

THE MANAGEMENT OF PARENT VOLUNTEERS
AT SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE LIMPOPO
PROVINCE

by

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Declaration

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I hereby declare that *The management of parent volunteers at secondary schools in the Limpopo Province* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

.....
(R.H. Simango)

.....
Date

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to:

My children, Evidence, Khongelani and Mandla

Acknowledgements

My sincere appreciation is extended to

- my supervisor, Dr C. Meier for her patience in guiding and encouraging me in all aspects of my study;
- Mr M.S. Mabasa for his assistance in typing my work;

and last but not least,

- my wife, Winnie, for her patience, encouragement and moral support during my studies.

Summary

This study explores the management of parent volunteers in secondary schools in the Limpopo Province. A literature study was conducted to investigate the existing theories and models of managing parent volunteerism in secondary schools. The literature revealed how parent volunteer programmes are conducted in countries, which have developed successful programmes such as the United States. The present state of parent volunteering in secondary schools in South Africa is also investigated to reveal the current situation.

A qualitative investigation in two secondary schools in the Limpopo Province was done. Data was gathered by means of semi-structured interviews with principals and deputy principals. Analysed data revealed that there are no volunteer programmes which are implemented in secondary schools in the Limpopo Province and school managers do not have the necessary skills to implement and manage parent volunteer programmes at secondary schools.

Key Terms

Parent, parent volunteer, school management, volunteer programme, school managers, rural secondary school, Limpopo Province

List of abbreviations

HOD : Head of Department

SGB : School Governing Body

SMT : School Management Team

PTSA : Parent Teacher Student Association

SASA : South African Schools Act

USA : United States of America

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Chapter 1

Orientation, problem formulation and aims

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Many researchers, on the subject of 'parent involvement', have conducted in-depth research. Significant findings have been revealed by these researchers, which has led to further investigations by proceeding researchers. According to St John and Griffith (1997:48-52), there are important benefits that teachers, learners and parents derive from parents' participation in school programmes and activities such as healthy communication, generation of interest and building positive self-esteem and confidence, to mention but a few.

In support of the above authors, Munn (1993:1), states that the importance of parental involvement in schools is now generally recognised. She goes on to say that a number of studies on school effectiveness identify parent involvement as one of the key variables associated with effectiveness and with learners attainment in particular. The more involved parents are with their children's schooling, the greater, it seems, are the chances of their children achieving academically well. In their research, Edward and Redfern (1988:120), reveal more benefits when they say, "as parents saw how they were valued and what a crucial role they played in the life of the school, they became less inhibited about offering their special skills. It became a more frequent occurrence to bump up into parents around the school".

Lemmer and Van Wyk (1998:2) contend that the most effective education occurs when families and schools work together in a shared enterprise. In support of the above statement, Swap (1996:1), asserts that home-school partnership is no longer a luxury. One element that we know contributes to successful children and schools in all

populations is parental participation in children's education. Bastiani (1995:8) agrees with the other researchers in saying that successful schools help parents to encourage and support their children's learning. Parent volunteerism in schools is one area of parent involvement. This area focuses on the voluntary activities that parents render to schools. According to Epstein (1988:215-216), parent volunteerism includes improving recruitment, training and management programmes. Berger (1991:234) refers to parent volunteers as unpaid employees in a school. The benefits of parent volunteerism are more direct as these people work alongside teachers in schools.

According to St John and Griffith (1997:69), parents can volunteer as organised groups such as parent dads and/or moms clubs that would assist teachers in school activities such as binding the reports, cultural activities, reading, cooking, trips, organising school parties and many more. Parent volunteers may also come from community groups, business and senior citizens organisations. Parent volunteers may not necessarily be completely professional. They may therefore volunteer for activities that match their skills such as assisting tutors, cafeteria helpers, teachers' assistants, door greeters, chaperons, typists, career mentors, translators and so on (Fuller & Olesen 1998:133).

The inception of the democratic government in South Africa in 1994 has also brought many changes to the education system. In the words of the first national Minister of Education in the new South Africa, Professor Bhengu, in his first address to parliament "education must be ploughed back to the communities". These were followed by a body of government legislation which encouraged parents' participation in the education of their children. The South African constitution of 1996 makes provision for parent's participation through School Governing Bodies. The South African Schools Act, Act 84 (Republic of South Africa 1996:14) also stipulates the role that the parents should play in the education of their children.

In the year 2002, the then MEC for education in Limpopo Province Dr. Mutswaledi in the Sowetan newspaper of Friday the 19th of April 2002 made a call to parents to go and volunteer in schools for one month in whatever way they could. He called this campaign 'Letsima' which means working together. It was successful in many areas. Nevertheless, despite all the benefits and legislation on parent participation indicated earlier on, one cannot overrule the fact that there are still impediments to the practical implementation of parent volunteerism in schools. This is supported by Woodhead and McGrath (1998:286) who state that "although the standard of home-school relationships has improved so much over the twenty years or so, there is still a wide

gap between the best and the worst". Young and McGreeney (1973:iix) assert that the majority of parents, even though some may be inarticulate, lacking in formal education and living in a barely tolerable environment, are nevertheless interested in the education and progress of their children. They are gravely hampered though, in the practical development of this interest by the lack of communication and inequality with those who teach their children. According to Gallagher, Bagin and Kindred (1997:126), parents are often reluctant to take it upon themselves to contact the school and ask if they may visit the classrooms. Once parents learn of the open door policy through the mass media and from parents who have visited the school, their reluctance and shyness give away to natural curiosity.

In Limpopo Province, many schools do not have proper programmes for the management of parent volunteers. This research aims to investigate and discover factors impairing the management of parent volunteers at secondary schools in Limpopo Province, particularly secondary schools at Malamulele district, as well as finding ways of improving this condition.

1.2 PROBLEM FORMULATION

The preceding discussion has outlined issues arising from parent involvement and in particular, parent volunteering at secondary schools. The discussion also suggests that a need exists to investigate the management of parent volunteers at secondary schools in rural areas in Limpopo Province. Against the above background, the question is asked: How can parent volunteers at secondary schools in the Limpopo Province be managed? The following questions facilitate the demarcation of the problem more clearly:

- What is the nature of 'parent volunteering'?
- What problems are experienced with the management of parent volunteers?
- How is parent volunteering managed in the rural areas of Malamulele in Limpopo Province?
- What can be done to improve the management of parent volunteers in Limpopo Province?

1.3 AIM OF THE RESEARCH

In the light of the above research problem, this research aims at:

- an examination of the nature of parent volunteering by studying the South African and international models
- discovering the problems which are experienced with the management of parent volunteers at secondary schools in Limpopo Province
- improving the strategies of management of parent volunteering programmes at secondary schools in Limpopo Province
- gaining knowledge from this study which may be used to make recommendations with a view to improving the quality of the management of parent volunteers at secondary schools in rural areas in Limpopo Province.

1.4 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

This research will assist the National Department of Education to review and evaluate the current policies on the management of parent volunteers as well as facilitating and monitoring their implementation in South African schools.

One of the previous researchers on the subject, Berger (1991:216), points out that the home is the foundation for human development and therefore parents need help in creating an effective home environment. This research, will to a great extent, also assist school managers and teachers in Malamulele district to look for strategies to implement parent volunteer programmes in secondary schools.

Furthermore, this research hopes to serve as an eye-opener for parents and school personnel in similar situations to recognise their responsibilities and that neither can expect the other to accomplish the task alone as it is a collective and collaborative effort. The research will assist rural secondary schools in Limpopo Province, specifically Malamulele district to embark on programmes on planning, recruitment, and training and managing parent volunteers in schools.

Parents and teachers in rural secondary schools need to enter into a student/teacher/parent contract. It is these kinds of contractual agreements, which can bring the stakeholders together to form strong parent volunteer organisations. All in all, the working together and close relationship between teachers and parents results in better performance of learners at school (Risimati 2001; Van Wyk 1996; Lemmer 1992). The report of this research will be a guideline to school managers on the strategies which can best suit our rural communities to become involved. This will ultimately lead to efficient schools.

1.5 LIMITATION

My study on the management of parent volunteers at secondary schools will be limited to two secondary schools which will be selected from Malamulele North-East circuit.

1.6 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

1.6.1 Management

Hanks and Hill Long in the Collins English Dictionary (1983:894) define management as the process of managing. To manage is to be in charge of, to administer, to succeed in being able to do something despite obstacles, to exercise control or domination over, often in a tactful manner and to contrive to carry on despite difficulties. It goes on to define management as the technique, practice, or science of managing and/or controlling. It is the skilful and/or resourceful use of material or time.

The concept of management relates, among others, to the facilitation of effective teaching and learning and the involvement of parents in the process. As such, the managerial role of the school manager is important to this study. Management is a continuous process through which members of an organisation seek to co-ordinate their activities and utilise their resources in order to fulfil the various tasks of the organisation as efficiently as possible (Hoyle 1981:8). Manz and Sims (1990:179) define management as “the process of planning, organising, actuating and controlling an organisation’s operations in order to achieve co-ordination of human and material resources essential in the effective and efficient attainment of objectives”.

According to Theron and Bothman (1990:179), educational management is based on authority, freedom, orderliness and managerial dynamics and always has an aim. Educational management can be described as a specific type of work in education which comprises those regulative tasks or actions executed by a person or body in a position of authority in a specific field or area of regulation, so as to allow formative education to take place (Van der Westhuizen 1996:55).

For the purpose of this study, management means all management activities of school managers in conjunction with their management teams, with the intention of facilitating effective teaching and learning.

1.6.2 Parent

The Collins English Dictionary (Hanks & Hill Long 1983:1066) refers to the word 'parent' as meaning father or mother, a person acting as father or mother or a guardian. The South African Schools Act (RSA 1996:4) refers to the term parent as "the parent or guardian of the learner, the person who undertakes to fulfil the obligation of a person referred to above, towards the learner's education at school". Lemmer and Van Wyk (1996:2) suggest including biological parents, guardians, grandparents or any other adult who is responsible for the child when attempting to establish or improve home-school relations.

For the purpose of this study, the word parent would mean anyone who has children in his or her care and who is willing to take an interest in their education.

1.6.3 Volunteer

Fuller and Olesen (1998:133) refer to volunteering, such as, when parents come to be involved in schools through their personal concerns for their children. A volunteer is therefore a person who freely offers to do something or work for an organisation without being paid. Berger (1991: 234) refers to a volunteer as an unpaid employee.

The Collins English Dictionary (Hanks & Hill Long 1983:1625) elaborates more on the word volunteer. It states that a volunteer is a person who performs or offers voluntary service. It is a person who does some act or enters into a transaction without being under any legal obligation to do so and without being promised any remuneration for his or her service. This means that the action of the volunteer arises from his/her natural impulse without compulsion. His/her performance is spontaneous, without payment or recompense in any form. It goes on to define a volunteer as a person who says or suggests something without being asked.

For the purpose of this study the word volunteer will refer to a parent who freely offers to work for an organisation without being paid.

1.6.4 Parent volunteers

For the purpose of this study, parent volunteers would mean parents who freely and out of their own interest offer to render voluntary services in schools for the sake of improving the quality of their children's education.

1.6.5 School

Du Plooy, Gressel and Oberholzer (1987:164) define school as the institution entrusted exclusively with education. It should take on only those social purposes that can be converted easily and naturally into educational goals and activities. Van der Westhuizen (1996:405) refers to the school as a place of tuition and learning, an open system established to meet the educational and training needs of the community at large. A school is not an independent or isolated entity; it operates in a social context, significantly in the local community .

