

Chapter 5

Quantitative findings and discussion

"In every school, regardless of its location and population served, a parent involvement component is important in fostering children's school success" (U.S Department of Education in Miedel & Reynolds 1999:399).

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of a factor analysis done to confirm the construct validity of the parental questionnaire. Thereafter the reliability of the measuring instrument, tested by item analysis, is demonstrated. Further, the findings of the t-tests, the F-tests, or the Pearson Product Moment Correlation used to test each of the hypotheses described in 4.2.2, are revealed and discussed. Lastly the percentage of parents who gave each of the scaled responses to the items in the questionnaire is presented and discussed.

5.2 Factor analysis

5.2.1 Introduction

Factor analysis was done to determine the construct validity of the questionnaire. The items in Sections A, B and C of the parental questionnaire (see 4.2.6) were subjected to factor analysis using principal component analysis with iterations to determine whether the items in a particular section measured the same construct. Three factors were sought, since the questionnaire was originally divided into three sections, parental attitude to the school, parent initiated contact and school initiated contact. The three factors from the factor analysis were then rotated using a Varimax rotation, which is an orthogonal rotation method. Table 5.1 reveals the rotated factor pattern as well as the final communality estimates of the 54 items.

Factors were interpreted by studying the nature of the items that had significant loadings on each factor. A loading of 0.3 or higher can be considered significant if the sample is larger than 50 subjects (Child 1976: 45). In the present investigation, the sample was 218, thus, 0.3 is the criterion for a significant loading. If an item

showed a significant loading onto more than one factor, it was usually grouped into the factor with the highest loading.

Table 5.1 Rotated factor pattern and communality estimates

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Communality estimates
50	0.678	0.054	0.088	0.470
52	0.653	-0.014	0.030	0.427
48	0.653	0.081	0.229	0.485
49	0.596	0.014	0.060	0.359
47	0.585	0.140	0.310	0.458
53	0.577	0.127	0.206	0.392
51	0.576	-0.051	0.041	0.336
54	0.525	0.170	0.191	0.342
40	0.487	0.134	0.358	0.383
39	0.481	0.191	0.351	0.391
46	0.481	-0.056	0.068	0.239
45	0.423	0.164	0.248	0.267
43	0.420	0.174	0.169	0.235
41	0.404	-0.040	0.165	0.192
38	0.397	0.067	0.371	0.299
44	0.395	0.068	0.181	0.194
33	0.392	0.137	-0.067	0.177
32	0.384	0.200	-0.086	0.195
30	0.332	0.388	-0.081	0.268
29	0.330	0.248	-0.069	0.175
31	0.327	0.320	-0.081	0.216
42	0.260	0.203	0.219	0.157
21	0.044	0.697	0.018	0.489
20	0.038	0.666	-0.018	0.446
19	0.135	0.629	0.054	0.417
24	0.105	0.589	-0.009	0.359
36	0.107	0.580	0.154	0.371
23	0.135	0.570	0.119	0.358
18	0.191	0.540	0.035	0.330
16	0.028	0.519	-0.103	0.281
26	-0.029	0.504	0.110	0.267
22	0.072	0.467	0.113	0.236
25	-0.040	0.449	0.028	0.204
9	-0.065	0.409	0.168	0.200
35	0.061	0.403	0.071	0.171
8	-0.041	0.381	0.270	0.220
34	0.316	0.347	-0.041	0.222
28	0.233	0.339	0.156	0.193

27	0.028	0.326	0.010	0.107
17	0.185	0.287	0.126	0.133
2	0.087	0.110	0.711	0.525
13	0.144	-0.006	0.677	0.480
11	0.166	0.036	0.612	0.403
7	0.147	0.164	0.605	0.414
5	0.110	-0.054	0.599	0.374
15	0.326	0.063	0.568	0.433
14	0.412	-0.124	0.510	0.446
1	0.448	0.334	0.491	0.554
37	0.334	0.084	0.481	0.350
3	0.113	0.273	0.479	0.317
6	0.262	0.147	0.375	0.231
12	0.157	0.057	0.297	0.116
4	-0.172	0.042	0.283	0.112
10	-0.113	0.013	0.185	0.047

The vast majority of the items had significant loadings on the sections to which they were originally assigned (see Appendix II). Thus, most of the items remained in their original group.

5.2.2 The assignment of suitable names to the three factors

5.2.2.1 *Assignment of a name to Factor 1*

The factor analysis grouped the majority of items in Section C into Factor 1 (see Table 5.1). In Sitole's questionnaire (Sitole1993:86), Section C, which corresponds roughly to Section C of this questionnaire (see 4.2.6.2), was named, "school initiated contact". Factor 1 has been re-named by the researcher, "**school initiated parental involvement (SIPI)**".

This name emphasizes that the items in this section measured the parents' perceptions of the school's, and the teachers', efforts to initiate parental involvement activities. For example, Item 52 "The school asks me to help make decisions on how school funds are spent". Some of these items, like Item 52, gave parents an

opportunity to be involved in their children's education that they would not have without the schools cooperation. Other items encouraged parents to be involved in ways that they could be involved even without the schools cooperation. For example, Item 39, "The school asks me to check my child's homework".

"Parental involvement" rather than "contact" was used as each item referred to a specific parental involvement activity, according to the definition in 2.2, rather than merely a way or form in which the school contacted the parents. For example, Item 48, "The school asks me to help make decisions about what and how my child is taught". In this item, the emphasis is not on the way the school contacts the parents, which could be any number of means including newsletters, questionnaires, or meetings. Rather the emphasis is on the involvement activity performed by the parent, namely, contributing to decisions on curriculum and teaching methods.

Item 42 (see Table 5.1) was included in Factor 1 since it loaded at the significance level for this factor (approximated to one decimal place) and it did not load significantly onto any other factor.

5.2.2.2 *Assignment of a name to Factor 2*

The factor analysis grouped the majority of items in Section B of the questionnaire into Factor 2 (see Table 5.1). In Sitole's questionnaire (Sitole 1986:86), Section B, which corresponds roughly to Section B of this questionnaire (see 4.2.6.2), was named, "parent initiated contact". Factor 2 has been re-named by the researcher, "**parent initiated parental involvement (PIPI)**".

Factor analysis reassigned several items from this section to the other sections. The name "**parent initiated parental involvement**" was chosen as the items that remained in this section measured the degree to which parents were involved in

activities that they could decide to be involved in regardless of whether the school invited them to be involved or not. For example, Item 18, "I read to my child". Although the school may request or encourage parents to read to their children, which may result in greater parental involvement, parents could be involved in this way even if the school did not ask them to be. These items reflected the extent to which parents actually were involved in ways that they could initiate. For many of these parent initiated involvement activities no contact with the school was necessary. Thus "involvement" rather than "contact" was used to name this factor.

Item 17 (see Table 5.1) was included in this factor since it loaded at the significance level (approximated to one decimal place) and did not load significantly onto any other factor.

5.2.2.3 *Assignment of a name to Factor 3*

The factor analysis grouped the majority of the items in Section A of the questionnaire into Factor 3 (see Table 5.1). In Sitole's questionnaire (Sitole 1993:86), Section A, which corresponds roughly to Section A of this questionnaire (see 4.2.6.2), was named, "parents' attitude to the school". Factor 3 retained the name, "**parental attitude to the school (PAS)**" because most of the items that loaded significantly onto this factor reflected clearly the parent's attitude to the school. For example, Item 1, "This is a very good school".

However, two of the items, items 4 and 12, do not reflect clearly the parents' attitude to the school. Item 4, "My child should get more homework", suggests that the parents take their children's education seriously; it does not however, necessarily reflect a positive attitude to the school. Item 12, "Parents get involved more in the lower grades" also does not clearly reflect the parents' attitude to the school. However, Items 4 and 12 were not omitted from the questionnaire, as they loaded

positively onto Factor 3, at the 0.3 significance level (approximated to one decimal place) and because this was already quite a short section of the questionnaire containing a final total of 13 items. Item 10 was discarded from the questionnaire, as it was not significant for any of the three factors.

5.2.2.4 *Items that did not load onto the categories for which they were developed*

There were a number of items that loaded significantly, often with high loadings onto factors that did not correspond to the original categories for which they were developed. These items are shown in Table 5.2, below. For the remainder of the study the distribution of the items according to the factor analysis was accepted (see Tables 5.3, 5.4 & 5.5) and the original allocation of items was ignored.

Table 5.2. Items which changed section

		Categories for which the items were developed		
		SIPI	PIPI	PAS
Factors on which the items showed significant loadings	SIPI		29, 30, 31, 32, 33	
	PIPI			8, 9
	PAS	37		

Items 29, 31, 32 and 33 were originally assigned to Factor 2 (PIPI) but they all loaded significantly, and most highly, onto Factor 1 (SIPI). "Item 29 was I go to PTA/PTO meetings". "Item 31 was I go to plays, musicals or other social or cultural events at the school". "Item 32 was I go to parent-teacher evenings or meetings". Item 33 was "I do fundraising for the school". These activities and events are traditionally initiated and organised by schools in Swaziland and parents could not attend them unless these events were made available by the school. Thus, parent attendance at these events was largely as a result of school initiated involvement and these items were included in SIPI for the remainder of the study. For this

reason Item 30, "I go to sports events at the school", was also reassigned to the section SIPI even though it also loaded significantly onto PIPI.

Items 8 and 9 showed highest loadings onto Factor 2 (PIPI) rather than onto Factor 3 (PAS) to which they were originally assigned. Item 8 was "I feel I can help my child in reading". Item 9 was "I feel I can help my child in mathematics". It seems probable that these items loaded most highly into parent initiated parental involvement, as parents who decide that they can help their children with mathematics or reading are far more likely to actually initiate these activities than those that feel they can't help (see 2.7.2.6). These two items were assigned to PIPI for the remainder of the study.

Item 37 showed a highest loading onto Factor 3 (PAS) rather than Factor 1 (SIPI) for which it was originally developed, although it showed a significant loading on both factors. Item 37 was "The school tells me how my child is doing at school". The higher loading onto PASI makes sense as this item reflects the parents' attitude to the school. One would expect parents to have a positive attitude to a school that provides information on how the child is doing and to have a negative attitude to a school that does not provide information on how their child is doing.

5.2.2.5 *Summary*

Several items were reallocated to different factors after the factor analysis. For the remainder of this study this new distribution of items was accepted. Each factor was named according to the aspect of parental involvement that the items included in it measured.

The items in Factor 1 measured the parents' perceptions of the school's, and the teachers', efforts to initiate parental involvement activities. Consequently Factor 1 was named **school initiated parental involvement (SIPI)**. Thus, this section of

the questionnaire measured a determinant of parental involvement defined in 2.6, the school's efforts to involve parents.

The items in Factor 2 measured the extent to which parents took the opportunities they had to be involved in activities that they could initiate with or without the school's cooperation. Thus, Factor 2 was named **parent initiated parental involvement (PIPI)**. This differs from the second determinant of parental involvement, which includes, in addition, the extent to which parents take the opportunities provided by the school to become involved (see 2.6). Thus, PIPI provides a measure of parental involvement in activities that did not depend on the school for their existence.

The items in Factor 3 measured the parents' attitude to the school. Hence, Factor 3 was named **parental attitude to the school (PAS)**. Although not a determinant of parental involvement as defined in 2.6, the parents' attitude to the school does affect the degree to which parents become involved in their children's education (see 2.7.2.7).

5.3. Item analysis

An item analysis was done for each of the three newly developed sections of the questionnaire to establish whether each item made a positive contribution to the total of that section of the questionnaire (Schnel 2001:105).

