in that same hut. We never thought that our parents were ever having time to make love. We thought they were secretly doing that in dark places, hence now we have this mentality of thinking that sex is a taboo. This has an impact even in our marriage because we never saw our parents showing intimacy towards each other. When some of our children are looking at people kissing each other on the T.V. they feel ashamed, hence we all, as parents and children, need to be educated in handling these things.

QUESTION : How can we do that because now we are faced with dilemma of HIV/Aids that needs immediate attention?

ANSWER : Parents should be called for workshops though they are always busy and not even come to school meetings. I think the schools should arrange monthly or quarterly

meetings and ask people who are experienced in these things to come and talk to parents.

LEARNER 4 : **A 15 year old Xhosa-speaking girl who is doing Grade 10. She preferred to use English.**

QUESTION : What topics are you normally dealing with at school during sex education?

ANSWER : We are told that when you have sexual feelings for an opposite sex you should know what to do. When you happen to have a boyfriend you must know how to behave sexually.

QUESTION : Do you talk with your parents on these sexuality matters?

ANSWER : Yes. My parents talk to me at home.

QUESTION : How do they talk to you about these things?

ANSWER : They tell me that I should not have sexual relationships with boys.

QUESTION : What do teachers say about relationships?

ANSWER : Teachers tell us it's normal to relate with opposite sex.

QUESTION : Have you ever shared with your parents about what is taught at school about sexual relationships?

ANSWER : No, I'm not free to talk to them. I'm afraid of them.

QUESTION : Who normally talks with you at home about these things?

ANSWER : My mother. She talked to me when I had my first menstruation.

QUESTION : From whom did you get your first hand information about sexuality matters?

ANSWER : My mother told me.

QUESTION : Which parent do you prefer to talk to?

ANSWER : My mother. Even my brother prefers to talk to my mother. We are afraid of our father.

QUESTION : What advice can you give to parents and other learners pertaining sexuality?

ANSWER : If learners are sexually active they must learn to wait until 21 years and not be involved in sex. Condoms are not 100% safe. It can have a hole and then you become infected with Aids. Parents should talk to their children. They should talk on a one to one basis and not call of you as children at the same time.

QUESTION : Does the school involve your parents in sexual talks?

ANSWER : No.

PARENT 4: **A father who is a traffic- officer.**

QUESTION : Does the school involve you in sex education programmes of your child?

ANSWER : No. The school does not involve us as parents. Only children who are in white schools that are being taught about these things and we Xhosa-speaking parents ought to copy this example and try to our children. According to our culture a parent does not talk with children such things. We should learn from other cultures how to talk to children about these things. White parents don't have problems in communicating with their children about these things.

QUESTION : Would you like the school to involve you as parent?

ANSWER : Very much. I would love to be involved though I would suggest that communication about sexual matters should start at home. It should be the responsibility of the parents. The child should get the information from the home before he/she starts schooling. As the child grows he/she should know the family values regarding sexuality.

QUESTION : What advice can you give to other parents regarding this?

ANSWER: Parents should be close to their children and communicate these things with them. Due to this high rate of Aids we, as parents, should talk about these things. At school, I think, this should be among the subjects that are taught for examination so as to minimise the death rate of our youth being killed by Aids. Parents should work together with teachers in this regard because it is not easy for us as black parents. We are just not used to it.