From the above definitions, it appears that the school is a place where the values and norms of the community should be promoted and this cannot be achieved by the school alone.

1.6.6 Rural schools

The word 'rural' means outside the main urban centre, with low population density and consists of either dispersed settlements or small towns and villages (John 1993:162). Rural means belonging to, characteristics of, the country life, in contrast to the town or urban life (Audrey 1990:275). For the purpose of this study, rural schools are schools, which are situated in remote areas that have an underdeveloped infrastructure. In South Africa such areas are mainly occupied by black people.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.7.1 Literature study

McMillan and Schumacher (1993:112-113) define a literature review as a critique of the status of knowledge on a carefully defined educational topic. In this study, I have used primary and secondary sources in the literature review to provide an in-depth background to the empirical investigation. I reviewed the literature dealing with the

management of parent volunteers including international as well as South African approaches to the management of parent volunteers. Each source was carefully chosen and studied with the purpose of selecting only data that is current, reliable and applicable. Primary sources included education legislation, provincial laws and regulations dealing with parent volunteers.

Secondary sources comprise data originally collected at an earlier time by other researchers for different purposes than the current research. Where necessary, I used recognised and authoritative works.

1.7.2 Empirical investigation

De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, Poggenpoel, Schurink and Schurink (1998:96) distinguish between quantitative and qualitative research designs. The former is defined as research relying primarily on the collection of numerical data while the latter relies primarily on verbal data. In the case of this research, a qualitative design was used to investigate the management of parent volunteers in secondary schools in Limpopo Province. Since the research aims at describing attitudes, the following characteristics of the qualitative research design guided my choice of this type of research design:

- A qualitative research design seeks to understand human experiences from the perspective of those who experience them. It is directly concerned with experience as it is lived or felt. De Vos *et al* (1998:11) point out that qualitative researchers interact with those they study and as such these studies are value-laden. The authors furthermore point out that the language of a qualitative study is personal, informal and based on definitions that evolve during that study. This ultimately provides rich context-bound material and information that may lead to theories that help to explain a phenomenon.
- This qualitative research is descriptive and open-ended. The purpose of a descriptive design is to obtain complete and accurate information about a phenomenon. This study aims primarily at describing the management of parent volunteers and obtaining accurate and complete information about the barriers to parent volunteer programmes in secondary schools.

1.7.2.1 *Sampling and selection of participants*

A sample is a small portion of the total set of objects, events or persons, which together comprise the subject of the study (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont 2005:194). Sampling is the process of drawing a sample from a population. In this investigation, I used purposeful sampling where the researcher specifies the characteristics of a population of interest. According to Lemmer (1992:90), qualitative researchers design their study purposefully when they search for participants or for a site. They search for information-rich settings and informants. In the case of this study, I selected two secondary schools in the Northeast circuit of the Malamulele district. These schools were considered information-rich. I collected data from the principals and deputy principals of the two secondary schools.

1.7.2.2 *Data collection methods*

Data collection methods must be appropriate to the researcher's goal and to the selected design (De Vos *et al* 1998:152). In this investigation, data was gathered by means of interviews based on interview schedules. The semi-structured interview, which is understood as a guided conversation in which the interviewee rather than the interviewer imposes the structure of the interview, was adopted in this investigation. This method of data collection allows the interview to secure accurate and full accounts from participants based on their personal experience.

The interviewer uses a flexible schedule of topics or questions arising from the literature study to guide the interviewing and ensure that certain important areas are covered. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992:136), the purpose of the semi-structured interview is to obtain rich and detailed verbal material that reveals the feelings of the participant. This type of interview is usually recorded on audiotape. These procedures were used in this study.

1.7.2.3 *Data analysis*

According to De Vos *et al* (1998:336), analysis is a reasoning strategy with the objective of taking a complex whole and resolving it into parts. By means of analysis the constant variables or factors that are relevant to the understanding of a phenomenon or an event are isolated. In the case of this study, qualitative data analysis was adopted. Data in qualitative research is usually in the form of textual

narratives (i.e. transcribed interviews), written descriptions of observations (field notes) and the reflection of ideas and conjectures recorded daily in the researcher's record book (De Vos *et al* 1998:335). The researcher analyses data on a daily basis as he gathers and transcribes the recorded data. Data from the transcribed interviews were analysed. Data were coded and relationships established.

1.8 CHAPTER DIVISION

Chapter 1 provides the introduction to the study, the problem formulation and aims of the study. It outlines the research design and methodology used and clarifies certain concepts that will be used in this study.

Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature about the concept of parent volunteers. International and national approaches to parent volunteering will be studied.

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

Chapter 4 constitutes the presentation, discussion and interpretation of the findings.

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

1.9 SUMMARY

In chapter 1, an orientation was given and concerns outlined about the management of parent volunteers in rural secondary schools. The research design and methodology that was employed in the study, its aims and objectives, sampling issues and outline of the study were identified. The second chapter reviews relevant literature on the approaches to the concept 'parent volunteers', both nationally and internationally.

Chapter 2

Literature review on the management of parent volunteers in secondary schools

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept 'volunteerism' in schools has attracted attention and wide popularity among authors both internationally and recently in South Africa. Most of these authors such as Epstein (1998), Ratcliff and Neff (1993), Fuller and Olsen (1998), Young and McGreeney (1973), Berger (1991), Lemmer and Van Wyk (1998), DeStino and Carravetta (2000) agree on most of the important aspects of volunteerism such as the management, benefits and impediments to parent volunteers in schools.

In countries like the United States of America (USA) where volunteerism has been in existence for some decades now, the emphasis has shifted from the traditional approach, where women comprised the majority of volunteers in schools and volunteer tasks restricted to fundraising, cultural and sporting activities, to more important aspects pertaining to teaching and learning (Young & McGreeney 1973:13).

These authors have also clearly outlined the different approaches to volunteerism and how volunteer programmes are being managed internationally. The information acquired from the literature study will enable the recommendation of strategies to improve the volunteer programmes in rural secondary schools at Malamulele District in the Limpopo Province. Special attention will be given to the management of successful programmes as well as the factors, which foster or inhibit successful programmes. The discussion will conclude by indicating the present situation in the South African context *vis-à-vis* the international situation.

2.2 INTERNATIONAL MODELS OF PARENT VOLUNTEERISM

The concept 'volunteering' has become common and is now recognised in many institutions in many countries (National Academy Press 1990:53). For the purpose of this study, the focus will be on the management of parent volunteers in secondary schools. Exemplary existing volunteer programmes in the United States of America (USA) will be used to illustrate the current situation in the South African context. These models will be discussed in relation to the countries in which they were implemented. To give a better understanding on the subject Epstein's model of parent involvement will be discussed as it is well developed and has been tried and tested in the USA.

2.2.1 Epstein's model of parent involvement

Joyce L. Epstein, who can be called one of the pioneers of parent involvement in schools and is also an author of a range of literature on school, family and community partnership, identifies six areas of parent involvement which she also calls 'types of caring' (Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders & Simon 1997:411-416):

- parenting: the focus is on helping all families fulfil their parenting tasks and create a learning environment at home
- communication: communicate with families about school programmes and students' progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school consultation
- learning at home: involve families with their children in learning at home, including homework and other curriculum-linked activities as well as decision making
- decision-making: include families as participants in school decisions, governance and advocacy through Parent Teacher Associations/Parent Teacher Organisation (PTA/PTO's), school councils, committees and other parental organisations
- collaborating with community: co-ordinate resources and services for families, learners and the school with business, agencies and other groups who provide services to the community

- volunteering: improve recruitment, training, work and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at the school or in other locations to support learners and school programmes.

As the main focus of this study is volunteering, I discuss what it entails. According to Epstein (2001:415), volunteering and supporting school programmes include the recruitment, welcoming, training and evaluation of volunteers. It also includes the way in which the skills and talents of volunteers are identified and matched with the needs of teachers, learners and administrators. This model also indicates how various volunteer programmes and activities affect the learning of learners, attitudes and behaviour, which includes the teachers, and parents' attitudes towards each other (Epstein 2001:415).

2.2.2 Other models of parent volunteering

The current literature on parent volunteerism stipulates the different ways in which volunteers can be recruited, interviewed, orientated, trained, placed and evaluated. Although the key factors to volunteerism are interest and skills of the volunteer himself/herself, the recruitment programmes have to be conducted very carefully. The following models of volunteering have been identified:

2.2.2.1 The individual model

According to Ratcliff and Neff (1993:91), volunteers can be recruited as individuals where the recruiter makes a face to face contact with the volunteer and requests the person to come and help at the school. The recruiter first indicates the need that exists at the school for a volunteer and then explains to the individual the area of volunteering so as to arouse the volunteer's interest. The recruiter may also use correspondence in the form of telephoning or writing letters to the prospective volunteer so as to recruit him/her. This duty is usually handled by volunteer co-ordinators, a teacher assigned to handle volunteer programme in a particular school or a school manager (McSweeney & Alexander 1996:69)

2.2.2.2 The group model

Another way that has been found to be very useful and successful in approaching volunteer recruitment is to organise people in groups, such as, classes where

prospective volunteers are addressed together before they can take decisions whether to volunteer or not. In this meeting, the co-ordinator explains clearly the school's needs for volunteers as well as what will be expected from the incumbents. These groups of volunteers may be organised in a conference meeting where experts address the audience on aspects of volunteering including its' benefits and demands. Volunteer recruiters may organise workshops where persons are informed about the concept of volunteering and all it entails (McSweeney & Alexander 1996:71).

2.2.2.3 Target group model

The target group model focuses on the skills and expertise needed in a particular school. School management first assesses the needs of the school and once identified, people from different fields, both retired and working are approached and requested to come and render their services on volunteer bases. Those who are still working request their employers to give them permission to go and volunteer for the stipulated periods. This model enables the school to obtain the diverse services of professionals thus recruited (McSweeney & Alexander 1996:72).

2.2.2.4 Community model

The community model of volunteering is applied by way of communicating with communities through the media. Both print or visual and electronic media are used by volunteer leaders of schools to inform and familiarise the community about volunteer posts. Radio tapes and cassettes are mostly used for this purpose where parents are gathered in one place and listen to the message about parent volunteering. Posters and handouts are also used to spread the message to the community. Information about the school, contact persons and numbers are provided so that interested volunteers may use it to access the school (McSweeney & Alexander 1996:92; Carravetta 1988:13).

This information reveals that parents need to be approached, in one way or another, before they can offer themselves to volunteer. The different strategies that are used in recruiting parents have been outlined as well as how they are implemented by schools.

2.3 BENEFITS OF PARENT VOLUNTEERING IN SCHOOLS

Despite factors inhibiting the use of parent volunteers in schools, as indicated in 2.5, many researchers on the subject agree that the benefits of parent volunteerism outweigh the impediments. Authors on the subject concur that there are many benefits which all those involved, such as, teachers, learners and parents, derive from the effective use of volunteers. The following discussion will elaborate on the benefits, which are derived from parent volunteering.