In order to determine whether to omit or retain an item, two procedures were followed. Firstly, item-total correlations were calculated and the item was omitted if the item-total correlation was very low or negative (Schnel 2001: 105). Secondly, an Alpha reliability coefficient was calculated for each section of the questionnaire, in

the event that all items were retained. The Alpha reliability coefficient was also calculated when a specific item was left out. An item was omitted if doing so resulted in a significantly higher Alpha reliability coefficient. Thus, on the basis of the item-total correlation, and the Alpha reliability coefficient one can decide whether a specific item should be retained or left out (Schnel 2001:106).

The findings of the item analysis for each section are shown in Tables 5.3 to 5.5.

Table 5.3. Item analysis of the section, school initiated parental involvement (SIPI)

No. of subjects: 218 No of items:22 Alpha reliability coefficient: 0.876		
Item	Item correlation with total	Alpha if item is left out
50	0.598	0.867
52	0.566	0.868
48	0.635	0.865
49	0.523	0.870
47	0.612	0.866
53	0.592	0.867
51	0.474	0.871
54	0.539	0.869
40	0.522	0.869
39	0.554	0.868
46	0.445	0.872
45	0.479	0.871
43	0.469	0.871
41	0.384	0.874
38	0.430	0.872
44	0.456	0.871
33	0.366	0.875
32	0.349	0.875
30	0.344	0.875
29	0.334	0.875
31	0.315	0.876
42	0.324	0.875

In the school initiated parental involvement section there were no items that correlated negatively with the total and omitting any of the items would not have increased the alpha reliability coefficient significantly. Therefore all items were retained.

Table 5.4. Item analysis of the section, parent initiated parental involvement (PIPI)

No. of subjects : 218 No. of items : 18 Alpha reliability coefficient: 0.850		
Item	Item correlation with total	Alpha if item is left out
21	0.607	0.836
20	0.597	0.838
19	0.590	0.836
24	0.542	0.838
36	0.557	0.837
23	0.554	0.838
18	0.515	0.839
16	0.459	0.845
26	0.475	0.841
22	0.453	0.842
25	0.389	0.846
9	0.372	0.846
35	0.379	0.845
8	0.354	0.846
34	0.362	0.847
28	0.356	0.848
27	0.299	0.848
17	0.324	0.848

In the section, parent initiated parental involvement, there were also no items that correlated negatively with the total. Further, omitting any of the items would not have increased the alpha reliability coefficient significantly. Thus, all the items were retained.

Table 5.5 Item analysis of the section, parental attitude to the school (PAS)

No. Of subjects: 218 No. of items : 13 Alpha reliability coefficient: 0.835		
Item	Item correlation with total	Alpha if item is left out
1	0.663	0.817
2	0.674	0.815
13	0.664	0.811
11	0.552	0.819
7	0.596	0.816
5	0.542	0.820
15	0.549	0.819
14	0.522	0.822
37	0.460	0.825
3	0.465	0.825
6	0.430	0.827
12	0.320	0.836
4	0.209	0.840

In the parental attitude to the school section, there were also no items that correlated negatively with the total. Omitting any of the items would not have increased the reliability significantly. Thus, all of the items in this section were retained.

In conclusion, the results of the item analysis suggested that the parental questionnaire was a reliable tool for measuring parental attitude to the school, parent initiated parental involvement, and school initiated parental involvement. The distribution of items shown in Table 5.3 to 5.5 reflects the final classification of the items used for the remainder of the study.

5.4 The reliability and validity of the parental questionnaire

The items were grouped into three constructs. This grouping of the items was confirmed by factor analysis (see 5.2) and thus the parental questionnaire had construct validity. The content validity of the measuring instrument was also established (see 4.2.6.2).

The closer the reliability of a measuring instrument is to 1, the smaller the difference is between the variance of the actual score and the observed score (Pienaar 1994:78). Ideally when an instrument is developed, its reliability should be as close to 1 as possible (Pienaar 1994:78).

It was not possible to test the reliability of the instrument using the test-retest method by administering it twice to the sample group. This was because, the parents would have been far less likely to complete it a second time and retesting would have influenced the spontaneous responses of the respondents. The equivalent form method could not be used, as there was no equivalent form available (Pienaar1994: 78). Reliability was, therefore, established by calculating the alpha reliability coefficient for each section (see Table 5.3 to 5.5). The reliability coefficients are presented in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6 Reliability of the parental questionnaire

Section	Alpha Coefficient	No. of items
SIPI	0.876	22
PIPI	0.850	18
PAS	0.835	13

Table 5.6 indicates that the reliability coefficient for each section was high. Therefore, the parental questionnaire could be considered a reliable measuring instrument.

5.5 Testing of the hypotheses

F- and t-tests were used to test hypotheses 1-5 and 8-10 (stated in 4.2.2) for each of the 3 variables, **school initiated parental involvement**, **parent initiated parental involvement**, and **parental attitude to the school**. In addition, the Pearson-Product Moment correlation was used to test the relationship between each of these three parental involvement variables and mathematics and English achievement, hypotheses 6 and 7.

Although SIPI refers to the school and teachers efforts to initiate parental involvement, it must be remembered that the questionnaire measured the parents' perceptions of the school's efforts in this regard rather than the actual efforts of the school. Nevertheless, since parents had no reason to bias their remarks in order to present a more favourable image of the school, SIPI is likely to give an accurate measure of the school and teachers efforts to initiate parental involvement.

5.5.1 Hypothesis 1

With regard to hypothesis 1 stated in 4.2.2.1, the following null hypothesis was tested:

- There is no significant difference between the average **school initiated parental involvement** of parents of different socioeconomic status.
- The hypothesis was also tested for **parent initiated parental involvement** and **parental attitude to the school**.

The socioeconomic status of the respondents was divided into three groups on the basis of their annual income.

Group 1: Less than E18 000 (n = 58).

Group 2: E18 000 – E52 000 (n = 88).

Group 3: More than E52 000 (n = 59).

The F-test was used to determine whether a significant difference existed between the average parental involvement of the parents in the three different income groups for each of the three measures of parental involvement defined in 5.2.2.5.

5.5.1.1 *Comparison between parents of the three different income groups with regard to **school initiated parental involvement***

The average **school initiated parental involvement** for each of the three income groups was calculated and compared. The findings are shown in Table 5.7

Table 5.7. Comparison of the SIPI of the different parental income groups

Income group	N	Mean SIPI	SD
1	58	47.707	13.190
2	88	48.000	12.088
3	59	46.288	10.152
F (2,202) = 0.39 ; P>0.05			

There was no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between the average **school initiated parental involvement** of the three parental income groups (see Table 5.7). This result is in accordance with those of Hickman *et al* (1995:129) and Shaver and Walls (1998:94) who also found no significant relationship between parental SES and parental involvement generally.

This finding suggests that these Swazi teachers and schools did not discriminate against parents according to their income level but rather made equal efforts to involve parents of all income groups. Apparently Swazi teachers did not make the stereotypic judgements against parents of lower SES that some teachers have been found to make in other studies (Epstein & Dauber 1991:290). This may be because the majority of teachers and the parents came from the same, Swazi, racial-ethnic community, regardless of SES (see 4.2.4.1). Alternatively, this may have been because teachers were unable to identify the SES of parents because low SES is not linked with any particular race or ethnic group in this community. In foreign countries parents with lower SES can often easily be identified by their race since SES is often closely linked with race-ethnicity (Lynch & Mills 1993:66; Kalmijn & Kraaykamp 1996:23; Placier1996:246).

5.5.1.2 *Comparison between parents of the three different income groups with regard to **parent initiated parental involvement***

The average **parent initiated parental involvement** for each of the three parent income groups was calculated and compared. The results are shown in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8. Comparison of the PIPI of the different parental income groups

Income group	n	Mean PIPI	SD
1	58	56.845	10.874
2	88	60.386	7.430
3	59	59.763	8.345
F (2, 202) = 3.01; p>0.05			

There was no significant difference ($p>0.05$) between the average **parent initiated parental involvement** of the three income groups (see Table 5.8). This finding indicated that parents, regardless of income level, were generally involved at similar levels in activities that they could initiate. Again, this finding is in accordance with the work of Hickman *et al* (1995:129), and Shaver and Walls (1998:94). Thus,

factors proposed by various authors to explain the lower levels of involvement of parents of lower SES were not lowering involvement in this community (see 2.7.2.1). Certainly, the argument that parents of lower SES may feel distanced and alienated from culturally different middle-class schools (Weiss & Edwards 1992:216) does not operate in this Swazi urban community. The majority of teachers and parents came from the same cultural-ethnic group (see 4.2.4.1). Further, there is very little cultural stratification in the Swazi population in accordance with income groups (personal observation).

Nevertheless, one may expect parents of lower SES to be under increased pressure due to financial constraints (Davies 1991:381), and to have extra barriers to their involvement such as less flexible work hours (Heymann & Earle 2000:842). However, the fact that parents in the lowest income group earned less than E1500 per month, did not seem to have a negative impact on the extent to which they became involved in their children's education in this community.

It is possible, however, that even though Swazi parents of different income levels were involved generally to the same degree in their children's education, that they may have been involved to different degrees in different types of parental involvement activities as was found by Hickman *et al* (1995:129). This possibility should be investigated in future studies. Many other authors have shown differences in the degree of involvement between parents of different SES and some types of parental involvement (see 2.7.2.1).

5.5.1.3 *Comparison between parents of the three different income groups with regard to **parental attitude to the school**.*

The average **parental attitude to the school** for each of the three parent income groups was calculated and compared. The findings are shown in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9 Comparison of the PAS of the different parental income groups

Group	n	Mean PAS	SD
1	58	45.931	7.825
2	88	45.784	6.012
3	59	43.695	6.859

F (2,202) = 2.10; p > 0.05

There was no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between the average **parental attitude to the school** of the three parent income groups (see Table 5.9). This finding supports the proposal that parents in this community did not feel alienated or distanced from the schools as the result of having a low SES. This may have been because the school was not significantly culturally different from these parents and because teachers did not discriminate against them as was suggested by the finding that parent SES had no significant relationship with SIPI (see 5.5.1.1).

5.5.2 Hypothesis 2

With regard to hypothesis 2 stated in section 4.2.2.2, the following null hypothesis was tested:

- There is no significant difference between the average **school initiated parental involvement** of parents with different levels of education.
- This hypothesis was also tested for **parental attitude to the school** and **parent initiated parental involvement**.

Less than 4% of the parents had no formal education or only primary education. As a result only two groups of parents were considered, those who had completed secondary education and those who had completed tertiary education.

Group 1: Parents who had completed their secondary education, i.e. high school (n = 55).

Group 2: Parents who had completed their tertiary education, i.e. obtained either a college diploma or university degree (n=149).

The means of both education groups were calculated and compared for each of the three measures of parental involvement defined in 5.2.2.5. The findings are presented in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10. Difference between the average parental involvement scores of parents with secondary and tertiary levels of education.

Variable	Level of education	n	Mean	SD	t	df	P
SIPI	Secondary	55	50.036	11.625	1.63	202	p> 0.05
	Tertiary	149	46.960	12.106			
PIPI	Secondary	55	58.909	10.896	0.46	202	p> 0.05
	Tertiary	149	59.564	8.219			
PAS	Secondary	55	47.800	5.895	2.88	202	P< 0.01
	Tertiary	149	44.779	6.896			

There was no significant difference ($p>0.05$) between the mean scores of parents who completed secondary education and those who completed tertiary education for both **school initiated parental involvement**, and **parent initiated parental involvement** (see Table 5.10). This indicated that, in general, parents who completed secondary education and those that completed tertiary education did not differ significantly with regard to either parent or school initiated parental involvement. These findings are in accordance with those of Sitole (1993:138) who found that parents of underachieving children who had completed primary, secondary, or tertiary education did not differ with respect to either involvement initiated by the school or the parent.

