

Summary

Parental involvement (PI) greatly benefits learners of all ages. The implementation of a PI programme would provide an effective and affordable means to address the needs of learners in Swaziland. The purpose of this study was to develop a PI programme for urban primary education in Swaziland.

The literature revealed that while comprehensive PI programmes are most effective, PI in learning activities in the home and an appropriate parenting style are particularly beneficial and correlate more closely with learning success than family background factors. Nevertheless, a relationship between family background factors and PI exists. Furthermore there are numerous barriers to PI. However, the most important determinant of PI is the effort of teachers to involve parents. PI is particularly important at senior primary level, the level at which PI drops off spontaneously.

In order to gain a more complete understanding of PI in this community, which would form the basis for an effective PI programme, a combined quantitative and qualitative approach was undertaken. A parental questionnaire was used to test quantitatively the affects of family background factors on three measures of PI and to determine the ways in which parents were involved, their attitudes to the schools, and the schools' efforts to involve them. Teacher and parent interviews and focus discussions were conducted following a qualitative ethnographic approach.

The integrated quantitative and qualitative findings revealed a low level of PI. As a result of a lack of relevant policy, Swazi teachers had very little understanding of PI or their role in establishing it. Thus, schools generally practiced Swap's Protective Model such that parents had very few opportunities, and little encouragement, to become involved. Consequently, parents did not fully

appreciate the importance of their involvement and did not always choose to become involved. The study revealed a number of barriers that further interfered with their involvement.

The implications of the findings were discussed and recommendations for a PI programme that harnesses the strengths and addresses the weaknesses of this community were made. In order to improve educational practice, recommendations targeted each role player and type of PI separately.

Key terms: parental involvement; parental involvement programme; parental attitude; primary school; Swaziland; quantitative research; qualitative research; parental questionnaire; parent interviews; teacher interviews.