2.3.1 Benefits of parent volunteering for teachers

According to Epstein (1988:152), volunteering activities help educators and families work together to support the school programme and learner's work and activities. She goes on to indicate that volunteers in schools or classrooms assist administrators, teachers and personnel as aides, tutors, coaches, lectures, chaperones and other relevant occupations. Swap (1996:56) also indicates how the school and management can benefit from parent volunteering by revealing the activities, which can be delegated to parent volunteers at school such as child development classes, assisting in bookshops, libraries, career work as well as escorting learners to conferences, interviews and visits. These activities can relieve teachers of some the burden if handled by volunteers.

Edward and Redfern (1988:120-121), in their investigation, revealed that many parents, after seeing how they were valued and what a crucial role they play in the life of the school, became more inclined to offer their special skills. Parents were increasingly attracted to the school, for instance, a grandmother demonstrating her lace making skills, a husband showing his antique camera and a mother demonstrating how to make a proper curry. One teacher at a school commented, "We have moved a long way from the time when we thought that only educated parents should be allowed to help in the classroom. It took me a long time as a teacher to trust children to be responsible for their own learning, and even longer to realise that trusting parents to do a good job works every bit as well" (Edwards & Redfern 1988:121).

According to Fuller and Olsen (1998:132), besides the direct benefits which teachers gain when parent volunteers assist in the classroom, they also assist in other areas of the schools, on trips, or with other activities which match the volunteer's skills, talents, and available time with the needed assistance. Volunteers offer to work after school

hours in the evenings, on weekends and during holidays. Volunteers contribute in many ways in school programmes; they play an active and constructive role in helping the school define the purpose of education, the objectives for specific fields, and courses of study. They can serve effectively on faculty committees concerned with the adequacy of the curriculum, revision offerings, and introduction of numerous changes that could not be attempted without their support. Parent volunteers can make a worthwhile contribution to class work. They can speak on topics about which they possess first-hand information. Helpers can loan rare books, objects, CDs, videotapes and historical collections. They can aid on field trips, checking attendance, exercising accident safeguards and taking part in follow-up activities. Volunteers can be members of textbook committees, report card committees and others dealing with improvement of teaching (Gallagher *et al* 1997:129). The same authors go on to mention more benefits of parent volunteerism when they assert that parents may assist the school programme by being involved in extracurricular activities. A number of parent volunteers possess talent and technical knowledge that can be used advantageously. Some schools call on helpers to work with teacher sponsors of clubs. Parents are willing to assist learners and teachers in designing simple costumes for dramatic productions and lending a hand in building stage scenery. They respond freely to invitations to participate in plays, musicals, assembly programmes, athletic games, acting as judges for contests and dances (Gallagher *et al* 1997:129).

Berger (1991:142) indicates a number of tasks which volunteers can render at school. She divides the tasks into teaching and non-teaching tasks. In her teaching tasks list, she indicates that volunteers serve as tutors, mentors, supervise learning centres, listen to children, tell stories, play instructional games, work with underachievers, help with choosing library books for learners, teach children to type, help learners prepare and practice speeches, assist learners with writing, take learners to resource centres, read to learners, help learners create a play, supervise the making of books, show filmstrips, share a hobby, demonstrate sewing or weaving as well as demonstrate food preparation. Her non-teaching tasks list includes making games, preparing a parent bulletin board and repairing equipment.

Young and McGreeney (1973:13-14) emphasise the importance of using parent volunteers by saying that it contributes most to the learner's progress at school. Lemmer and Van Wyk (1998:1) indicate the following benefits that the school get from parent volunteerism: parent volunteers can assist in the arts, careers education, vocational education or physical education, organise cake sales, raise school funds,

serve refreshments, as well as act as audiences at school concerts, sports and other functions. The volunteer programmes revealed by The National Academy Press (1990:66) in the USA also give a list of activities, which are basic to the volunteer programme at the Dallas Independent School District. The list corresponds with the one issued by Lemmer and Van Wyk (1998:4) in the above paragraph but with the addition of the activities such as assisting teachers in preparing materials, typing, mimeographing, duplicating, monitoring tests and preparing bulletin boards. Parent volunteers also assist with office work by giving telephone, learner registration, filing and clerical assistance. Parent helpers also help by interpreting for non-English-speaking parents, orienting new students to school, taking sick children to their homes or the doctor and driving participants to athletic and other events and contests.

Another exemplary volunteer programme that displays benefits for teachers is the one at Ann Arbor school in Michigan (USA). The volunteers act in specific roles. At least once a week, as mentors, they talk with students by telephone or in person, helping with concerns about doing well in school or problems with friends or at home. Volunteers assist as guides where they visit schools to explain and discuss their careers. Helpers also work as tutors with individual learners on mastery and practice of activities. The success of this volunteer programme was even supported by the teachers' union, while teachers welcomed the extra help and were uniformly positive about the programme (National Academy Press 1990:46).

The Illinois Secondary School in Chicago (USA) is another volunteer programme worth mentioning. The Schoolhouse Volunteers is the largest Chicago volunteer programme, in which individuals work in schools as audiovisual aides, classroom assistants, tutors, administrative staff helpers, and community fundraisers. Parent volunteers make up almost 80 percent of the programme. Volunteers in this programme include working and retired teachers, other professionals with academic expertise and assistants from business in the downtown area who come in after work before going home for the evening (National Academy Press 1990: 53).

In California (USA), one of the criteria, used to evaluate principals, is how well they have used volunteers. There is a written policy to this effect. The policy supports volunteer activities in a structured and organised way to supplement organised teaching. The policy suggests that certain subjects like economics for example, should be taught not only by a teacher but with help from volunteers from the banking community or other such experts (National Academy Press 1990:80). This benefits

teachers, as they will not have to struggle teaching subjects they are not familiar with. According to DeStino and Carravetta (2000:15), involving parents as volunteers can enrich the classroom and relieve teachers of some duties. The preceding discussion has indicated clearly that there are lots of benefits that teachers in schools can derive from parent volunteering.

2.3.2 Benefits of parent volunteering for parents

The use of parent volunteers in schools does not only benefit teachers, parents also derive several benefits. In cases where parents are welcomed, there is increasingly a need by parents to assist as they can in the education of their children.

In their own words, some parents said, when asked about their feelings after involving themselves in a school volunteer programme (Lemmer & Van Wyk 1998:1) “Volunteering allows me to get to know the people who work with my kids and what is going on at the school.” Another parent volunteer said “My kids feel proud when I am here. My being here sends the message that school is important“. A high school principal from the Eastern Cape reported that vandalism and theft were rife at the school where hard earned equipment, bought for school was stolen within days. He goes on to say that they appealed to parents who volunteered to form patrols to guard the school grounds at night and vandalism and theft ceased (Lemmer & Van Wyk 1988:1). Young and McGreeney (1973: vii-ixia) in their reports of community studies indicate that there was a gap between parents and schools because of lack of communication. The teachers’ attitude was that parents, because of their own educational inadequacies and difficult living conditions, are not particularly interested in the education of their children. However, after increased contact between teacher and parent, these parents who initially considered themselves inarticulate, lacking formal education and living in barely tolerable environment, became interested in the educational progress of their children. The parents’ contact with the school and teachers improved their self-esteem irrespective of their educational background.

Parents want the best for their children and respond to an opportunity to volunteer if the option for working is varied and their contributions are meaningful. Although the world is a busy place, time spent at school can bring satisfaction and variety to a parent’s life (Berger 1991:139). As parents interact with staff at the school, they become more comfortable as they gain work experience, test new careers and learn new skills or use

untapped skills. By meeting new people in the volunteer programme, parents' self-confidence and learning responsibility builds up (Fuller & Olesen 1998: 133).

Parent volunteers get opportunities to use their natural gifts and talents, empowering each other and being role models (Fuller & Olesen 1998:134). According to Edward and Redfern (1988:120), when parents were recruited as volunteers, they saw how they were valued and what a crucial role they played in the life of the school they became more inclined to offer their special skills and were quick to come forward.

Parent helpers also help in shaping the educational landscape of their schools. A parent who has been involved in a volunteer programme says, "I cannot think of another volunteer experience I have had that has been as meaningful as my participation in school improvement. My work counts, my voice is heard. I have made a difference for my children. Hundreds of other parent volunteers in my district have broken the mold of traditional parent volunteering" (Cavarretta 1998:15). According to Epstein (1988:415-417), the positive results of parent volunteerism for parents are increased understanding of the teachers' job, feeling comfortable in school, and carry-over of school activities at home. Parents also develop self-confidence about their ability to work in school with children and frequently take steps to improve their own education. Parent assistants get first hand information and are welcomed at school. Parents also gain specific skills such as leadership and teamwork.

When writing about the productivity through volunteerism, Kouri (1990:7-12) supports the authors already mentioned when she talks about the rewards of parent volunteering in schools "Volunteerism offers an avenue for learning new skills or adapting existing ones for use in paid jobs". She goes on to give examples of people who have combined their volunteer work and formal schooling to forge new careers. Volunteerism serves a personal need to "give back" to the community. For Hellen and Bruce Fickel (in Ratcliff & Neft 1993:84) "Volunteering is our way of paying the rent for the space we take on earth". The above statements assert that there is a sense of self-fulfilment on the part of the volunteer when doing a volunteer work.

According to Ratcliff and Neft (1993:12), parent volunteering provides meaningful self-investment. By volunteering, people perform the work, which would otherwise require paid workers. Constructive use of volunteers is an effective means of providing them a way to give something of themselves in the service of others.

The National Academy Press (1990:59) indicates how the contributions of volunteers were valued in Contra Costa County in California by quoting the words of the County Superintendent of Education when he said that “without the efforts of these high-powered service-oriented volunteers, more formal efforts would be needed, for which funding would be difficult to obtain”. As training of volunteers improves and volunteers themselves see the results of their efforts, more teachers are welcoming their help.

McSweeney and Alexander (1996:82) also mention that parents benefit in many ways when they participate in volunteer programmes. As parents interact with their organised teams, they find opportunities to discover their skills and talents of leadership and display them in the four stages of teamwork, which are forming, storming, norming and performing. By participating in these roles, parents gain respect from their colleagues in the programme and develop a confidence in themselves.

The above discussion has revealed how parents can benefit from volunteer programmes especially if these programmes are well implemented and regulated in schools.

2.3.3 Benefits of parent volunteering for learners

The main purpose of the school and parents coming together is for the benefit of the learner. As indicated earlier, the benefits, which are enjoyed by the school management and teachers, are inclusive of learners. However, there are benefits, which learners gain as an individual group from parent volunteering in schools. According to Epstein (1988:415), parent volunteering can enable learners to acquire skills in communicating with adults. Parent volunteering enhances learning by learners because of individual tutoring or targeted attention. Learners become aware of many skills, talents, occupations and contributions of parents and other volunteers. Cavarretta (1998:14) indicates that parent volunteers may assist in planning and developing a school’s curriculum, which will ultimately benefit the learner. DeSteno and Carravetta (2000:15) contends, that parent volunteering can enrich the classroom as learners will be exposed to a variety of people with different skills and talents.

A number of studies on school effectiveness identify parent volunteering as one of the key variables associated with success in general and with learner attainment in particular (Swap 1996:60). The more involved parents are with their child’s schooling, the greater, it seems, are the chances of their children doing well. Many researchers

have identified the ways in which parent volunteering helps learners' attain. Most of them have highlighted the positive effect on learner motivation. Furthermore, the children of parents who are involved in school programmes are nearly three times more likely than those with uninvolved parents to engage in school sponsored activities, such as, athletics, the arts, academics or service clubs and projects. In addition, learners whose parents are uninvolved are twice as likely as those with involved parents to be in the bottom half of their class or have to repeat a grade. In fact, there is some indication that the degree of parent involvement is more significant in the success of learners than virtually any other variable, including race, social class or native language (Munn 1993:2-3).