Swazi teachers did not appear to discriminate, in terms of how much they attempted to involve parents, between parents who had completed secondary education and those who had completed tertiary education. It is possible, however, that some Swazi teacher's make less effort to involve the tiny fraction of less educated parents. Some teachers in the USA do not make the effort to involve parents that have less than a high school education because, they claim, these parents lack the ability or willingness to help (Epstein 1987a:131).

Parents with secondary and those with tertiary education also did not differ significantly in the degree to which they were involved in their children's education in activities that they could initiate. This finding is not unexpected since one would intuitively expect both secondary and tertiary educated parents to have sufficient skills, and feel confident, to help their primary school children.

Parental illiteracy was identified by South African educators in several studies (see 3.4.4.1) to be the biggest barrier to parental involvement. However, in this study because a tiny fraction of parents (less than 3%) had only a primary education, while less than 1% had had no formal education, this portion of the sample was excluded from the analysis. Thus, it was not possible to tell whether illiterate Swazi parents were less involved in their children's education. Regardless, it was clear that very few parents of these urban Swazi primary learners, unlike those in urban Soweto schools (Mkwanazi 1997:27), were likely to be illiterate. This finding is in accordance with the fact that 4 out of 5 of these schools were located in Manzini, which has the highest literacy rate for the country (IE 1994:1). Consequently, illiteracy is not likely to form a barrier to parental involvement for the vast majority of Swazi urban parents particularly those living in Manzini. However, since approximately one third of the Swazi population as a whole is illiterate (IE 1994:32) it would be necessary for future studies to investigate the relationship between parental illiteracy and parent involvement. The findings of such studies are likely to

be particularly pertinent in rural communities where the majority of illiterate adults reside (IE 1994:2).

There was, however, a significant difference ($p < 0.01$) in the average **attitude of parents to the school** of parents who completed secondary education and those who completed tertiary education (see Table 5.10). Parents who completed secondary education appeared to have a more positive attitude to the school than those who completed tertiary education. This finding is contrary to that of Sitole (1993:138) who found no difference.

Since Swazi schools reflect Swazi culture generally (see 4.2.4.1), this more positive parental attitude of the secondary level educated parents was not likely to be because these parents felt more comfortable culturally at the school. Parents with tertiary education were likely to feel equally comfortable at the school. McGillicuddy-Delisi (in Watkins 1997:4) proposed that less educated parents may be more likely than other parents to understand the importance of parental involvement. However, if this were the case one would expect this more positive attitude to translate into more involvement by these parents. The levels of PIFI did not differ significantly for these two groups. The fact that the SIFI did not differ significantly for the two groups suggests that the teachers and school were not discriminating between the groups in favour of the less educated parents. One possible explanation for this more positive attitude is that these less educated parents may have had lower expectations of the school and thus, had a more positive attitude to its efforts and achievements.

5.5.3 Hypothesis 3

With regard to hypothesis 3 stated in section 4.2.2.3, the following null hypothesis was tested:

- There is no significant difference between the average **school initiated parental involvement** of parents who speak different home languages.
- This hypothesis was also tested for **parent initiated parental involvement** and **parental attitude to the school**.

Since more than 93% of the sample population spoke either siSwati or English, only the responses of parents speaking these two languages were analysed.

Group 1: Parents whose home language was siSwati (n = 180).

Group 2: Parents whose home language was English (n = 23).

The means of both language groups were calculated and compared for each of the three measures of parental involvement defined in 5.2.2.5. The results are presented in Table 5.11.

Table 5.11. Difference between the average parental involvement scores of siSwati- and English-speaking parents.

Variable	Language	n	Mean	SD	t	df	P
SIPI	siSwati	180	47.528	11.794	0.80	201	p> 0.05
	English	23	49.696	15.019			
PIPI	siSwati	180	58.750	9.056	1.42	201	p> 0.05
	English	23	61.609	9.321			
PAS	siSwati	180	45.661	6.657	0.65	201	p> 0.05
	English	23	44.696	7.138			

There was no significant difference ($p>0.05$) between the mean scores of siSwati and English-speaking parents with regard to **school initiated parental involvement, parent initiated parental involvement, or parental attitude to the school** (see Table 5.11). This indicates that, in general, siSwati-speaking and English-speaking parents did not differ significantly with regard to parental involvement as measured by this instrument.

These schools taught and communicated with learners and their parents in English (see 4.2.4.1). The findings suggested that the fact that siSwati-speaking parents spoke a different language from that used by the school did not form a barrier to their involvement. This finding is not unexpected since the majority of parents were well educated (see 5.5.2) and a pass in English is required for the completion of O'Levels (the exams that conclude secondary education) (SASB 1996:124). Thus, one would expect most siSwati-speaking parents to be able to communicate effectively in English. Further, despite the fact that these schools used English as the medium of instruction and communication, the home language of most teachers was siSwati and siSwati speaking parents and teachers had the same ethnic-cultural background (see 4.2.4.1). Consequently, cultural differences would not create barriers for the involvement of these siSwati-speaking parents.

Since speaking siSwati is an integral part of Swazi culture, the English-speaking parents can be assumed to have a different cultural background from the schools and the majority of teachers. Nevertheless, these findings suggest that teachers made similar efforts to involve all parents and that this cultural difference did not present a barrier to the involvement of English-speaking parents. The fact that these parents could communicate easily with teachers and were not socioeconomically disadvantaged (personal observation) probably explained this finding. Kerbow and Berhardt (in Zellman and Waterman 1998:371) found that minority parents are often more involved than non-minority parents when SES is equal. Scott-Jones (1987:273) points out that adequate SES control is extremely difficult to obtain, so that even when attempts are made to control SES, differences in involvement may sometimes be erroneously ascribed to race-ethnicity when they are, in fact, due to SES.

It is however, possible that parents from these different language–ethnic groups were involved in different ways in their children’s education and that the effectiveness of parental involvement activities may differ according to the race-ethnicity of the parents and children as has been found in foreign studies (see 2.7.2.2).

Since the hypothesis was not tested for the tiny proportion of parents, less than 7%, who spoke languages other than English and siSwati at home. It is possible that the different home languages of these parents, to that used by these schools, may have been barriers to their involvement.

5.5.4 Hypothesis 4

With regard to hypothesis 4 stated in paragraph 4.2.2.4, the following null hypothesis was tested:

- There is no significant difference between the average **school initiated parental involvement** of employed and unemployed parents.
- This hypothesis was also tested for **parent initiated parental involvement** and **parental attitude to the school**.

The parents were in one of two groups.

Group 1: Unemployed parents (n = 26).

Group 2: Employed parents (n = 192).

The means of the employed and unemployed parents were calculated and compared for each of the three measures of parental involvement defined in 5.2.2.5. The findings are presented in Table 5.12.

Table 5.12. Difference between the average parental involvement scores of employed and unemployed parents.

Variable	Employment status	n	Mean	SD	t	df	P
SIPI	Employed	192	47.135	11.935	1.56	216	p>0.05
	Unemployed	26	51.038	12.350			
PIPI	Employed	192	58.958	8.884			

	Unemployed	26	59.962	9.739			
PAS	Employed	192	45.151	6.941			
	Unemployed	26	47.192	5.020	1.45	216	p>0.05

There was no significant difference ($p>0.05$) between the mean scores of employed and unemployed parents with regard to **school initiated parental involvement**, **parent initiated parental involvement**, or **parental attitude to the school** (see Table 5.12). This indicated that, in general, employed and unemployed parents did not differ significantly with regard to parental involvement as measured by this instrument.

Unemployment has been identified as one of the biggest barriers to parental involvement in several South African studies (see 3.4.4.1). Further, parents who work full-time may actually be more involved in home involvement activities than those who do not (see 2.7.2.3). The findings of this study suggest, however, that there is no relationship between employment and parental involvement. However, the statistical analysis was based on the work status of only the parent who answered the questionnaire. Thus, it is possible that the other parent in these families was working. These families may have been sufficiently well-off economically that the second parent did not need to work. Thus, the stresses believed to prevent unemployed parents from being more involved in their children's education (van Wyk 2001:126) may not have been operating in these families. Thus, no conclusion can be reached about the effect of unemployment on parental involvement in this community except that the unemployment of one parent seemed to have no significant effect on parental involvement, and that the majority of responding parents (over 88%) were employed. In only 12% of these families was either one or both parents unemployed. One would expect a substantial proportion of these families to have had at least one parent employed. Thus, unemployment of both parents is probably very rare in this community and as a

result is not likely to be a barrier to involvement for the majority of parents whose children attend urban Swazi primary schools.

5.5.5 Hypothesis 5

With regard to hypothesis 5 stated in paragraph 4.2.2.5, the following null hypothesis was tested:

- There is no significant difference between the average **school initiated parental involvement** of single and married parents.
- This hypothesis was also tested for **parental attitude to the school** and **parent initiated parental involvement**.

Due to the very low numbers of divorced and remarried respondents, the subjects were divided into two groups.

Group 1: Married parents, which included remarried parents (n = 157).

Group 2: Unmarried parents, which included single and divorced parents (n = 55).

The means of both groups were calculated and compared for each of the measures of parental involvement (see 5.2.2.5). The findings are presented in Table 5.13.

Table 5.13. Difference between the average parental involvement scores of married and single parents.

Variable.	Marital status	n	Mean	SD	T	df	P
SIPI	Married	157	47.108	11.763	0.93	210	p> 0.05
	Unmarried	55	48.873	12.962			
PIPI	Married	157	58.739	8.7904			

	Unmarried	55	59.455	9.7084			
PAS	Married	157	44.975	6.9282			
	Unmarried	55	46.509	6.333	1.44	210	p> 0.05

There was no significant difference ($p>0.05$) between the mean scores of married and unmarried parents with regard to **school initiated parental involvement**, **parent initiated parental involvement**, or **parental attitude to the school** (see Table 5.13). This indicates that, in general, married and unmarried urban Swazi parents do not differ significantly with regard to parental involvement.

These results suggest that single Swazi parents initiated as much involvement in their children's education as married parents and that Swazi educators were not biased against single parents, in terms of involving them in their children's education. This despite the fact that some negative bias remains against single parents in many societies (Scott-Jones 1987:271). Sitole (1993:122) also observed no differences between parent and school initiated involvement of single and married parents. However he found that married parents had a more positive attitude to the school.

Many researchers have found lower levels of involvement in single-parent families, especially in terms of involvement at the school (see 2.7.2.4). Grolnick *et al* (1997:546) found lower levels of parental involvement for single parents for all three dimensions of parental involvement that they studied, personal, cognitive and school. However, when SES was held constant only school involvement differed (Grolnick *et al* 1997:546). This suggests that it was the low SES of these families rather than the family structure that reduced involvement in the other dimensions. Evidence of other studies also suggests that lower SES may explain many of the negative effects of single-parenthood on children (Scott-Jones 1987:272). Since SES had no effect on parental involvement in this study, the finding that marital status has no effect on parental involvement is not surprising. It is possible,

however, that single-parents were less involved in some types of parental involvement, such as involvement at the school, as has been found in several other studies.