Edward and Redfern (1988:121) contend that parent helpers make an enormous difference to the quality of education we offer in schools. They like learning more about the curriculum at first hand; they enjoy the involvement with their own and other people's children. Children, for their part, make no bones about the pleasure they derive from seeing their parents in school.

Gallagher *et al* (1997:129), emphasise the importance of using parent volunteers as room parents. The function of the volunteers here is to represent the parents of learners in the grade or room, work with the teacher, and serve as a link between the home and school. The presence of these volunteers in classes boosts the learners' confidence and self-esteem knowing that their parents are not only concerned about their education, but also included. Berger (1991:121) also indicates the importance of parent volunteers serving as room parents who, for example, can also provide treats and create parties.

The involvement of parent volunteers improves school attendance. Lemmer and Van Wyk (1988:4) report a schoolteacher from Potchefstroom who reported that there was a problem of truancy at their school. Learners simply slipped out of school during the day. Many learners also came to school late. The answer to the problem came with the parent volunteers who formed teams, which monitored the school gates during the early morning and apprehended latecomers. They ensured that the school gates were locked until home going time. School attendance then dramatically improved. One schoolboy remarked, "I won't take the risk of slipping out of school. They really care about our school."

Parents also benefit learners by setting up tutoring programmes. These programmes may include after-school classes and extra instruction. As tried and tested in high schools in Illinois, USA, these programmes have helped learners to develop positive attitudes towards school and success. These programmes entail enabling the learners and parents to keep track of homework assignments (Lemmer & Van Wyk 1998:4).

A questionnaire completed by teachers and volunteers about their perceptions of a Florida school volunteer programme said that the presence of volunteers in classrooms affected learner learning and learning attitudes positively, as evidenced by improvement in behaviour and attitudes as well as test scores. A significant increase in self-concept scores for learners was reported. It is testified that volunteers enhanced teacher effectiveness and increased learner achievement in reading and grammar on all grade levels, irrespective of aptitude, sex and ethnicity (National Academy Press 1990:36-37).

The above research findings clearly reveal that there is a wealth of benefits which learners can derive from parent volunteering in schools and that there is a need to investigate further so as to discover how these programmes can be introduced in secondary schools in South Africa.

2.4 THE MANAGEMENT OF PARENT VOLUNTEER PROGRAMMES IN SCHOOLS

In order for any volunteer programme to be successful, survive and be sustained, certain procedures have to be followed when organising it. Many exemplary volunteer programmes, which will be explained later on, will indicate clearly the relationship between the formal organisation of parent volunteer programmes and their success. Many researchers when introducing parent volunteer programmes recommend what are sometimes called the golden rules of volunteerism. These are recruiting, training, placement, evaluation and recognising volunteers.

2.4.1 Recruiting of parent volunteers

Parent volunteers are recruited into the programme because their services are needed. The management of the school is responsible for recruiting parent volunteers. However, this task can be delegated to a teacher who can serve as a guide or co-ordinator. The principal of the school plays an active role as guide to the volunteer

programme. In countries like the USA, which are advanced with regards to the management of volunteers, the state employs a person who is designated as responsible for school volunteer programme co-ordination (National Academy Press 1990:27). For example:

- in Dade County, Florida, the principal of each school in the district is asked to select a staff member and a community volunteer to head the school's volunteer programme, those leaders are then trained to recruit, interview, screen, orient and place volunteers and to monitor the programme (National Academy Press 1990:63)
- in Dallas, Texas, two paid co-ordinators administered the management of parent volunteer programmes in schools: the volunteer office was responsible for recruiting, training, and evaluating the programmes: as well as providing a list of activities of the programmes (National Academy Press 1990:65-66).
- in Kingfield, Maine, which is the headquarters of a rural school district of the school district of the state, teachers are assigned with duties as teacher aides while part-time paid volunteer co-ordinators are also employed: recruitment of volunteers is one of the duties of the volunteer co-ordinator: a book 'The Junior Great Book Program' was designed as a guide for volunteer programmes and contains specific programme requirements: to manage this programme, the volunteer services co-ordinator works closely with each school participating in the volunteer programme (National Academy Press 1990:95-96).

Recruiting volunteers is conducted in many ways. Brochures which contain information about the needs, duties and the benefits that the school can derive from the programme are used. Posters recruiting volunteers and how they can volunteer are placed in targeted areas. Newspaper articles are written to inform and to recruit readers. Advertisements, in the form of pamphlets and handouts, are also used to recruit parent volunteers. Spot announcements on radio and television, and very importantly, word of mouth where parents are invited and addressed about the importance of parent volunteering as well as how they can form part of the programme (National Academy Press 1990:96; Kouri 1990:71; Berger 1991:148).

In these recruitment drives, the main focus is to equip parents with information about the duties of a parent volunteer. These recruitment drives are followed by interviewing,

orienting, training, placement, evaluation and recognition of parent volunteers, particularly those who indicate an interest to be of the programme.

2.4.1.1 Interview

Many researchers in the existing literature on the management of parent volunteers in schools agree that before parent volunteers are placed in the programmes, certain requirements are to be met. The potential volunteers are screened and interviewed to establish their interests, skills and available time they can offer to school programmes before schedules are drawn for their daily, weekly or monthly activities. The interviewing and screening are done in accordance to the school's needs. The interview process is conducted by the co-ordinators, school principal or a teacher assigned by the school (Ratcliff & Neff 1993:85).

According to McSweeney and Alexander (1996:96), the interview is more an informal meeting with the applicant, an experienced person in a senior position, and the person who is likely to be working closely with the new volunteer. An informal atmosphere is essential as the interviewer will want to learn as much about the person as possible and he or she will wish for them to learn as much as possible about the interviewer and his or her organisation. The interview objectives should include: introducing the school, its philosophy and practice, finding out what they want to gain from voluntary work, talking through the variety of activities they could undertake, identifying any special skills they may have, clarifying their commitment and availability, identifying any actual or potential training needs and examining the opportunities for a volunteer contract of attendance.

2.4.1.2 Orientation

In orientation, the volunteer gets to know the other volunteers in the programme. The orientation phase also includes learning how an organisation operates. An initial orientation meeting and perhaps even a party, can provide a means of introduction in an informal context. Volunteers' responsibilities and methods of following up on the accomplishment of those responsibilities should also be included in the orientation. This includes attendance procedures, curriculum materials, amount of preparation expected, dress and other normative details. If a great many details need to be included, a booklet may be required. Orientation can be provided independently on a one-to-one basis or in a large or small group (Ratcliff & Neff 1993:115). The National

Academy Press (1990:96) states that once volunteers are recruited, virtually all organised programmes provide orientation often in joint meetings with school staff, about the general nature of undertaking on which they are embarking such as briefing on practical matters like physical facilities and rules.

2.4.2 Training of parent volunteers

Before parent volunteers embark on their activities, it is worthwhile for them to be trained. They have to undergo pre-service training. Pre-service instruction involves assessment of the capabilities of parent volunteers and equipping them with needed skills. Pre-service training emphasises the learning of skills needed for basic competence in the volunteer task. The degree of skill required relates directly to the goals and objectives of the programme and the subsequent job description. Two important methods, modelling and shaping are appropriate for pre-service training.

2.4.2.1 Modelling

Modelling involves the presentation of the desired behaviour by another person for imitation by the new volunteer. This presentation may involve a live demonstration or videotape of the activity. Of importance here is that the parent volunteer observes the skills desired and is given an opportunity to imitate them. The demonstration should emphasise key aspects of the task. Key tasks of the skill to be learned might also be emphasised by charts and key terms presented by an overhead, a list handed out or captions over the picture presented on a videotape. After the model has been observed, the parent volunteer needs to be given the opportunity to imitate what has occurred in a practical context. Surroundings should be as realistic as possible, including any needed visuals. Initial modelling might be one-to-one with a volunteer co-ordinator, to maximise immediate feedback and likelihood of success. Videotaping and replaying the volunteer's imitation can also be instructive while making simple distinctions between cognitive, affective, and lifestyle content, tabulated in short intervals of a few seconds which may help the parent volunteer become aware of their instructional behaviours and needs for correction (Ratcliff & Neff 1993:116).

2.4.2.2 Shaping

Shaping refers to the gradual acquisition of a skill in successive stages. Not all aspects of the volunteer's task should be learned at one time. It is important to break down the

job description into component parts for learning singly at first, and then combining them once the component skills have been learned. Shaping begins with sensitising and informing people as to needs, followed by commitment and observation and involvement. Finally the parent volunteer begins to convince others of the need for involvement (Ratcliff & Neff 1993:117).

Training may be conducted while parent volunteers are in the job (in-service training). After explaining to parent volunteers the routine, expectations and preferences for teaching, it will be worth the effort in the parent volunteers' abilities to co-ordinate with the teacher in the classroom (Berger 1991:145). Lemmer and Van Wyk (1998:3) say that effectively trained parent volunteers in a school can offer teachers help with many humdrum administrative and supervisory tasks so that they can channel their precious time and energy into all-important task of teaching.

Epstein (1988:409) recommends that parent education and other courses or training for parents be conducted. In this training, parents gain information on skills required for learners in all subjects at each grade. Parents also gain information on how to assist learners on how to improve skills on various class and school assessment. According to Kouri (1990:31), the staff always acts as consultants and trainers for volunteers, some of whom bring prior experience and skills to the job and others learn as they go.

Volunteer training should be of good quality, appropriate to the role they will fulfil. The valuable volunteer's time should not be wasted. No time should be spent on inappropriate training as it removes them the service that they originally joined the school for. Training should be selective and in accordance with the individual's training needs. Parents who already possess skills in particular aspects are exempted from training while those who lack particular skills are grouped together for such training (Berger 1991:145-146).

2.4.3 Placement of parent volunteers

Another important aspect of parent volunteer programmes is the placement of parent volunteers in the practical context to do their volunteer activities. These activities are classified into instructional and non-instructional support. Instructional support is wherein parent volunteers, assist in tutoring the learners, monitoring the learners, grading papers, conducting rote exercises, administrative staff helpers, and community fundraisers. Parent volunteers can also serve as audiovisual aides or bilingual aides

(National Academy Press 1990:37). Parent volunteers also assist in different activities, which are non-instructional in nature such as cultural activities, health activities, social and sport. Parents can also volunteer on field trips, as chaperones, games, preparing parent bulletin board and repairing equipment.

2.4.4 Evaluation of parent volunteers programmes

Evaluation of volunteer programmes is imperative, as it will reflect the areas, which will call for in-service training on the part of parent volunteers. According to Ratcliff and Neff (1993:129-134), evaluation should include everyone in the learning context. Standards for evaluation should be known to everyone and methods of evaluation be related to the objectives and goals of the training. Evaluation of individual parent volunteers considers the overall effectiveness of the parent volunteer programme. Evaluation should include a summary of strengths, weaknesses, and suggestions for improvement.

2.4.5 Recognition of parent volunteers

Improvement is more likely when people receive reinforcement for past accomplishments. This also applies to parent volunteers. When a parent volunteer feels he or she has been adequately recognised for accomplishments, this tends to result in less defensiveness and greater motivation to do better. Volunteer co-ordinators need to look for positives in the volunteer's performance and give him/her attention and praise (Ratcliff & Neff 1993:140).

As a way of encouraging them, parent volunteers need to be recognised, rewarded or praised. First and foremost is the recognition of every volunteer's unique situation and that they have important other relationships and activities in their lives such as partners, family, employer, friends and hobbies to mention but few (McSweeney & Alexander 1996:57). Other forms of recognising volunteers include writing notes of appreciation to volunteers, pins, plaques and bulletin boards postings. Many parent volunteer co-ordinators or schools usually organise these types of events towards the end of the year where volunteers are saluted. These practices are probably helpful in retaining volunteers. However, it was reported that most of the volunteers prefer recognition in the form of information from the schools about whether and how their volunteering make a difference to learners (National Academy Press 1990:70).

2.4.6 The pool from which parent volunteers are drawn

Previous research findings (National Academy Press 1990:66) reveal that for the past three decades, women who were mothers of school children were the ones who were actively involved in participating in the form of volunteers. The main reason for this was that male parents were economically active and had no spare time to reserve for volunteering. This source has reduced as women have also moved into employment. The pool from which volunteers are drawn has changed according to school managers and officials.

Today the pool from which volunteers are recruited has increased to include people from business community, working and retired teachers and professionals, citizens with specific academic expertise and college students. As the pool of volunteers has become diverse, so are the kinds of activities they are engaged in. However, the main role of volunteers in schools remains to augment and enrich teaching and other school programmes. This is substantiated by the fact that volunteers are supposed to work under the authority and supervision of the teacher or other school employee, in support of school objectives (National Academy Press 1990:53).

2.5 FACTORS INHIBITING PARENT VOLUNTEERING IN SCHOOLS

Despite all the benefits which parents, teachers and schools derive from the efforts of parent volunteering, there are lots of impediments to parent volunteerism. There are factors which emanate from volunteers themselves such as lack of commitment, not knowing what is expected of them, failing to show up as planned, failing to adapt to policy changes and personality differences. On the other hand, there are factors which come from schools and programme co-ordinators which include poor co-ordination or sloppy management, lack of adequate orientation and screening, confusion over objectives, teacher's attitudes and uncertainty by teachers as to how to use or react to an adult who is a highly qualified professional volunteer (National Academy Press 1990:89). Volunteers themselves cited the following problems: that the teacher they were assigned to work with did not know how to make good use of the volunteer's time.

According to Woodhead and McGrath (1988:289), the need exists for better education laws in many countries providing support to the quality of parent volunteer programmes. This situation has not improved much, which means that lack of

legislation on parent volunteering is still another factor preventing parent volunteering. The South African education legislation, that is, the Constitution (RSA) 1996 Act no 108 and the South African Schools Act (SASA) RSA, no 84 of 1996 do not provide sufficient information as far as parent involvement and parent volunteering is concerned.

Parents' educational inadequacies and the difficulties of the conditions in which they live such as illiteracy, unemployment and their past experiences of the school may to a large extent inhibit parents from volunteering in school programmes. Parents in these conditions may lose interest in the education of their children (Young & McGreeney 1973: iix).

According to Gallagher *et al.* (1997:127), lack of communication between school and parents deprives parents of valuable information about their children. This also hampers parents from volunteering in schools.

The attitudes of both parents and school management and educators towards parent volunteerism also contribute in preventing parent volunteering. Educators believe parents infringe on their territory while parents feel unwelcome at school (Berger 1991:117). Fuller and Olsen (1998:141) supports the above statement when they say that as educators become more professional and organised, they gradually remove parents from decision-making process which inhibits parents from volunteering in schools.

Berger (1991:117) indicates how teachers and school personnel impair parent volunteering in schools when she says that each school differs in character and reflects the morale and attitudes of the personnel. Some say, "come enjoy with us this exciting business of education" while others say "you are infringing on my territory, send your children, we will return them to you each evening, but in the meantime let us keep to our own responsibilities."

In their report about impediments experienced in Kingfield, Maine schools, the committee of the National Academy Press (1990:72) reports the following findings, "Those few instances in which the use of parent volunteers did not work out well were almost always due to insufficient knowledge of what was expected of them or to insufficient training. Impediments to carrying out successful programmes are chiefly insufficient funds for training and for materials and transportation".

The above literature review on impediments to effective parent volunteerism in schools has revealed, without doubt, that there are still many aspects to be improved in the management of parent volunteer programmes.

2.6 GOVERNMENT SUPPORT OF THE MANAGEMENT OF PARENT VOLUNTEER PROGRAMMES IN SCHOOLS IN THE USA

In many instances cited as examples of successful volunteer programmes, there has been the support of the state in one way or another. Several years ago, Florida, in the USA became the first government in the country to enact legislation-supporting parent volunteering in schools (National Academy Press 1990:61). Today there other countries like the United Kingdom, Canada and Britain, which have joined in formulating fully-fledged legislations on parent volunteering.

Research on parent volunteering National Academy Press (1990:82) has revealed that the government support can enhance successful volunteer programmes. There are several ways in which the government can support these programmes. The state in the USA supports volunteer programmes in different ways such as:

- legislation
- employing co-ordinators
- designing handbooks which guide volunteer programmes and
- setting aside annual budgets for the training of volunteers.

The National Academy Press Committee (1990:60-92), which conducted research on parent volunteering in schools in the USA, reports that:

- in Dallas, two paid co-ordinators administer school volunteer programmes; they are part of the school district's Community Relations Department, which has an annual budget; the volunteer office is responsible for training all volunteers who serve in the system, including individuals and parents
- in Miami Dade County, a volunteer programme handbook has been designed which guides volunteer programmes
- in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the director was active as a parent in the magnet school desegregation plan and became the first director of school volunteers in Tulsa
- Tulsa schools' volunteers seemed exceptionally well organised and self-starting

- The National Academy Press Committee revealed that there is a relation between the level of support at the top policy level and administrative levels in a school system and the success of school volunteer programmes
- beyond this, sincere personal acceptance and approval by the district board of education, the superintendent and each participating school principal is apparent in successful programmes
- all of the district programmes reviewed by the committee had some form of centralised administrative structure
- the state of Florida has what is probably the strongest legislative commitment; with annual funding for matching grants to school districts to promote and extend school volunteer programmes.

When the committee investigated the level to which government involved itself said, “It is not surprising that a number of governments have active state-wide volunteer programmes. About half the number of people they interviewed provided the name and address of a person at the state level who had been designated as responsible for school volunteer programme coordination” (National Academy Press 1990:26-27).

2.7 PARENT VOLUNTEERING IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

The South African Schools Act (RSA 1996) makes provision for the involvement of parents in the education of their children. Some South African researchers, such as Lemmer and Van Wyk (1998), have done research about the need for parent volunteers in schools, the benefits thereof as well as how the management programmes can be run. The two researchers also cite examples of South African schools in the Eastern Cape where parent volunteerism paid dividends.

Another South African researcher on the subject of parent volunteerism in schools, Berger (1991:120-123) has also indicated the benefits, which can be derived from parent volunteerism but indicated the need for further research. She has also written guidelines on the role of parents and school administrators in facilitating parent volunteer programmes in schools such as making policies, provision of resources and recruitment of volunteers (Berger 1991:117-137). The contents of Curriculum 2005, which is the National document for education also emphasises the involvement of parents in their children’s education. Parents are now invited to come and demonstrate their different skills to the learners at school. In their research reports on parent volunteering in South African context, Lemmer and Van Wyk (1998:1-4) state that there

is a need to consider the introduction of parent volunteering programmes in South African schools. They go on to say how the parents, learners and educators can benefit from these programmes. The pilot volunteer projects such as the one conducted in the Eastern Cape yielded very positive results.

However, despite all the legislation and efforts by the government and the Education Department, not much enthusiasm, optimism and interest are practically demonstrated in South African schools. It can indicate that there seems to be no broad based literature on the management of parent volunteers in secondary schools in diverse circumstances, especially those relating to South Africa. There are not enough guideline documents from the government either, which guide the teachers and school personnel on the implementation and management of parent volunteer programmes, especially those which can be applied in rural schools where most parents are economically inactive and educationally inadequate.

There is a need for both the South African education authorities and researchers to learn much from the international sources on the management of parent volunteer programmes so that the information gained can be contextualised and implemented in the South Africa. The present legislation (Constitution, Act 108 of 1996) and school policies such as, the South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996 does not provide many direct and specific guidelines on the management of parent volunteer programmes in schools.

2.8 SUMMARY

The above discussion has described Epstein's model of parent involvement where parent volunteering is one form of parent involvement in schools. Other models of parent volunteering were discussed to give a broader understanding of the research topic, The management of parent volunteers in secondary schools. The discussion has also indicated the importance of parent volunteering in schools. There is much that the parents, learners and educators can benefit from if these programmes are introduced in schools. There are steps which can be followed, such as the recruitment, training, placement and evaluation of parent volunteers, in order for the programmes to be successful. There are also impediments to the implementation of these programmes. The role of the government in supporting the parent volunteer programmes as well as the situation in the South Africa is pointed out.

In the next chapter (Chapter 3), the research methodology used to investigate the management of parent volunteers at Malamulele area in the Limpopo Province is discussed.

Chapter 3

Research design and methodology

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the aims of the research, the research design and research methods that were used in the empirical investigation. This investigation addressed the main research question, namely, 'How can the management of parent volunteers in secondary schools be improved?' In order to achieve this, I adopted the research methods, data collection methods and data processing methods relevant to a qualitative approach. A discussion of ethical measures and measures adhered to in order to ensure trustworthiness is included (Fouché & De Vos 2002:63-75).

3.2 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

My aim is to address the research problem as mentioned in the preceding paragraph by:

- investigating the problems that inhibit the effective management of parent volunteering in secondary schools.
- recommending to the relevant stakeholders how the management of parent volunteer programmes in secondary schools can be improved.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Mouton (2001 in De Vos *et al* 2005:132) defines a research design as the plan or blueprint according to which data are collected to investigate the research question. It is a detailed plan, which guides the manner in which research is to be conducted. For the purpose of this study, I adopted a qualitative research design. This research design, according to Neuman (2000:161), is a kind of research design that seeks to understand human experiences from the perspective of those who experience them. Leedy (1993:140) asserts that qualitative research is interpretative in character,

meaning that the enquirers try to discover meaning in what they have been given an account of. My role as the researcher was to interpret the emotions and views of the participants by means of words and not in any form of quantification (Strauss & Corbin 1990:17). The use of qualitative research methods enabled me to interact with the participants in my field who are in this case the principals and deputy principals of secondary schools. As I was the research instrument, I had full access to first hand information from the information-rich participants (Patton 1990:14).

3.4 ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

3.4.1 Informed consent

In this study, I obtained informed consent from the principals and deputy principals who were the participants by means of dialogue where I indicated to them the title of my research, the purpose of my research, the goals of the investigation as well as my competence as a researcher Gall & Borg (1999). I also used the language best understood by the participants in order to obtain their appropriate informed consent. In this case I used the English language. In this language I informed the participants of the nature of the research and that they were free to choose whether they would like to participate in the investigation or not. The participants were also informed of their right to withdraw at any time during the process of the research (De Vos *et al* 2005:59-60). I also substantiated why the participants were selected, that is, because they met the criteria for the study. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:50), informed consent should include elements such as competence, which implies the level of responsibility and maturity of the individual who is given information so as to make correct decisions. Informed consent also includes voluntarism, which implies that the participants choose whether to take part or not, full information and comprehension, which entails the participant's understanding of the research project. I explained both the possible advantages and disadvantages to the respondents (Fouché & De Vos 2002: 65-66).