5.5.6 Hypothesis 6

With regard to hypothesis 6 stated in paragraph 4.2.2.6, the following null hypothesis was tested:

- There is no significant positive correlation between **school initiated parental involvement** and learners' achievement in mathematics.
- This hypothesis was also tested for **parental attitude to the school** and **parent initiated parental involvement**.

To test this hypothesis the second term mathematics marks of 218 learners were used. The Pearson-Product Moment correlation was used to ascertain if a significant positive correlation existed. The findings of the test are recorded in Table 5.14.

Table 5.14. Correlation between parental involvement and learners' mathematics achievement

	SIPI	PIPI	PAS
Mathematics achievement	-0.051	0.041	0.107
p > 0.05 for all correlations			

No significant relationship ($p > 0.05$) was found between any of the three measures of parental involvement and children's mathematics achievement (see Table 5.14).

Many authors have found a correlation between academic achievement and parental involvement and believe that parental involvement improves academic achievement (see 2.4). On the other hand, Ma's (1999:78) suggests that, through academic excellence or taking an advanced course, the child may initiate at least some types

of parental involvement. In either case a correlation between academic excellence and parental involvement would be expected. These results, however, support neither proposal.

Parent initiated parental involvement had no relationship with mathematics grade in this study despite the fact that the teacher's felt mathematics achievement was a good indication of general achievement and that learner grades have been found to be particularly sensitive to parental involvement (see 4.2.2.6). It is possible that a relationship would have been found, however, had a different measure of academic achievement been used. It is also possible that some types of involvement in Epstein's (1995:704) six areas may have had a relationship with mathematics achievement, even though the general level of parent and teacher initiated involvement did not. Many studies have found a relationship between academic achievement and only some types of parental involvement rather than with parental involvement generally (see 2.4).

Teachers in this study did not make more effort to involve the parents of either high or low achievers in mathematics. This is surprising as one would expect the teachers to be communicating with the parents of children who are having problems with mathematics more frequently (see 2.4.3) and to be encouraging them to help with homework or supervision. Such a relationship may yet be found if the relationship between mathematics achievement and these types of involvement alone is investigated.

The parents' attitude to the school was not effected by their children's mathematics achievement. This is unexpected as parents often hold the school responsible for poor academic achievements (Hoover-Dempsey *et al* 1987:419) and thus, one might expect the parents to have a more negative attitude if their children were struggling with mathematics. Since the parents' attitudes to the school were

generally very positive (see 5.6), perhaps they felt that the school was helping these children as much as was possible.

5.5.7 Hypothesis 7

With regard to hypothesis 7 stated in paragraph 4.2.2.7, the following null hypothesis was tested:

- There is no significant positive correlation between **school initiated parental involvement** and learners' achievement in English.
- This hypothesis was also tested for **parental attitude to the school** and **parent initiated parental involvement**.

To test these hypotheses the second term English marks of 218 learners were used. The Pearson-Product Moment correlation was used to ascertain if a significant positive correlation existed. The findings of the test are recorded in Table 5.15.

Table 5.15. Correlation between parental involvement and learners' English achievement.

	SIPI	PIPI	PAS
English achievement	-0.050	-0.019	-0.076
p > 0.05 for all correlations			

No significant positive correlation existed between any of these three measures of parental involvement and children's English achievement (see Table 5.15).

As is the case for mathematics achievement these results do not support the correlations found between parental involvement and academic achievement found by other researchers (see 5.5.6). However, as is the case for mathematics, this may

be due to the particular measure of academic achievement, English grades, used, or because this study did not focus on correlations between this and Epstein's (1995:704) six types of parental involvement separately.

5.5.8 Hypothesis 8

With regard to hypothesis 8 stated in paragraph 4.2.2.8, the following null hypothesis was tested:

- There is no significant difference in the average **school initiated parental involvement** between parents whose children attend different schools.
- The hypothesis was also tested for **parent initiated parental involvement** and **parental attitude to the school**.

Due to the low numbers of respondents whose children attended the two private schools, the respondents were divided into only four groups on the basis of which school their child attended.

Group 1: Parents whose children attended either of the two private schools, School A and School B (n = 18).

Group 2: Parents whose children attended School C (n = 37).

Group 3: Parents whose children attended School D (n = 82).

Group 4: Parents whose children attended School E (n = 81).

The F-test was used to determine whether a significant difference existed between the average parental involvement of the parents whose children attended the four different school groups for each of the three measures of parental involvement defined in 5.2.2.5.

5.5.8.1 *Comparison between the parents whose children attended the four different school groups with regard to **school initiated parental involvement**.*

The average **school initiated parental involvement** for each of the four school groups was calculated and compared. The results are presented in Table 5.16.

Table 5.16 Comparison of the SIPI of the different school groups

Group	n	Mean SIPI	SD
1	18	49.111	10.420
2	37	49.568	11.572
3	82	49.634	10.530
4	81	44.309	13.379
F (3,214) = 3.34; p < 0.05			

There was a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the average **school initiated parental involvement** of the four school groups (see Table 5.17). Therefore, in order to determine between which groups these differences existed, the Bonferroni post hoc comparison test was used (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:350). The findings are presented in Table 5.17.

Table 5.17. Bonferroni analysis of the level of SIPI for school groups

School groups	Difference between the means	t value	P
1 – 2	0.456	$t < 2.663$	$p > 0.05$
1 – 3	0.523	$t < 2.663$	$P > 0.05$
1 – 4	4.802	$t < 2.663$	$p > 0.05$
2 – 3	0.067	$t < 2.663$	$p > 0.05$
2 – 4	5.259	$t < 2.663$	$p > 0.05$
3 – 4	5.326	$t > 2.663$	$P < 0.05$

There was a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between groups 3 and 4 (see Table 5.17). These results indicate that the teachers at School D made a greater effort to initiate the involvement of parents than the teachers at School E.

Schools of lower SES have been found to have lower levels of some types of parental involvement (see 2.7.4.3). However, a relationship between school SES and parental involvement does not explain the differences found between School D and E. School E actually had a slightly higher SES than School D, as indicated by higher school fees (see Table 4.1). Therefore the school with the higher SES had lower school initiated involvement. In fact, there was very little difference in the SES of School D and School E. Table 4.1 shows that the school fees at the two schools were very similar, classes were equally crowded and the buildings and facilities at both schools were of a similar standard (personal observation). The other schools fell between Schools E and D in their level of SIPI. This suggests that SES was not the decisive factor.

Research into which types of parental involvement are responsible for the differences between these two schools would probably shed light on why this difference exists. Ho and Willms (1996:132) found that schools varied considerably in terms of parent volunteering and attendance at PTA meetings but little where home discussion, home supervision and school communication were concerned.

The stance of the head-teacher, teachers and schools on parental involvement, however, plays a crucial role in determining the level and type of parental involvement that occurs at the school (see 2.7.4). It seems possible that School D had a more positive approach to involving parents in their children's education and, thus, had a higher level of SIPI than School E.

5.5.8.2 *Comparison between the parents whose children attended the four different school groups with regard to **parent initiated parental involvement**.*

The average **parent initiated parental involvement** for the parents whose children attended the four different school groups was calculated and compared. The findings are presented in Table 5.18.

Table 5.18. Comparison of the PIPI of the different school groups

School groups	N	Mean PIPI	SD
1	18	59.389	6.400
2	37	62.703	7.276
3	82	59.061	9.233
4	81	57.370	9.512
F (3, 214) = 3.08; p<0.05			

There was a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the average **parent initiated parental involvement** of parents whose children attended the four school groups (see Table 5.18). Therefore, in order to determine between which groups these differences existed, the Bonferroni post hoc comparison test was used. The findings are presented in Table 5.19.

Table 5.19. Bonferroni analysis of the level of PIPI for school groups

School groups	Difference between the means	t value	P
1 – 2	3.314	$t < 2.663$	$p > 0.05$
1 – 3	0.328	$t < 2.663$	$p > 0.05$
1 – 4	2.019	$t < 2.663$	$p > 0.05$
2 – 3	3.642	$t < 2.663$	$p > 0.05$
2 – 4	5.332	$t > 2.663$	$P < 0.05$
3 – 4	1.691	$t < 2.663$	$p > 0.05$

There was a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between school groups 2 and 4 (see Table 5.19). This indicates that parents whose children attend School C were more involved in **parent initiated parental involvement** activities than parents whose children attend School E. No significant difference in **parent initiated parental involvement** was observed between any other school groups.

Again differences in the SES of the schools, reflected by parents' ability to pay the school fees (see Table 4.1), are not likely to explain the differences in the levels of PIPI seen here. Although School C does have a higher SES than School E there was

no significant difference between the first school group, which represents the two private schools and had a considerably higher SES, and the other school groups. It seems more likely that there is some other reason that parents at School E initiated less parental involvement. The low level of enthusiasm shown by the school in terms of initiating parental involvement (see 5.5.8.1), may have had a negative effect on the parents initiation of involvement. Epstein (1995:706-707) notes that parents feel more positive about their abilities to help when encouraged by the school.

Clearly, however, since there were no significant differences in either PIPI or SIPI (see 5.5.8.1) between more than one pair of schools, on the whole Swazi schools and parents initiated similar levels of parental involvement despite economic differences. Possibly this was due to strong similarities in their views of the roles of the parent, teacher and school.

5.5.8.3 *Comparison between the parents whose children attended the four different school groups with regard to **parental attitude to the school**.*

The average **parental attitude to the school** of each of the four groups of parents whose children attended the different school groups was calculated and compared. The findings are presented in Table 5.20.

Table 5.20. Comparison of the PAS of the different school groups

School group	N	Mean PAS	SD
1	18	44.556	6.972
2	37	47.892	4.783
3	82	45.171	7.002
4	81	44.667	7.083
F (3,214) = 2.15; p > 0.05			

There was no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between the average **parental attitude to the school** of the four groups of parents whose children attended the four different schools (see Table 5.20). Thus, parents from all four school groups

had similar attitudes to the schools their children attended. This suggests that the differences in the levels of PIPI between Schools C and E were not due to the parents at school E having a negative attitude to the school but, rather, due to some other factor. Possibly parents at School E were not recognising their role in their children's education due to a lack of encouragement from the school.

5.5.9 Hypothesis 9

With regard to hypothesis 9 stated in paragraph 4.2.2.9, the following null hypothesis was tested:

- There is no significant difference in the average **school initiated parental involvement** of parents of different ages.
- The hypothesis was also tested for **parent initiated parental involvement** and **parental attitude to the school**.

The respondents were divided into three groups on the basis of their ages.

Group 1: 20 –30 years (n = 24).

Group 2: 30 – 40 years (n = 110).

Group 3: Above 40 years (n = 79).

The F-test was used to determine whether a significant difference existed between the average parental involvement of the parents in the three different age groups for each of the three measures of parental involvement defined in 5.2.2.5.

5.5.9.1 *Comparison between the parents of the three different age groups with regard to **school initiated parental involvement***

The average **school initiated parental involvement** for each of the three age groups was calculated and compared. The findings are presented in Table 5.21.

Table 5.21. Comparison of the SIPI of the different parental age groups

Age group	n	Mean SIPI	SD
1	24	49.417	12.704
2	110	48.273	12.057
3	79	45.785	11.806
F (2,210) = 1.33; p>0.05			

There was no significant difference ($p>0.05$) between the average **school initiated parental involvement** of the three parental age groups (see Table 5.21). This suggests that teachers made the same amount of effort to involve parents regardless of the parent's age. These results are in accordance with those of Sitole (1993:124) who found no significant difference between parents of different ages and school initiated contact.

5.5.9.2 *Comparison between the parents of the three different age groups with regard to **parent initiated parental involvement***

The average **parent initiated parental involvement** for each of the three responding parent age groups was calculated and compared. The results are presented in Table 5.22.