As mentioned by Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (in Cohen *et al* 2002:61), the obligation to protect the anonymity of research participants and to keep research data confidential is all-inclusive. I assured the participants of their anonymity and confidentiality. I assured them that I would ensure that neither their names, traceable information nor their schools would be disclosed. I used code names for people and

places and did not disclose any information, which might have harmed the participants or their institutions (Wallen & Frankel 1991: 40).

3.4.2 Deception and privacy of participants

Cohen *et al* (2000:50) define deception as a kind of experimental situation where the researcher knowingly conceals the true purpose and conditions of the research or positively misinforms the subjects, or exposes them to unduly painful, stressful or embarrassing experiences, without the subjects having knowledge of what is going on. De Vos *et al* (1998:27) describe deception of subjects as withholding information or offering incorrect information in order to ensure participation of the subjects when they would otherwise possibly have refused. I avoided deceiving participants in order to gain their consent at all costs. Before tape recording the interviews, I assured them of their right to decline to respond to certain questions in the interview guide. I did not deliberately deceive my subjects and if it happened inadvertently, I aimed to rectify it immediately.

3.4.3 Competence of the researcher

According to De Vos *et al* (2005:63), researchers are obliged to ensure that they are competent and adequately skilled to undertake a professional investigation. In my capacity as a qualified secondary school educator and a deputy principal, I possess the necessary research skills. Furthermore, I was introduced to research in my undergraduate studies. I also enrolled for research in an adult education course, which served as pre-requisite for my admission for this study. I also did research methodology during coursework for this study in Education Management.

3.4.4 Debriefing of respondents

Where necessary, I conducted debriefing sessions after the participants completed their participation in the study. This enabled me to rectify any misunderstanding, which could have arisen amongst the participants during the interviews (Cohen *et al* 2000:50). In these sessions I also informed the participants about the results of the project as well as the purpose of the results. During debriefing, the participants and I could share our experiences of the project and any possible harm that might have occurred unintentionally was minimised (Fouché & De Vos 2002:73).

3.5 MEASURES TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS

As the literature indicates, there are a number of alternative models for assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative data (De Vos *et al* 1998:348). For the purpose of this study, Guba's model of trustworthiness as depicted in De Vos *et al* (1998:350) was used as it is well developed and has proved useful to many researchers in South Africa.

3.5.1 Truth-value

According to Lincoln and Guba (in De Vos *et al* 1998:349), truth-value can also be called credibility. In qualitative research, truth-value can be assured since the research is based on the information about human experiences as perceived and experienced by the participants themselves. As the researcher, I was prepared to ensure that my findings reflected accurately the truth of the participants' perceptions so that I could have confidence in these findings.

3.5.2 Applicability

According to Guba (in De Vos *et al* 1998:349), applicability in qualitative research refers to transferability or 'fit' which can be defined as the extent to which the findings can apply to other contexts, settings and groups. My research setting is Malamulele area in the Limpopo Province. Schools here are characterised by shortage of classrooms, overcrowding, illiterate and unemployed parents and lack of educational support materials. The communities are dominated by families, which are headed by women and children as most men work far away from their homes. Teachers constitute the School Governing Bodies (SGB) of the schools where teachers in one school become SGB members in another school and vice versa. A large part of South Africa is occupied by a rural population that exhibits the same characteristics as my sample schools. This means that the results of my findings will apply in other areas of the country.

3.5.3 Consistency

Following the scientific steps of conducting research procedures, the researcher should ensure that the findings are a true reflection of the investigation.

3.5.4 Neutrality

Neutrality refers to the freedom from bias in the research procedures and results (De Vos *et al* 1998:350). In this study, I attempted to remain as objective as possible where I guarded against subjective values, perspectives and biases, which could influence the interpretation and description of data. To achieve this, I made use of a tape recorder and transcribed the interviews verbatim. I also asked the participants to review what they had said and conducted follow-up interviews.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION

According to Poggenpoel in De Vos *et al* (1998:352), the researchers in a qualitative research design utilise a wide range of strategies. This study was circular in nature, which called for the utilisation of purposeful sampling, data collection and partial analysis which was simultaneous and interactive.

3.6.1 Sampling

Sampling refers to the procedure, which is employed in selecting potential participants (Simelane 1998:21). In this study, I used a purposive sample where the principals and deputy principals of secondary schools who were considered as information-rich participants were interviewed.

3.6.1.1 Sample criteria

These are characteristics, which the researcher uses for qualifying individuals to form part of the sample. The condition for inclusion in this study was being principal or deputy principal of a secondary school and having served in the same position at the same school for not less than five years.

3.6.1.2 Sample size

As this is a dissertation of a limited scope, I used two secondary schools for sampling where I interviewed the principal and the deputy principal in each school, which resulted in four (4) participants. However, I decided that the research could include the SGBs and Heads of Department of the two schools should a need arises. This is supported by Simelane (1998:23) who says that in qualitative research, the sample

size is determined by repetition of data that the researcher obtains from interviews with participants. Thus, sampling continues until data saturation is reached.

3.6.2 The researcher as instrument

According to Sharan (1998:7), the researcher in qualitative research is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. In this study I was the instrument as I was the one who gathered and analysed data. I also acknowledged my human fallibility. I studied relevant publications to improve my skills and competency as a researcher.

3.6.3 Interviews

The most common form of interview is the person-to-person encounter in which the researcher elicits information from the respondent. Interviewing is necessary when the researcher cannot observe behaviour, feelings or how people interpret the world around them (Sharan 1998:71). I designed a semi-structured interview guide or schedule (see Appendix C) which focused on the factors, which inhibit the effective management of parent volunteering in secondary schools. Interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim.

3.6.4 Data processing

Data processing is a systematic process whereby data is selected, categorised, synthesised and interpreted in order to provide explanations of the single phenomenon of interest (Bernard 2002:448). I transcribed the individual interviews obtained through recording into typed text before analysing them. The following steps were followed while analysing the collected data:

- Organising the data
- Segmenting of data
- Coding of data

3.6.4.1 Organising the data

As data collected can be voluminous, it was necessary for me as the researcher to organise the data collected. This involved the process of data reduction which entails selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the raw data (Patton 1990:379).

3.6.4.2 *Segmenting of data*

In the process of reducing data, I divided the transcribed data after reading and re-reading them into meaningful analytical units or segments. This enabled me to determine if there were segments of the texts, which were important for this research. I also identified where these segments began and ended. After identifying the segments, I coded them in order to differentiate them (Strauss & Corbin 1990:63).

3.6.4.3 *Coding of data*

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990:63) coding is the operation by which data are broken down, conceptualised and re-compiled into new units. The new units which emerged as major points of the collected data (categories) were further broken down into sub-categories or themes which were contrasted in order to determine how they were similar or dissimilar to one another. I also associated the items with each other and refined the patterns and themes, which is also called ordering (Dzivhani 2000:28).

3.6.4.4 *Literature comparison*

In this phase I revisited my literature review (Chapter 2) in order to compare my research findings with what I had already discovered about the study in the existing literature (Simelane 1998:29).

3.7 SUMMARY

In this chapter the research design, which guided the empirical investigation, was discussed. The qualitative research approach, which was adopted while collecting data, was also discussed. Data collection methods, sampling procedures, data processing methods as well as ethical measures and measures to ensure trustworthiness were described and discussed. The presentation of the collected data, the analysis and the interpretation of the results are done in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Presentation and discussion of findings

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss the findings of the empirical investigation on the management of parent volunteers in secondary schools at Malamulele district in the Limpopo Province.

4.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4.2.1 The participants

In this study interviews were conducted in two schools with two principals and two deputy principals. Biographical data of the four informants are presented in the tables below as their information may have an impact in the information that has been captured.

The principals in all cases have served for more than five years in the same school. Thus they are presumed to have sound knowledge of the parents and the community. The tables below indicate the characteristics of the participants.

Table 4.1: Characteristics of principals

PRINCIPAL	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B
Gender	Male	Male
Age	45	47
Teaching experience	25	23
Years as principal	12	8
Years in present school	12	13

Table 4.2: Characteristics of deputy principals

DEP. PRINCIPAL	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B
Gender	Male	Male
Age	44	45
Teaching experience	20	21
Years as dep. Principal	6	7
Years in present school	12	13

4.3 FINDINGS

The data collected through the interview schedule were analysed and the findings were organised in categories and are presented in the proceeding paragraphs.

4.3.1 The interview schedule

The two principals and two deputy principals revealed the tabled categories while responding to the questions in the semi-structured interview schedule on the management of parent volunteers in their schools. The deputy principals will be referred to as principals in my quotations.

My findings are categorised according to the said categories as revealed by the interviewees. In Table 4.3 the categories and sub-categories are summarised.

Table 4.3: Categories and sub-categories

<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Educators<ul style="list-style-type: none">• management of parent volunteers in schools• lack of parent volunteer programmes• the attitudes of educators• principals lack skills to deal with parent volunteers• communication between schools and communities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Parents<ul style="list-style-type: none">• parents' lack of interest• parents' level of formal education.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Government<ul style="list-style-type: none">• lack of government support• policies on the management of parent volunteers.

4.3.1.1 *Educators*

a) *Management of parent volunteers in schools*

The participants displayed a vague understanding of the concept parent volunteer. This was manifested during the discussions with the school managers and deputy school managers. Consequently, all the principals interviewed indicated clearly that at their schools there are no programmes for managing parent volunteers. These principals even stated that they themselves have serious problems on how they can initiate and manage these programmes. The following statements by the principals confirm this point.

One principal indicated:

The last time we had a large number of parents coming to volunteer at the school was in 2001 when the then MEC for education who is back to the position, Doctor Motsoaledi made a provincial call for parents to go and volunteer at schools for the whole month and I think that was in March.

Another principal stated:

People must be designated by both the Department of Education and at school level as to who will be trained to work with parent volunteers' matters in schools, particularly in secondary schools.

The concept of parent volunteers appeared new to some of the principals. Some principals consider it to be only for particular groups of people.

Yet another principal stated:

I am now realising, with the help of this interview that indeed a lot is still needed in this important aspect of volunteering and its management in our schools. School managers need to be capacitated with skills and prepared documents, which will guide them in the management of parent volunteers.

What the interviewees revealed in the above discussion indicates that there is scant knowledge of parent volunteer programmes on the part of school managers.

b) Lack of parent volunteer programmes

All the principals interviewed indicated that they do not have programmes to follow while conducting parents' voluntary work at their schools. In cases where parent volunteering takes place, there are also no programmes, which are followed and managed. School management and educators use their own methods. All the schools do not have a list of regular parent volunteers at their schools.

One principal said:

To be honest with you, according to me, parents' involvement as volunteers in the school is very insufficient. These parents sometimes fail to attend even our official meetings, let alone the question of volunteering. Some parents would offer their skills and services after you have explained the problems you experience at school and indicate to them that the school cannot afford to pay for the work.

Another principal stated:

The parents who come to volunteer are not the same parents all the time. I think the reason why they do not come on their own is that they are not sure whether they are needed or not, whether they will be utilised or not as there is no specific person who liaises with them at our school.

Finally, another principal said:

I think schools should hold regular meetings with the parents so as to reduce the social gap which exists between schools and communities.

c) *The attitudes of educators*

Another factor, which came out during the interviews with the principals as a hindrance to parents volunteering in their schools, is the attitude, which is displayed by educators towards parent volunteers in schools. The educators are not welcoming.

One principal indicated:

From my experience, the attitudes of some educators and school administrators are some of the problems. Look, most of our teachers here do not welcome parents who pay visits to the school, some do not even bother to greet them, they would always refer them to the principal's office and when the principal is not there, the parent may wait for many hours without being attended to.

Furthermore a principal said:

The school also plays a role in de-motivating parents from volunteering, a parent may come here only to find that he or she is not recognised, even when they come with complaints, such as, when they are called to be informed of their children's behaviour.

Yet another principal stated:

Problems are there because parents are adults and always want to do serious business. If they come and find that nobody shows interest in them, they turn back and you will never see them again. Sometimes you find that they are given

irrelevant jobs like cleaning the school which they see as not important. One must also make mention of the fact that we as educators are sometimes not welcoming, we consider parents as not necessary at school as we think we are professionals who know their job.

From what the principals and deputy principals said, it became clear that the attitude of teachers and other school personnel contribute a lot in attracting or de-motivating parents from volunteering in schools.

d) *Principals lack skills to deal with parent volunteers*

One of the major impediments to parent volunteering as was revealed by the interviews is that the school managers who are supposed to spearhead the management programmes do not possess sufficient knowledge about volunteering and lack skills of initiating and managing volunteer programmes. The interviewed principals revealed this.

One principal said:

I cannot tell you exactly how we use them as we do not have a formal way of using them. Sometimes the management team advices me to call a parent meeting, especially when there is a need.

Another principal remarked:

At our school we do not necessarily use any specific policy document for this purpose, actually what we do is to call the parents through learners when there is a need for their assistance.

Yet another principal stated:

As those people are volunteering, we do not even use policies, what we do is to welcome them when they come and organise the tools what will be needed when they do the work.

The above discussion revealed that the principals' skills of dealing with parent volunteering are haphazard and need to be improved.

e) *Communication between schools and communities*

The interviews with the school principals revealed that there is no close link between schools and communities. This also has an impact on the flow of information between them. Learners are mostly used by the school to carry information or invitations to the parents, which task they do not do effectively.

The school managers do not have the recruitment strategies and volunteer programmes, which proved a lot of success in many schools in the USA. Communication with parents is done only when there is a serious need of the parents' attention.

One principal stated:

Some parents would offer their skills and services after you have called them and explain the problems you experience at school and indicate to them that the school cannot afford to pay for the work.

Another principal said:

Parent volunteering at our school is not given the attention it deserves, actually we do not communicate effectively with our parents.

In both the schools where the interviews were conducted, the principals indicated that there are no programmes or meetings between the schools and communities.

Another principal said:

Definitely, the last time we had a large number of parents coming to volunteer was in 2001 when the then MEC for education who is back to the position, Dr. Motsoaledi made a provincial call for parents to go and volunteer in schools for the whole month and I think that was in March.

The interviews revealed that, in rural communities, there is still a problem of communication between the parents and schools.

4.3.1.2 Parents

a) Parents' lack of interest

The interviews also showed that the parents of learners at the secondary schools under investigation did not show interest in their children's school work. This is displayed in the way they respond to meetings called at the schools to discuss about matters relating to school and learners.

One principal said:

It is very rare, actually their attitudes towards school is not that positive. Most of these parents of course are not educated and so they are not interested in their children's school work. According to me, the parents' involvement as volunteers in the school is insufficient. They do not come to official meetings, let alone the question of volunteering. Some parents would offer their skills and services after you have explained the problems you experience at school and indicate to them that the school cannot afford to pay for the work.

Another principal stated:

Yes, sometimes they are called to attend parents meetings but do not turn up. No any valid reasons is given. Some can tell you to the face that they do not work at school. What do you call that?

Yet another principal observed:

As I indicated to you, most of the parents in these areas have negative attitudes towards school. They do not usually respond positively to our meetings. Even those who are retired professionals will talk of compensation when they volunteer.

The above quotations of the principals show that the parents in these communities are not involved in the education of their children in the form of volunteering. They do not see their role and how they can be utilised in the work which is professional when they themselves are not.

The interviewees have indicated that the parents lack interest which is another strong inhibiting factor in parent volunteering.

b) Parents' level of formal education

During the interviews with the principals, it also emerged that the parents level of education plays a role in their motivation and interest to volunteer in school. Most of the parents of learners who are at school now, cannot read or write.

One principal said:

This issue of volunteering in schools, especially in rural schools like ours where most of the parents are illiterate, the level of parent involvement is still very low.

Most of these parents of course are not educated and they do not show interest in their children's schoolwork.

Another principal remarked:

Well, there are many factors, the question of their level of education, unemployment and time are influential contributory factors.

A principal remarked:

You see in rural schools like this one, the understanding of parents when it comes to how the school operates is very low, they need some education and even training and to be involved before they can volunteer on their own.

Another principal agreed:

I am telling you, most of school managers, parents and parents themselves believe only unemployed professional educators are expected to volunteer at schools.

I realised during the interviews with the principals, that the learners also play a role in discouraging their parents from visiting or coming to school. They apparently feel embarrassed when their parents who are not educated visit their school which they consider a place for the educated. The principals went on to indicate that some learners do not even inform their parents if they are requested to invite them to school for a meeting or a party.

The preceding discussion shows that, in rural areas where many parents are not formally educated, parents volunteering is minimal.

4.3.1.3 *Government*

a) *Lack of government support*

Another factor, revealed by the interviews as contributing to inhibiting parents from volunteering in secondary schools, is that there is no intervention by the government to initiate or monitor this aspect.

One principal remarked:

People must be designated by both the Department of Education and at school level as to who will be trained to work with the volunteer's matters in schools.

Another principal said:

Finally, I think the greatest challenge lies with the Department of Education to produce a working document, which will assist educators in this important aspect.

Yet another principal stated:

Problems are there because there are no working documents that we follow and everything is done only through experience and discretion of school managers and there is no consistency in this regard.

b) *Departmental policies on the management of parent volunteers*

With regard to the use of departmental policies on parent volunteering, it came out from the discussions with the four participants that there are no policies which directly address the question of parent volunteering in schools.

One principal said:

I cannot say with full confidence that we, at our school are using the policy documents satisfactorily because firstly I do not for one know or have any document at my disposal which specifically guides schools about how they should manage parent volunteering at their schools.

Another principal stated:

As of now, I cannot say we have enough policy documents supplied by the Education Department on this subject and hence their utilisation is not satisfactory. I can say without any doubt that in most of the schools in this vicinity even the word volunteer cannot be well interpreted. In order for all secondary schools to have uniformity, I think the Department of Education must formulate a guiding document, which all the schools should adopt with regards to volunteering in schools.

One other principal remarked:

What we do is to welcome them when they come and organise the tools, which will be needed when they do the work. Furthermore, at our school we do not have many documents, which guide us in this regard except the South African Schools Act, which does not shed much light on the management of parent volunteers.

The quotations from the interviewed principals indicate clearly that there are no policy documents, which the schools use from the Department of Education hence the ineffective way in which parent volunteering takes place in schools.

4.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings gathered from the participants revealed many shortcomings with regard to the management of parent volunteers in the schools selected for research. According to Epstein (2001:415), volunteering and supporting school programmes include recruitment, training and evaluation of volunteers. The school managers in the selected schools indicated that they do not even know where they can start if they were to recruit and train parent volunteers.

Literature also indicates that in the USA, where parent volunteering has received much attention, co-ordinators are assigned to handle parent volunteer programmes in particular schools or school managers themselves (McSweeney & Alexander 1996:50). The participants in the two schools indicated no knowledge of that.

The participants indicated that the parents do not see that they have a role at schools as they are not professionals but Berger (1991:142) indicates a number of tasks volunteers can render at schools. She divides the tasks into teaching and non-teaching tasks.

The National Academy Press (1990:53) states that volunteers in these programmes, in countries like the USA, include working and retired professionals. Participants in my investigation stated that retired professionals need compensation if they were to render a voluntary service at school. The participants cited the attitudes of teachers as a problem to parents coming to volunteer in schools. This confirms what was revealed by the existing literature (Berger 1991:148).

The participants indicated that they lack skills and knowledge as there are no policies from the Department of Education to guide them about parent volunteers. According to Woodhead and McGrath (1998:289), the need exists for better education laws in many countries providing more support to the quality of parent volunteer programmes. The findings also revealed that parents lack interest in the education of their children as they themselves are not formally educated. Young and McGreeney (1973:xii) state that parents' educational inadequacies and the difficulties of the conditions in which they live such as illiteracy, unemployment and their past experiences of the school may, to a large extent, inhibit parents from volunteering in school programmes. Parents in these conditions may lose interest in the education of their children. Most of the parents in this area, where the investigation was conducted, are uneducated and unemployed.

The participants also indicated that there is a lack of communication between the school and the community. Existing literature indicates that this also hampers parents from volunteering in schools (Gallagher *et al* 1997:127).

The investigation has revealed that the attitudes of all school personnel towards parent volunteering is not positive and therefore contributes in inhibiting parents from volunteering in schools, as also stated by other researchers (Berger 1991:117).

4.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter I dealt with the findings concerning the views of the principals and deputy principals of two rural secondary schools about parent volunteering in their schools. The two schools are found at Malamulele district in the Limpopo Province.

The data were collected by means of interviews with principals and deputy principals of two secondary schools. Based on the above findings and analysis, it seems that there are no parent volunteer programmes at secondary schools in the Limpopo Province. Principals identified the shortcomings, which need the attention of the Department of Education.

The next chapter deals with the summary and recommendations.

Chapter 5

Summary and Recommendations

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This research has dealt with an investigation of the management of parent volunteers at secondary schools in the Limpopo Province with a view to developing guidelines for managers in secondary schools. Such guidelines, which have suggested themselves as a result of this study, are aimed at improving future educational practice.

5.2 SUMMARY

This study was motivated by the following question:

How are parent volunteer programmes managed at secondary schools in the Limpopo Province?

In order to answer the question, a literature study was done which provided a conceptual framework within which to work (cf chapter 2). Thereafter the management of parent volunteers was explored by means of an empirical investigation using a small sample of participants in two secondary schools in the Malamulele district in Limpopo Province. A qualitative approach was used. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principal deputy principal of each of the selected schools.

The results revealed that there are factors, in the different levels of the Education Department, which inhibit parent volunteering at secondary schools in the Limpopo Province. As a consequence of the findings, certain recommendations are made which need the attention of the different stakeholders and which warrant further research.

Parent volunteers can play a very important role in schools. There are lots of benefits, which parents, teachers and learners can derive from parent volunteer programmes especially

when they are effectively implemented. My literature review revealed that these programmes have developed satisfactorily in many states in the USA. There is however not sufficient literature on the subject relating to South Africa. My research results also confirm that there are no consistent volunteer programmes in many secondary schools in the Limpopo Province.

The results of the investigations have revealed the feelings of the principals about the importance and need for the implementation of parent volunteer programmes in their schools. They also said that there are challenges facing them which inhibits parent volunteering in their schools and which calls for the involvement of the different participants in the education of learners such as the government, the school personnel and the parents.

The interviews also showed that there are presently no people from either the departmental or school level who have been designated with the task of co-ordinating parent volunteering in the secondary schools of the Limpopo Province. Parents respond when they are invited to schools to volunteer but it is not effective without regular programmes to follow and instruct.