Table 5.22. Comparison of the PIPI of the different parental age groups

Age group	n	Mean PIPI	SD
1	24	60.583	6.206
2	110	60.509	8.026
3	79	56.671	10.311
F (2, 210) = 4.78; p<0.01			

There was a significant difference ($p<0.01$) between the average **parent initiated parental involvement** of the three age groups (see Table 5.22). Therefore, in

order to determine between which groups these differences existed, the Bonferroni post hoc comparison test was used. These findings are presented in Table 5.23.

Table 5.23 Bonferroni analysis of the level of PIPI and parental age

Age groups	Difference between the means	t value	P
1 – 2	0.074	t< 2.413	p> 0.05
2 – 3	3.838	t> 2.413	p< 0.05
1 – 3	3.912	t< 2.413	p> 0.05

These results indicated that parents who were between 30 - 40 years of age were more involved in **parent initiated parental involvement** activities than parents who were above 40 years of age (see Table 5.23). These results are similar to those of Sitole (1993:124) who found 30–40 year old mothers to initiate more involvement than older or younger mothers, although no significant differences were observed for fathers. Mkwanazi (1994:29) noted that educators felt that older parents were less involved than younger parents. Some older parents have a more limited, traditional view of their role and place greater trust in the teacher as the professional who does not need their interference (Rasekoala 1997:27).

5.5.9.3 *Comparison between the parents of the three different age groups with regard to **parental attitude to the school**.*

The average **parental attitude to the school** for each of the three responding parent age groups was calculated and compared. The findings are presented in Table 5.24.

Table 5.24. Comparison of the PAS of the different parental age groups

Group	n	Mean PAS	SD
1	24	45.458	6.345
2	110	45.372	6.685
3	79	45.291	7.194
F (2,210) = 0.01; p > 0.05			

There was no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between the average **parental attitude to the school** of the three responding parent age groups (see Table 5.24). This suggests that the parents in all three age groups had similar attitudes to the school and that it was not a negative attitude to the school that resulted in the parents who were over 40 initiating less parental involvement. This finding differs from that of Sitole (1993:124) who found the more involved mothers to also have a significantly more positive attitude to the school.

5.5.10 Hypothesis 10

With regard to hypothesis 10 stated in paragraph 4.2.1.10, the following null hypothesis was tested:

- There is no significant difference between the average **school initiated parental involvement** of male and female parents.
- This hypothesis was also tested for **parent initiated parental involvement** and **parental attitude to the school**.

The respondents were divided into two groups.

Group 1: Male parents (n = 67).

Group 2: Female parents (n = 145).

The means of both parent genders were calculated and compared for each of the three measures of parental involvement defined in 5.2.2.5. The findings are presented in Table 5.25.

Table 5.25. Difference between the average parental involvement scores of male and female parents.

Variable.	Gender	n	Mean	SD	t	df	P
SIPI	Male	67	47.075	12.419	0.31	210	p> 0.05
	Female	145	47.628	11.786			
PIPI	Male	67	56.925	10.142	2.21	210	p< 0.05
	Female	145	59.855	8.375			
PAS	Male	67	44.746	7.149	0.99	210	p> 0.05
	Female	145	45.745	6.682			

There was no significant difference ($p>0.05$) between the mean scores of the parents of different genders with regard to **school initiated parental involvement** and **parental attitude to the school** (see Table 5.25). This indicates that, in general, male and female parents do not differ significantly with regard to **school initiated parental involvement** and **parental attitude to the school**. One would expect both parents to have a similar attitude to the school, which they probably both played a role in choosing. Swazi teachers appear to provide as many opportunities for involvement to fathers as to mothers. However, research indicates that many teachers assume that mothers will be more involved than fathers (Tichenor 1998:253).

There was a significant difference ($p<0.05$) between the average **parent initiated parental involvement** between male and female parents (see Table 5.25). Mothers were involved to a greater extent in parental involvement activities that they

could initiate than fathers. It is also likely that the responding parent was also the more involved parent. Thus, the higher number of mothers that responded to the questionnaire combined with the higher PIPI of mothers than fathers leaves little doubt that female parents did initiate more involvement than male parents. This finding is in line with those of several other studies that have found parental involvement to be gendered (Reay 1995:345; Christenson *et al* 1992a:37). These studies have found that it is the mothers and other female caregivers that are involved in children's schooling regardless of family structure or marital status (Standing 1999:58).

This may simply be because females traditionally have a more nurturing role than males in many societies, including Swazi society, and as a result may feel that parental involvement in education is their responsibility. Reay (1995:346) found that both parents in the USA see parental involvement as the mother's responsibility.

5.6 Parental attitude to the school

A positive parental attitude to the school is vital for successful parental involvement (see 2.7.2.7). Since the aim of this study was to design an effective parental involvement programme for Swaziland it was essential to determine the attitudes of parents to the school.

The parents' responses to the items in PAS suggest, in contrast to the South African findings of Heystek and Louw (1999:25), that parents' attitudes to urban Swazi primary schools were remarkably positive. Researchers in the USA have also found, despite national reports that have criticised teachers, curricula, and standards at public schools, that parents there also tend to have very positive attitudes to these schools and teachers (Epstein 1986:280).

5.6.1 Most positive parental responses in the factor **parental attitude to the school**

In Table 5.26 those questions to which more than 80% of the parents responded positively are shown.

Table 5.26 Most positive parental responses in the factor PAS

Item	Parental response in %			
	Disagree strongly	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Agree strongly
1. This is a very good school	0.9	2.3	30.0	66.8
2. The teachers care about my child	1.4	4.1	39.0	55.5
3. My child likes to talk about school at home	2.3	10.1	27.5	60.1
5. I feel welcome at the school	2.8	7.8	28.0	61.5
7. The school and I have the same goals for my child	4.1	7.3	26.6	61.9
11. My child is learning as much as he can at this school	2.8	10.6	36.7	50.0
13. This school is a good place for learners and parents	4.6	15.1	35.3	45.0

Over 94% of the parents “agreed strongly” or “agreed a little” that their children attended a good school (Item 1) and that the teachers cared for their children (Item 2, Table 5.26). Almost 90% of the parents “agreed strongly” or “agreed a little” that their children liked to talk about school at home (Item 3), that they felt welcome at the school (Item 5), and that they and the school had the same goals (Item 7). Having similar goals is important as a consensus between the home and school helps to counter other negative outside influences and without this consensus the effectiveness of both educators and the family as socialising agents is compromised (Christenson *et al* 1992:195). For all of these items close to 60% of the parents not only agreed but actually “agreed strongly”.

Nearly 80% of the parents also agreed that their children were learning as much as they could (Item 11) and that the school was a good place for learners and parents (Item 13). However, a fairly large proportion of these parents only agreed a little to these items. Further, a substantial percentage of parents, 13.4% and 19.7% respectively, disagreed with these statements. This suggests that, these schools must ensure that they are extending all their learners fully and that parents also benefit from them. Epstein (1991:349-350) mentions that schools must also be of benefit to parents, schools should make room for parents, including establishing resource rooms for their benefit.

Nevertheless, the responses to the items in this section indicate clearly that the vast majority of parents were satisfied with the school and felt comfortable there. This suggests that they trusted the school and would be open to suggestions by the school on how they could be more involved in their children's education. The hostility found between parents and schools in some studies, particularly between poor minority parents and middle-class schools (Ascher 1988:110), was not evident in these urban Swazi schools. This was probably because although education at urban Swazi schools, like that in foreign countries (Ascher 1988:110), is likely to reflect the values and goals of the teachers, the majority of teachers and parents were part of the same Swazi ethnic-racial community (see 4.2.4.1). Thus, these parents were likely to have felt that their values and goals were congruent with those of the school staff, as their response to Item 7 (see Table 5.26) suggested, and that there was continuity between the home and the school.

5.6.2 Less positive parental responses in the factor **parental attitude to the school**

Although all the items in the PAS section drew a majority of positive responses, the items shown in Table 5.27 also drew many negative responses. In each case 20% to 40% of the parents responded negatively. This suggests that schools may need to improve their policies and actions in these areas.

Table 5.27 Less positive parental responses in the factor PAS

Item	Parental response in %			
	Disagree strongly	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Agree strongly
37.The school tells me how my child is doing	5.5	21.1	31.2	42.2
6. Many parents I know help out at school	15.1	23.4	43.6	17.9
14. The school contacts me when my child is doing, or behaving well, and not only for problems	24.3	17.9	24.8	33.0
15.My child's teacher is interested in my opinions	11.5	15.1	33.9	39.5

Although Item 37 was originally in SIPI, it was easy to interpret the parents' responses to this item in terms of PAS, to which it was assigned after factor analysis (see Table 5.2), due to the similarity of the wording of the response choices of SIPI and PAS. More than 70% of the parents agreed that the school told them how their child was doing (see Table 5.27). These results suggest that most parents were satisfied that they were being informed about how their child was doing at school. Nevertheless, generally parents want information about how their children are doing at school (Crozier 1999: 322) and **all** parents should be satisfied that they know how their children are doing.

The more negative response to Item 14 (see Table 5.27), suggests that Item 37 was probably interpreted by most parents to refer to communication of their children's academic results. In Item 14, over 40% of the parents felt that schools only contacted them when their children had problems. The experiences of these parents are in accordance with research that indicates that most contact between teachers and parents occurs when children are having behaviour or learning problems (see 2.4.3). Nevertheless, the fact that 58% of the parents agreed that the school

contacted them for positive things as well, suggests that teachers in Swaziland do not only contact parents when there are problems.

Although, the responses to Item 6 suggested that there was room for more parents to help at the school, the majority of parents reported that they knew many parents who helped at the school. These results were remarkably positive. A study by Epstein (1986:281) done in Maryland in the USA discovered that 70% of parent's never helped in the classroom, on class trips or did fundraising.

Almost 40% of the parents agreed strongly that the school was interested in their opinions. This is important as when parents feel valued they also feel more confident their ability to help their children and are likely to be less hostile and more receptive, to the school (see 2.7.2.6). Both of these factors are likely to increase parental involvement. Thus, it is unfortunate that almost 34% of parents only agreed a little and over 25% disagreed with this statement.

5.6.3 Items 4 and 12 in the factor **parental attitude to the school**

As discussed in 5.2.3, Items 4 and 12 did not deal directly with the parents' attitude to the school. As a result they are discussed separately.

Table 5.28 Parental responses to Items 4 and 12 in the factor PAS

Item	Parental response in %			
	Disagree strongly	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Agree strongly
4. My child should get more homework	3.7	10.1	21.6	64.7
12. Parents get more involved in the lower grades	10.1	23.4	32.6	33.9

The parents' responses to Item 4 (see Table 5.28) indicate that Swazi parents, like the majority of other parents (Olympia, Jenson, Clark and Sheridan 1992:309)

believe strongly in the importance of homework. This suggests that if they were convinced of the importance of their own role in helping their children with homework and knew how to do so, they would be willing and effective partners in this area (see 2.4.5 & 2.7.2.6).

The parents' responses to Item 12 (see Table 5.28) also show that most parents believed that parents were more involved in the lower grades, as has been found in many other studies (see 2.8).

5.7 Parent initiated parental involvement

The section PIFI measured how involved parents were in their children's education in terms of activities that they could decide whether or not to initiate and that were essentially in their, rather than the schools, control (see 5.2.2.5). Nevertheless, it must be remembered that the school's attitude to parental involvement, is decisive in terms of how much and what type of parental involvement actually occurs and has a large impact on the parents confidence and motivation to be involved (see 2.7.2.6 and 2.7.4).

Since negative responses to these items would probably be perceived by the parents to reflect badly on themselves, it was possible that parent responses were biased in the direction of what they believed to be more socially acceptable responses. Thus, the parents' responses may have been more positive than was really the case. An attempt was made to limit this effect by assuring parents of the anonymity of the questionnaire.

5.7.1 Parent initiated activities that the majority of parents had done frequently

Those activities which the majority of parents reported that they had done **many times that year** are presented in Table 5.29 below.

Table 5.29 Most frequent PIFI activities

Item	Parental response in %			
	Parent does not do this	Parent has not done this yet this year	Parent has done this once or a few times	Parent has done this many times
16. I talk to my child about school work	0.9	0.0	15.1	83.9
20. I help my child with homework	3.7	2.8	27.5	66.1
21. I check that my child has done his/her homework	5.1	4.1	22.0	68.8
27. I teach my child household chores	3.2	6.9	22.0	67.9
35. I limit the amount of time my child watches TV	6.9	2.8	33.9	56.4
36. I have rules about homework	8.3	8.3	21.1	62.4

The findings suggest that majority of parents were strongly involved in terms of home discussion (Item 16, Table 5.29). Since home discussion has been found to have a particularly strong impact on learner academic success (see 2.4.8), this finding is encouraging. Epstein (1986:282) found that home discussion was one of the most popular techniques encouraged by teachers and experienced by parents.

The vast majority of parents reported that they helped with homework, most (66%) many times (see Item 20, Table 5.29). This finding contrasts with that of Heystek (1999:102) where only 14% "good parental participation" in homework was noted by teachers and 68% "little participation". The *American National Educational Goals* report (in Balli, 1998:143), documents that while 65% of parents reported that they helped their first graders with homework, this percentage had dropped to 14% by the eighth grade. Baker and Stevenson (1986:158-159) found that 83% of mothers claimed to have helped their child with homework that year, while 22% did so regularly. Although the Swazi parents may have rated themselves higher than teachers would have in order to provide socially acceptable responses, the much

lower self-ratings for other items (see Tables 5.30 and 5.31) suggest that the majority of Swazi parents, unlike parents in communities in South Africa and the USA, frequently do help with homework at this level. This suggests that Swazi parents realise the importance of homework, and their role in it. This finding is further supported by parental responses to Items 4 (see Table 5.28), 21 and 36 (see Table 5.29). Homework can be one of the most beneficial forms of parental involvement (see 2.4.5).

Items 21, 35 & 36 (see Table 5.29) describe supervisory activities. Almost two thirds of the parents frequently checked that their children had done their homework, limited the amount of time their children watched TV, and had rules about homework. This is encouraging since home supervision has been found to result in a number of positive child outcomes including improved learner attitudes, behaviour and learning (see 2.4.2). These findings are in accordance with those of Epstein (1986:280-281) who found that one of the most pervasive forms of parent involvement is supervision of their children at home. However, the fact that between 10 - 17 % of parents did not do these things at all that year suggests that not all parents realised the benefits of supervising their children's time and activities, and that they need to be informed of these benefits.

Item 27 falls under parenting (Epstein1995:706). Children require chores at home in order to learn responsibility, however, there must be a balance between the time they spend on these chores and their other activities (Epstein 1995:706). Clearly, the majority of Swazi parents ensured that their children did chores. However, due to the way in which the question was phrased, it is not clear whether parents understood that a balance must be maintained between chores and other activities.

5.7.2 Parent initiated activities that the majority of parents had not done frequently

Those activities that the majority of parents reported that they had done either infrequently or not at all are presented in Table 5.30. Since the questionnaires were completed in October, it seems likely that if the parent had not performed an activity yet that year, that he or she was not going to at all, that year.

Table 5.30. Infrequent PIPI activities

Item	Parental response in %			
	Parent does not do this	Parent has not done this yet this year	Parent has done this once or a few times	Parent has done this many times
17. I visit the classroom	15.6	11.5	61.5	11.5
18. I read to my child	18.3	13.3	40.4	28.0
19. I listen to my child read	6.0	10.1	36.2	47.7
22. I see that my child makes up work after being absent	11.9	19.3	27.1	41.7
23. I listen to, or read, a story my child wrote	9.6	12.4	42.2	35.8
24. I practice spelling or other skills before a test	9.2	17.4	39.0	34.4
25. I talk to my child about TV programmes	20.7	7.8	33.0	38.5
34. I take my child to museums, libraries, air shows or other educational venues	14.7	14.7	38.5	32.1

More than 70% of the parents visited the classroom during they year, however, most of them visited the classroom just “once or a few times” during the year (see Item 17, Table 5.30). Some of these parents probably visited the classroom for teacher-parent meetings, which were held in the classrooms (personal observation). However, since almost 63% of the parents reported that they had not attended a parent-teacher meeting that year (see Item 32, Table 5.35), many of these parents must have visited for other purposes. Only 11.5% of the parents, actually visited the classroom many times and 27.1% of the parents never visited their child’s classroom at all that year. This suggests that parents did not fully understand the extent to which their children would benefit from these visits because although most parents felt welcome at the school (see Item 5, Table 5.26), most did not visit their children’s classroom frequently.

The majority of parents, 72.1%, 52.3%, 64.2% respectively, did not read to their children (Item 18), listen to their children read (Item 19), or listen to or read a story that their children had written (Item 23), more than a few times a year at most (see Table 5.30). Since reading and writing form the foundation of learning (Overett & Donald 1998:347), and parental involvement in these activities has been shown to benefit children (see 2.4.5) this is clearly a very serious situation. It cannot be acceptable that 31.7%, 16.1% and 22.0% respectively, of these parents had not done these things even once that year. It seems unlikely that parents did not do these things due to lack of ability since the vast majority were well educated (see 5.5.2) and reported that they were able to help with reading (see 5.7.4). It seems likely that parents were not aware of the benefits, or the necessity, of their involvement in these ways.

A large percentage of parents (31.2%) reported that they did not see that their child made up work after being absent (see Item 22, Table 5.30). This probably does not tell one much about their level of involvement, however. This is because it is quite likely that many of these parents were those of children who had not been absent that year. Thus, these parents answered negatively because they had not needed to make sure their child caught-up work. The question was poorly phrased especially since the majority of parents' home language was not English (see 4.2.4.2).

It is of concern that roughly two thirds of the parents only practiced spelling or other skills before a test only a few times during the year at most (see Item 24, Table 5.30). Swazi education is based on a policy of continuous assessment (DP 1998:172), thus, children are continually tested and there are a great many opportunities for parents to help them prepare. Clearly, these parents need to be encouraged to help their children prepare for tests.

It is also unfortunate how few parents (38.5%) discussed TV programmes with their children frequently (Item 25, Table 5.30). Epstein (1986:282) found that very few parents watched and discussed TV programmes with their children. Swazi children, like children in many other countries, tend to watch a great deal of TV (personal observation). Parents can help children to explore their environment by explaining and discussing TV programmes with their children (Christenson *et al* 1992b:195; Jantjes 1995:295). Further, by discussing and restricting the more morally questionable TV programmes parents can help reduce the negative influence that such programmes may have on their children. The benefits of discussing and monitoring TV programmes must be pointed out to parents. Ballantine (1999:171) notes that parents should restrict the number of hours their children spend watching TV.

The majority of the parents reported that they took their children to educational venues at least once during the year (see Item 34, Table 5.30). However, almost 30% had not done so at all that year and need to be encouraged to do so.

5.7.3 Parent initiated activities that a substantial proportion of parents had not done at all

There were a number activities which the only a very small proportion of parents reported that they did many times a year and which at least 40% of parents reported that they had not done at all that year. These are presented in Table 5.31.

Table 5.31 PIFI activities not done by at least 40% of the parents

Item	Parental response in %			
	Parent does not do this	Parent has not done this yet this year	Parent has done this once or a few times	Parent has done this many times
26. I play games at home to teach my child new things	22.5	17.9	36.2	23.4

28. I talk with the teacher on the phone or at school	25.2	13.8	37.6	23.4
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The findings suggest that few parents understood the importance of playing educational games with their children (see Item 26, Table 5.31). Playing educational games is an effective and pleasant way for children to learn (Ascher 1988:109; Rogers 1989:37-38; Caldwell 1998:365). A number of parental involvement programmes include family games that are related to school work (Moles 1982:45). Parents need to understand the potential learning value of these games for their children (Caldwell 1998:367).

Just over 60% of parents reported that they had spoken to the teacher on the phone or in person that year (see Item 28, Table 5.31). Since 70% of the parents reported that they had visited the classroom that year (see Item 17, Table 5.32), a great deal of these conversations probably occurred there. However, almost 40% of the parents reported that they had no verbal communication, of any variety, with teachers (Item 28, Table 5.31). These results are comparable to those of Epstein (1986:281) who found in her study in the USA that more than one third of the parents she studied had not met with the teacher that year and almost two thirds of the parents never communicated by phone with the teacher. Communication by telephone between teachers and parents is common in some foreign schools (Jones 1998:9). However, in Swaziland telephonic communication may be limited because most Swazi schools only have one telephone and teachers are hard to reach as they are not available during lessons (personal observation). The teachers could, however, make their home telephone numbers available. Parents and teachers should be encouraged to talk to each other frequently either by telephone or in person (see 2.4.3).

5.7.4 Items reassigned to parent initiated parental involvement

Items 8 and 9 were reassigned from PAS to PIPI (see Table 5.2). Since the wording of the responses of these two sections differ, with PAS referring to what parents feel able to do and PIPI to what parents actually do, the original wording of these items is used in Table 5.32.

Table 5.32 Parental responses to reassigned Items 8 and 9.

Item	Parental response in %			
	Disagree strongly	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Agree strongly
8. I feel I can help my child in reading	2.3	1.4	24.8	71.6
9. I feel I can help my child in mathematics	2.8	6.9	27.1	63.3

The vast majority of parents agreed that they were able to help with their child's reading (see Item 8, Table 5.32). This makes sense in view of the high levels of education attained by the majority of these parents (see 5.5.2). However, well under 50% of the parents reported that they frequently performed activities that would improve their children's reading abilities (see Items 18, 19, 23 & 24, Table 5.30). Thus, these parents' belief in their abilities did not always translate into action. Possibly parents felt that reading was being dealt with sufficiently at school and that their involvement was not necessary, or perhaps other barriers were effecting the frequency with which they carried out these activities.

Item 9 questioned whether parents felt they could help their children with mathematics. A very large proportion of parents agreed that they could (see Table 5.32). However, because of the wording of this item, which was originally part of PAS and not PIPI, it is not possible to determine from this questionnaire whether parents actually did help their children with mathematics.

5.8 School initiated parental involvement

The SIPI section reports the parents' perceptions of the school and teachers efforts to initiate parental involvement (see 5.2.2.5). It is vital to determine to what extent, and in what ways, the school initiates parental involvement as this is largely responsible for how much parental involvement actually occurs at a school (see 2.7.4).

Since these responses do not reflect on the parents in any way, one can expect them to be more honestly addressed. These were, however, the parents' perceptions of what the schools were doing, rather than definitive statements of what the schools were actually doing.

5.8.1 Parental involvement activities that the schools made the greatest effort to initiate

Those activities which 50% or more of the parents felt the school was doing well or very well are shown in Table 5.33.

Table 5.33 Activities that the schools made the greatest effort to initiate

Item	Parental response in %			
	Does not do this	Does this but could do much better	Does this fairly well	Does this very well
The school...				
39. Asks me to check my child's homework	17.4	19.7	24.8	38.1
42. Sends home clear notices that can be read	11.5	10.6	17.9	60.1
43. Invites me to events at the school	17.4	8.7	20.2	53.7
44. Invites me to parent-teacher meetings at the school	7.3	10.6	14.7	67.4
45. Sends home news about things happening at school	18.4	16.5	27.5	37.6
46. Asks me to raise funds for the school	31.7	14.2	14.7	39.5

Foreign studies indicate that most teachers expect parents to supervise homework (Olympia *et al* 1992:310). The majority of Swazi parents (62.8%) reported that the school asked them to check their children's homework "fairly well" or "very well" (see Item 39, Table 5.33). This figure corresponds well with the 68.8% of the parents who did this many times during the year (see Item 21, Table 5.29). It is likely that being asked to check homework by the school encouraged parents to do so. Clearly, as less than 10% of parents did not check their children's homework at all during the year (see Item 21, Table 5.29), some parents were checking spontaneously without the encouragement of the school. Since home supervision benefits the child (see 2.4.2), schools and teachers need to put emphasis on the parents' role in checking homework such that over 37% of the parents do not feel that the schools efforts in this respect are inadequate.

Over 77% of the parents reported that the school sent home clear notices that could be read (see Item 42, Table 5.33). The responses to this item and to Items 37 (see Table 5.27) and 43, 44 & 45 (see Table 5.33) suggest that school to home communication is a strength at these Swazi schools. This finding is consonant with those of Tichenor (1998:251) and Edwards and Warin (1999:331-335), who found that teachers and schools emphasise school to home communication. School to home communication is important as parents feel confident to help their children or request changes to improve activities when they know what the school is doing (Epstein 1986:288).

A small proportion of parents (11.5%), reported that the school did not send home clear notices at all (Item 42, Table 5.33). It is possible that the learners themselves were not delivering the school's messages. Perhaps teachers should provide incentives to learners to ensure that they deliver the messages and parents should monitor whether their children are delivering the messages. This figure is

comparable with the study done by Epstein (1986:281) that found that 16.4% of parents received no memos from their child's teacher.

Over 73% of the parents reported that the school invited them to events at the school "very well" or "fairly well" (see Item 43, Table 5.33). This is important as the attendance of parents at drama and athletics events, has been found to improve children's academic performance (Dornbusch & Ritter 1988:76).

Most parents (over 80%) reported that the school invited them to parent-teacher meetings well (see Item 44, Table 5.33). The 7% of the parents who reported that the school did not hold parent-teacher meetings, may have missed the notices that informed them of this occasion. Parent-teacher meetings seem to be one of the prevalent forms of parental involvement initiated by the schools and teachers in Swaziland as is also the case in South African (van Wyk 2001:120), and other foreign schools (Epstein & Becker 1982:113; Weiss & Edwards 1992:231).

Just over half of the parents reported that the school asked them to raise funds well (Item 46, Table 5.33). However, over 45% of the parents said the school could "do much better" in this respect or did not ask them to fundraise at all. It seems surprising that such a high proportion of parents were being underutilised as fundraisers as this is one of the most traditional forms of parental involvement (van Wyk 2001:120). These figures match up well with the parents' response to Item 33 (see Table 5.35). Half of the parents said they had done fundraising for the school once to many times during the year, the other half had done no fundraising. These findings suggest a relationship between the schools efforts to initiate fundraising and the amount of fundraising done by parents.

5.8.2 Parental involvement activities that the school made little effort to initiate

The five schools made little effort to initiate certain parental involvement activities. The majority of parents reported that the school could 'do much better,' or did not do at all, the activities shown in Table 5.34.

Table 5.34 Activities that the schools made little effort to initiate

Item	Parental response in %			
	Does not do this	Does this but could do much better	Does this fairly well	Does this very well
The school...				
38. Tells me what skills my child needs to learn each year	29.8	26.2	21.1	22.9
40. Gives me ideas of how to help my child at home	31.2	26.1	21.6	21.1
41. Asks me to volunteer for a few hours at the school	61.5	16.1	11.0	11.5
47. Asks me for information about my child	42.2	21.1	19.3	17.4
48. Asks me to help make decisions about what and how my child is taught	53.7	20.2	14.2	11.9
49. Asks me to make decisions about school staff.	80.3	9.6	7.3	2.8
50. Asks me to help make decisions about school discipline	72.5	11.5	9.2	6.9
51. Asks me to help make decisions about school uniform	71.1	12.4	11.5	5.0
52. Asks me to help make decisions about how school funds are spent	63.8	16.1	9.2	11.0
53. Asks the community to play a role in the children's schooling	50.5	19.7	19.7	10.1
54. Involves local businesses and organisations in my child's schooling	53.7	26.1	9.2	11.0

Almost 56% of the parents felt that the school either did not inform them at all or could "do much better" at telling them what skills their children needed to learn each year (see Item 38, Table 5.34). This result is in concordance with the finding that parents want more information about what their children are doing at school and how to support them (Crozier 1999:322). It is important that Swazi teachers and schools realise that learners will benefit if their parents are aware of what their children are supposed to be learning and are, consequently, able to support this learning at home or even contribute to it at the school (Epstein 1986:288).

Epstein (1986:280) reports that fewer than 30% of the parents in her study felt that teachers gave them many ideas of how to help their children in reading or mathematics. This finding accords with the results of this study in which over 57% of the parents felt that the school did not give them ideas on how to help their children at home or “could do this much better” (see Item 40, Table 5.34). This is a serious situation as the one of the most important criterion for the success of parental involvement in these activities is that parents receive adequate instruction in their roles (McKenna & Willms 1998:34). Furthermore, Epstein (1987a:127) found that parents received most of their ideas for involvement in learning activities in the home from the teachers. Parents need to be shown strategies of how to help in the home and these strategies must be developmentally appropriate for the child (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1995:315). In fact several studies have shown that parental involvement in learning activities in the home may even be detrimental to the child when it is offered in inappropriate ways (see 2.9.2).

That these five schools did not emphasise or encourage parent volunteering at the school is clear from the fact that over 61% of the parent's reported that their school does not do this, with an additional 16.1% saying that the school “could do this much better” (Item 41, Table 5.34). Parents in South Africa are given very little opportunity by schools to volunteer in the classroom (Heystek 1999:103; van Wyk 2001:123). Heystek (1999:103) found that no structures or planning existed to accommodate these activities and that parents could not participate in these activities even if they wished to. This may also be the case in Swaziland. Tichenor (1998:252) found that student teachers felt the least positive about parents volunteering at school. This may be because teachers feel uncomfortable with parents in the classroom (Newport 1992:49-50; McKenna & Willms 1998:36).

However, in contrast to their response to Item 41, the majority of parents (60%) responded to that they knew many parents that helped out at the school (see Item 6, Table 5.27). This suggests that these parents may have had a false impression about the extent to which other parents were involved at the school. Alternatively, if many parents really were helping at the school, most were doing so almost entirely on their own initiative and were not being invited to do so by the school.

Epstein (1986:281) states that most communication activities flow only one way, from the school to the home, and that there is often no encouragement for communication from the parents at most schools. This also seems to be true for these Swazi schools at which school to home communication seems to be a strength (see 5.8.1), while home to school communication seems to be a weakness. At these schools 63.2% of the parents reported that the school either did not ask them for information about their child or "could do this much better" (see Item 47, Table 5.34). Edwards and Warin (1999:334) found that schools in their study made very little attempt to learn about the social worlds of the children who attended them. Only 17.4 % of Swazi parents felt the school did this "very well". Further, while the majority of parents felt the school was interested in their opinions (see Item 15, Table 5.27), it seems that the teachers were not interested in parents' opinions about their children. Moreover, the parent's responses to Items 48 – 52 (see Table 5.34) suggest that teachers and schools did not value parents opinions where decisions are concerned either. Thus, one wonders what parent opinions the parents felt the school was interested in. Swazi teachers and schools need to be informed that the parents also have valuable information and opinions which are beneficial to all participants in the education situation (Scott-Jones 1988:68; Crozier 1999:114). Furthermore, teachers need to be taught how to encourage communication from the parents (Peressini 1998:322).

Items 48 - 52 (see Table 5.34) all center on the parents' role as decision-makers. Despite the fact that many authors feel that decision-making by parents is an essential part of true parental participation (see 2.4.6), these items received the most negative responses of all the items in the questionnaire. Between 73 to 89 % of parents responded that the school did not ask parents to help make decisions or could "do much better" in this respect. Most of these parents reported that the school did not ask them to help make decisions at all.

These findings are to be expected for Items 49 and 50 as the Ministry of Education is responsible for making these decisions in Swaziland and offers even teachers and schools very little role in these decisions (see 3.2).

The response to Item 48 "The school asks me to help make decisions about what and how my child is taught" indicates that the majority of parents were not being allowed to help decide the teaching methods used (see Table 5.34). Further this response indicates that despite the government's policy of consultation with parents on curriculum developments (see 3.3.2.1), the vast majority of parents did not feel that they were being consulted on this issue.

Decisions about school uniform and how school funds were spent are, however, left to the individual school. Thus, it is a pity that the findings of this study suggest that parents were not even given the opportunity to make decisions in these limited areas (see Items 51 & 52, Table 5.34).

It should be noted that these items did not ask whether parents actually make these decisions, rather only if they were asked to "help" make these decisions. Thus, the findings suggest that parents at these five schools have virtually no role in decision-making at all. This is contrary to the situation in most Australian, American, Canadian and British schools, where, while parents may play an inadequate role in

decision-making, they at least have an advisory role or some limited direct input into decisions (see 2.4.6). The results of this study suggest that, like South African teachers (see 3.4.4.3), Swazi teachers, and the Ministry of Education, do not value parents as decision-makers. Furthermore, this situation is more serious in Swaziland as, unlike the situation in South Africa, Swazi educational legislation does not support any role for parents as decision-makers (see 3.3.2 and 3.3.3).

Items 53 and 54 (see Table 5.34) concern community collaboration. Over 70% of parents felt that the school either did not involve the community or could do so much better. These results suggest that community involvement at Swazi schools is very limited as is the case in South African schools (see 3.4.3). Schools need to be made aware of the many possibilities of community involvement (see 2.4.7) and must be encouraged to develop relationships with the community.

5.8.3 Items reassigned to school initiated parental involvement

Five items in the section PIPI were reassigned to the section SIPI after factor analysis (see Table 5.2). The responses to these items are shown in Table 5.35.

Table 5.35 Items reassigned to SIPI

Item	Parental response in %			
	Parent does not do this	Parent has not done this yet this year	Parent has done this once or a few times	Parent has done this many times
29. I go to PTA/PTO meetings	18.3	20.6	31.2	29.8
30. I go to sports events at the school	42.7	29.4	17.9	10.1
31. I go to plays, musicals or other social or cultural events at the school	43.1	30.3	15.6	11.0
32. I go to parent-teacher evenings or meetings	38.1	24.8	20.2	17.0
33. I do fundraising for the school	26.6	21.6	15.1	36.7

Exactly 61% of the parents reported that they had attended PTA meetings once to many times during the year (see Item 29, Table 5.35). However, parents were not asked to help make decisions by the school (see Items 48-52, Table 5.34). Thus, while the responses to Item 29 indicate that PTAs must exist and function in most of these schools, PTAs apparently do not accord parents decision-making powers. Mkwanazi (1994:26) also found that most of the Soweto schools she studied had PTAs but that these did not accord parents true management roles.

Almost 40% of parents did not attend PTA meetings that year (see Item 29, Table 5.35). This is somewhat higher than the 23% that did not attend these meetings in black South African schools as rated by the teachers (Heystek 1999:101). However, Heystek (1999:102) notes that there were still some schools that did not have a PTA at the time of his research. It is possible that Swazi parents may not have attended PTA meetings due to the infrequency of these events at the school their child attended or due to the non-existence of a PTA at some schools. Alternatively, since parents have little say in educational decisions and often do not find PTA meetings enjoyable (Parr *et al* 1993:38), some may have felt that it was pointless for them to attend such meetings.

Although almost 74% of parents responded that the school invited them to events at the school "fairly" or "very well" (Item 43, Table 5.33), the majority of the parents, over 70%, had not attended plays, musicals, cultural or sport events that year (see Items 30 & 31, Table 5.35). Less than 30% of parents had attended these events at all during the year. This is similar to Heystek's (1999:104) levels of good participation of 25.8% and 38.4 % for attendance of sport and social functions, respectively, in South Africa. These findings suggest that a lack of knowledge and poor communication were not responsible for the low attendance of these events. The reassignment of these items from PIPI to SIPI suggests that these low attendance figures at cultural, musical, social or sports events may have been

because most schools did not hold many, or even any, of these events, rather than due to a choice made by the parents. Since parent attendance at such events has been shown to improve learners' school performance (see 2.4.4), schools should be encouraged to hold these events frequently.

Despite the fact that the vast majority of parents felt that the school did a good job of inviting them to the parent-teacher meetings (Item 44, Table 5.33) over 62% reported that they had not gone to these meetings that year (see Item 32, Table 5.35). A relatively small proportion of parents, 17%, attended many times during the year. This figure is similar to that found by Heystek (1999:104) who found only 19% good attendance at parent-teacher meetings, as reported by teachers. In this Swazi study, however, a further 20% of parents responded that they attended once to a few times a year. Since it is likely that these meetings were not held more often than once or a few times a year in most schools, this finding suggests that parent-teacher meeting may be better attended in this urban community than was the case for the South African community Heystek studied. However, as Heystek's data are based on teachers' views rather than parents' responses, these data are difficult to compare since the parents' responses may be biased in a socially acceptable direction. Nevertheless, it is of great concern that over 62% of Swazi parents had not attended such meetings that year, despite the response that over 80% had been invited well (see Item 44, Table 5.33). This figure is much higher than that found by Epstein (1986: 281) in her study in the USA, where 35% of the parents were found to never have attended parent-teacher meetings.

As discussed in section 5.8.1 the findings of Item 46 (see Table 5.33) and Item 33 (see Table 5.35) suggest a relationship between the schools efforts to initiate fundraising and the amount of fundraising done by parents. This is supported by the reassignment of Item 33 from PIPI to SIPI (see Table 5.2). It is possible that some parents were given very little opportunity to fundraise by the teachers and schools.

Since Swazi schools are inadequately funded (see 3.2), this is most unfortunate. The Swazi Ministry of Education notes that, "The tight budgetary situation over the years (in Swaziland) has made self-help efforts by parents and local communities particularly important" (IE 1994:15).

5.9 Summary of findings and discussion

Factor analysis confirmed the construct validity of the questionnaire although a few items had to be reassigned to other sections and one item was discarded. The resulting three factors were named **school initiated parental involvement (SIPI)**, **parent initiated parental involvement (PIPI)**, and **parental attitude to the school (PAS)**. Item analysis supported the reliability of the questionnaire, since the alpha reliability coefficient for all three sections was close to 1.

The testing of the ten hypotheses revealed findings of which some were in accordance with foreign and South African research, while others reflected the unique social circumstances of Swaziland. No significant relationship was found between SIPI and any of the family background characteristics tested. These findings suggest that Swazi teachers and schools made similar efforts to involve all parents regardless of family background. However some groups of parents were found to initiate more parental involvement than others (PIPI), and some groups of parents had a better attitude to the school (PAS).

Although some foreign researchers have found a positive relationship between parental involvement and SES, the findings of this study were in accordance with those researchers who found no significant relationship between SES and parental

involvement. This may be due to the largely homogenous nature of the parent-teacher community in respect to race-ethnicity. Sociocultural congruency existed between the majority of parents, including those of lower SES, and the teachers and school. Thus, parents with lower SES should not have felt alienated or distanced from the school and were not treated differently by teachers, who would also have had difficulty identifying them.

No significant relationship between parents' home language and their involvement was found for any of the three measures of parental involvement. This was probably because most siSwati-speaking parents were proficient in the use of English, which was the medium of communication and instruction at these schools. Further siSwati-speaking parents experienced no cultural barriers to their involvement. English-speaking minority parents were no less involved than siSwati speaking parents, despite having a different culture from the school, probably because they did not experience the barriers to involvement related to language differences and lower SES that minorities in some other countries experience.

Possibly because they had lower expectations of the school, Swazi parents with a secondary education had a more positive attitude to the school than parents with tertiary education. However, like parents in South Africa, they did not differ in terms of either parent or school initiated involvement. This was not surprising since parents in both groups should have been in the position to help their children. In fact, only a tiny proportion of parents had less than secondary education, so illiteracy was not the major barrier to parental involvement that it is in South Africa. The same is true for unemployment, which is rare in urban Swaziland.

Although levels of parental involvement were similar at most schools, School D had a greater level of SIPI than School E. This was probably due to a more positive teacher and school approach to parental involvement at School D. The parents at

School E were also less involved than those at School C in terms of PIPI, possibly reflecting a less positive and encouraging school attitude to parental involvement at School E. Unlike some foreign studies there was no link between the SES of the school and parental involvement.

As had been found in South Africa, Swazi teachers did not appear to discriminate against older parents. However parents older than 40 initiated less parental involvement than younger parents. While these parents did not differ in their attitude to the school it is likely that they did differ in terms of their conception of their own role. Older parents probably envision a more limited conventional role for themselves.

As the findings of foreign studies have suggested, mothers tended to be significantly more involved than fathers in terms of parent initiated involvement. This is likely to be due to the conservative view that involvement in their children's education is a maternal role.

Contrary to foreign studies, no significant relationship was found between parental involvement and parents' marital status or between parental involvement and children's achievement in either mathematics or English. However, it was possible that a relationship between the involvement of parents in this community and children's academic achievements existed. Had a different measure of achievement been used, this relationship might have been found.

The analysis of parents, responses to the items in **parental attitude to the school** indicated that Swazi parents, unlike South African parents, had a very positive attitude to the school. This was probably due to the high level of sociocultural congruency between the majority of parents and the school. This suggests that parents may be open to suggestions from the school that they become

more involved in their children's education. Parents' attitudes are likely to improve even more if they derive direct benefits from the school, and if schools actively "make room" for them. Schools must ensure that they emphasise positive communication.

Analysis of the section **parent initiated parental involvement** indicated that Swazi parents were extremely active in terms of home discussion and helping with homework. This is encouraging since parental involvement in learning activities in the home is particularly beneficial to children. The findings suggested that Swazi parents realized the importance of their involvement in homework to a far greater degree than either parents from the USA or South Africa. The vast majority of Swazi parents supervised their children's homework activities and also limited TV watching.

However, Swazi parents need to be encouraged to initiate reading activities with their children, visit their children's classrooms, discuss TV programmes with them, help them prepare for tests, and take them to educational venues more frequently. Swazi parents did not seem to fully realise the beneficial nature of these activities. Schools must also encourage these activities.

A large proportion of parents never played educational games with their child and did not seem to be aware of the benefits of such games. Like parents in the US.A, over a third of Swazi parents had not spoken to their child's teacher that year. Clearly, ways must be found to ensure that there is more contact between teachers and these parents.

In terms of **school initiated parental involvement** one of the strengths of these five schools was school to home communication. Other prevalent forms of parent involvement initiated by the school were asking parents to check their children's

homework and encouraging parents to raise funds for the school. This supportive financial role for parents is also a role expected of parents by the Ministry of Education (see 3.3.2.1). Thus, these Swazi schools tended to emphasise the conventional parent involvement activities favoured by schools worldwide. Nevertheless, although these areas represented the schools' strengths, the responses of the parents suggested that there was considerable room for these schools to become more active in initiating even these types of parental involvement.

Moreover, these schools did not inform parents about the skills that their children needed to learn or teach them how to help their children at home, despite the fact that effective parental involvement depends on these things. As is also the case in many other foreign schools, parents were not encouraged to volunteer at the school and home to school communication was neglected.

Unlike the parents in many foreign schools, Swazi parents were given virtually no opportunity to make any decisions even in those areas that did not fall under the province of the Ministry of Education. In fact, even though assigned a role in curriculum development by policy, parents did not seem to actually play any role in this activity. While PTAs were attended by the majority of parents, these bodies played little role in school governance. The majority of parents did not attend cultural or sport events and, as is the case in South Africa, also did not attend parent-teacher meetings. This may be due to the rarity of such events.

5.10 Conclusions and implications for development of a parental involvement programme

In conclusion, the findings suggest that a parent involvement programme for urban Swaziland primary schools may face fewer obstacles than such programmes are

likely to face in countries such as South Africa and other foreign countries which have highly heterogeneous populations in terms of race-ethnicity and levels of education or both. Swazi teachers did not seem to discriminate between the various groups of parents on the basis of family background factors. In the case of parents with different SES or education levels this lack of discrimination was probably, largely, as a result of the homogeneity of the urban Swazi teacher-parent population in respect to race-ethnicity and education level. It is likely that for the same reason no differences in parent initiated parental involvement between parents of different SES were found. Since virtually no parents were illiterate or unemployed these factors did not form barriers to parental involvement for the majority of urban Swazi's. Nor were home language or marital status barriers to the involvement of the majority of parents. This meant that the two groups of parents that the Swazi parental involvement programme would particularly have to encourage to become involved are parents over 40 years and fathers.

The initiation of a successful Swazi parental involvement programme in urban Swazi primary schools is also favoured by the positive attitude of parents to the school, and the fact that parents appeared to already be involved in learning activities in the home and home supervision. However, Swazi schools seem to have a particularly limited role for parents. This role included fundraising and encouraging parents to check their children's homework. These schools emphasised school to home communication.

It is likely that parents' poor attendance at cultural or sporting events may have been largely due to the infrequency of such events. Home to school communication, volunteering at the school and decision-making were not encouraged, and these schools clearly did not offer parents anything like a true partnership in their children's education. The actions of these schools are those expected of schools that follow, either consciously or unconsciously, Swap's Protective Model, Epstein's

Separate Spheres of Influence Model, or view parents as consumers according to Reeve's model (see 2.7.4.4). It is likely that the limited view of the role of parents held by Swazi education policy makers (see 3.3.2) underlies, at least in part, these schools' conventional and narrow view of parental involvement. In fact, even this limited policy is not fully implemented since the majority of parents had not been consulted about the curriculum.

Since the efforts of teachers and schools to involve parents are largely responsible for the extent and ways in which parents are involved, it is hardly surprising that Swazi parents appeared to be unaware of the importance of their frequent involvement in many educational activities. These activities included visits to their children's classrooms, taking part in reading activities with their children, helping their children prepare for tests, taking their children to educational venues, playing educational games with their children, attending parent-teacher meetings, and communicating with the teacher.

Consequently, a Swazi programme of parental involvement should educate parents, teachers and even the educational authorities, to envision a wider and more active role for parents in their children's education. The nature of this programme in relation to the findings of this quantitative research as well as the findings of the qualitative research (revealed in Chapter 6) will be discussed in Chapter 7.