The principals who have, at some stage, tried to involve parents in some voluntary work said that they do participate even though they do not come in large numbers. The principals made it clear that the schools themselves are not doing their part in recruiting, training and placing the parents as volunteers in their schools.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.3.1 Parent volunteer programmes

Literature on parent volunteering indicated that there should be a programme which parents follow while volunteering in schools. This will enhance proper implementation of parent volunteering (National Academy Press 1990:71).

The interviews revealed that the secondary schools under investigation do not have any volunteer programme. The school managers have limited knowledge about parent volunteering programmes and have never attempted implementing them in their schools. There is no specific person at school who is charged with the responsibility of co-ordinating parent volunteers at these schools.

Consequently for parent volunteering to be implemented successfully in secondary schools in the Limpopo Province, it is recommended that there be programmes in schools which direct both the implementation of the programme and the parents who participate. This will enhance consistency on how these programmes are conducted and applied.

5.3.2 Training school managers

Parents who volunteer in schools need training in order to participate fruitfully. This means that the person at school level who co-ordinates parent volunteering should possess the necessary skills and strategies for training the parents. The findings of this investigation revealed that school managers lack knowledge on how to handle parent volunteers as they have never been informed about it. They did not even know how they can introduce or recruit parents to come and volunteer in their schools. The school principals are the ones who are supposed to have the necessary skills to recruit, train and evaluate the parent volunteers in their schools. They also require training.

For this reason it is recommended that the Department of Education in the Limpopo Province formulates a policy to guide and instruct school managers on how to introduce and manage parent volunteer programmes in school. The Department of Education should also bear the responsibility for conducting workshops for school managers who will co-ordinate parent volunteering in schools. The Department of Education must also design a volunteer programme handbook which will guide both the school personnel and the parent volunteers.

5.3.3 Government support

In my investigation it was clear that the schools receive no support from the government with regard to parent volunteering. The National Academy Press committee revealed that there is a relation between the level of support at the top policy level and administrative levels in a school system and the success of school volunteer programmes.

As a result there is a need for the South African education authorities to learn from the international sources on the management of parent volunteer programmes so that the information gained can be contextualized and implemented in South Africa. The Department of Education must bring about uniformity on how parent volunteering is handled in secondary schools in the Limpopo Province. It is also recommended that the government should support and encourage schools to introduce and manage parent volunteer programmes. Co-

ordinators should be employed by the government who will facilitate parent volunteering at all levels.

5.3.4 Policies

If the schools are to have uniformity in their practices, there must be common policy documents followed by all. The policy documents should guide the school managers on how to implement parent volunteer programmes. In order, therefore, for such programmes to take place in a proper and uniform way in schools, the Department of Education has to provide policy documents which will spearhead their implementation in schools. Almost all the interviewees remarked about not having any departmental policy to guide them with regard to the implementation and management of parent volunteering in their schools.

It is, therefore, recommended that the Department of Education in the Limpopo Province formulates policy documents which will guide school managers in the implementation and management of parent volunteer programmes in schools. The Department of Education should also make a policy on how parents should volunteer in schools which will be followed by all the schools.

5.3.5 Communication between school and community

The interviews revealed that there is no regular communication between schools and communities. School managers only call meetings with parents when there is a problem which they want to bring to the attention of the parents. Parents also are not up to date with what is happening at school. They do not voluntarily go to school and seek information about the functioning of the school.

It is therefore recommended that school managers plan programmes for parent meetings where they will regularly inform the parents about what is happening at schools. School management should also invite parents to approach the school and express their views about the school and how they can assist the schools and make them feel welcome.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As the involvement of parents in their children's education occurs in various forms, I recommend further research on this topic regarding:

- the relationship between the parents' level of formal education and their interest in volunteering in schools
- the impact of parents' unemployment on their volunteering at schools'
- the role of the teachers' attitudes in inhibiting parent volunteering.

5.5 FINAL REMARKS

The discussions in the preceding chapters revealed problems which are encountered by both parents and teachers when it comes to parent volunteering. These problems call for the attention of the Department of Education which carries the authority for bringing about changes in our schools. There is a great need to improve parent volunteering in secondary schools in the Limpopo Province. For this reason both parents and school personnel must receive training concerning the implementation and management of parent volunteer programmes in schools. These programmes can have a positive impact if they are applied in schools as learners will be exposed to different people with different skills who will empower and enrich them with a wealth of knowledge and information.

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Appendix A

Basopa High School
P.O. Box 658
SASELAMANI
0928
04 June 2005

The Circuit Manager
Malamulele North East Circuit
Private Bag X2959
SASELAMANI
0928

The Circuit Manager

Request for permission to conduct research at your schools.

I hereby request a permission to conduct an educational research at secondary schools in your circuit. The title of my research is: The management of parent volunteers at secondary schools at Malamulele in the Limpopo Province.

The purpose of this research is to find out how parents of learners at secondary schools involve themselves in the education of their children. The findings will also benefit the Department of Education.

Yours faithfully,
Simango R.H.

Appendix B

Basopa High School
P.O. Box 658
SASELAMANI
0928

The Principal

Application to conduct research at your school.

I hereby apply to conduct an educational research at your school. The intended period of research is between June and July 2005. The title of my research is: The management of parent volunteers at secondary schools at Malamulele in the Limpopo Province.

Your co-operation will be appreciated.

Yours faithfully,
Simango R.H.

Appendix C: Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW: (A) DATE: 29 JUNE 2005

(MR. G.T.) PRINCIPAL

CODES: RES= RESEARCHER

: PRI = PRINCIPAL

RES: Good afternoon Mr. Principal.

PRI: Good afternoon Sir.

RES: As indicated in our conversation, I would like to spend forty five to sixty minutes of your time asking you questions on the management of parent volunteers at your school. Can I go ahead?

PRI: With pleasure sir.

RES: Thank you for affording me the opportunity to talk to you. How would you define a parent volunteer?

PRI: A parent volunteer means a parent who offers to come and help at school and who will not expect payment from the school or the School Governing Body for that service, the job can be professional or unprofessional.

RES: Okay, in what way do you use departmental policy documents on the management of parent volunteers at your school?

PRI: I cannot say with full confidence that we, at our school are using the policy documents satisfactorily.

RES: Why not?

PRI: Yes, because, firstly I do not for one know or have any document at our disposal which specifically guides schools about how they should manage parent volunteers at their schools.

RES: Yes?

PRI: The only documents that are at our disposal as school managers are the South African Schools Act and may be the Constitution which stipulates that parents are supposed to govern their schools and take responsibility for the well fair of their schools.

RES: Okay.

PRI: It is in these documents where parents are encouraged to assist teachers and learners in matters regarding cultural, religious, sports and other community values.

RES: In what way do you use these policy documents at your school?

PRI : I cannot tell you exactly how we use them, as we do not have a formal way of using them. Sometimes the school management team advises me to call a parent meeting, especially when there is a need.

RES: What do you mean by a need?

PRI : Sometimes we experience difficulties of heavy storms, tornadoes damages caused by acts of nature or domestic animals.

RES: Yes?

PRI: That is when we request the parents to come and assist in repairing the school.

RES: And how do they respond?

PRI: They usually come, although not in large numbers.

RES: So the parents do not voluntarily visit the school until they are requested to do so?

PRI: It is very rare; actually their attitude towards school is not that positive. Most of these parents of course are not educated and so they do not show interested in their children school work.

RES: Okay, now to what extent are the parents of your learners involved as volunteers at your school? If not, why not?

PRI : According to me, the parents' involvement as volunteers in the school is very insufficient to be honest with you. These parents sometimes fail to attend even to our official meetings, let alone the question of volunteering. Some parents would offer their skills and services after you have explained the problems you experience at school and indicate to them that the school cannot afford to pay for the work.

RES: Ehe?

PRI : Definitely, the last time we had a large number of parents coming to volunteer at the school was in 2001 when the then MEC for Education who is back to the position, Doctor Motsoaledi made a provincial call for parents to go and volunteer at schools for the whole month and think that in March.

RES: I am interested in that, did the school have any programme for that?

PRI : Parents were allocated a teacher who designed a register in order to regulate their volunteering work. Parents had to sign in when they arrive in the morning and in the afternoon when they knock off.

RES: What kind of work did they do?

PRI : They did different types of work.

RES: Okay.

PRI: They divided themselves into groups, there was a group of those who opted to repair school furniture, those who volunteered to renovate and repair the school buildings while women did the cleaning of the whole school premises and that was wonderful.

RES: I see.

PRI: But that was only for one month.

RES: And how was the mood?

PRI: Every parent was excited and dedicated, they use to sing traditional songs, which they used to sing in their come together gatherings. They looked very proud of their services especially because their children were seeing them.

RES: How were the parents motivated to volunteer here?

PRI: The motivation and interest were somehow natural.

RES: Ehe?

PRI: Because the only thing we did as a school was to call a meeting in which they came and express our appreciation for the response and tell them about the MEC's call and the following morning the number had doubled.

RES: Any incentive may be?

PRI: They were not promised anything in the beginning, although they were awarded certificates of participation as a token of appreciation. The greatest motivation though was the feeling of being included in the education of their children irrespective of them not being teachers.

RES: In those cases where parent are involved, what are the problems that are experienced?

PRI: From my experience, the attitudes of some parents and school administrators are some of the problems.

RES: Okay.

PRI: Look, most of our teachers here do not welcome parents who pay visits to the school, some do not even bother to greet them, they would always refer them to the school managers' offices and if the principal is not there, the parent may wait for many hours without being attended.

RES: Is it?

PRI : Some of our teachers sometimes feel that parents disturb them in their work and that they should visit the school only when they are requested. Again, some parents also have a negative attitude towards school. There is also a question of feeling inferior by parents. You can see by the way they talk with the staff members, they do not display any confidence in themselves. They feel they are not capable of doing anything at school and so there is no way in which they can be of help.

RES : In reference to these problems, what do you think would be possible solutions?

PRI : You know what?

RES : Eh.

PRI : This issue of volunteering in schools, especially in rural schools like ours where most of the parents are illiterate, the level of parent involvement is still very low. People must be designated by both the department of education and at school level who will be trained to work with the volunteer's matters in schools, particularly in secondary schools. In order for all secondary schools to have uniformity, I think the department of education must formulate a guiding document, which all the schools should adopt with regards to volunteering in schools.

RES : Hmmmm, I get your point.

PRI : Another solution would be for school managers to have open policies with regards to welcoming parents as volunteers in schools.

RES : Okay.

PRI : Parents cannot come and volunteer in schools unless we as personnel in schools change our attitudes towards parents in general.

RES : Is there anything you would like to add?

PRI : I still have a lot to suggest; I think schools should hold regular meetings with the parents so as to reduce the social gap, which exists between schools and communities presently. In schools, we need to train educators who will specifically deal with parent volunteers from recruiting them to motivating them because as it is now, most of the parents are not motivated to volunteer in schools. Finally, I think the greatest challenge lies with the department of education to produce a working document, which will assist educators on this important aspect.

RES : It has been a great pleasure talking to you, thank you very much.

PRI : Thank you sir, I also enjoyed your stay with me.

RES : Thank you.

INTERVIEW B

(MR. E) PRINCIPAL

CODES: RES: RESEARCHER

PRI : PRINCIPAL

RES: Good afternoon Mr. Principal.

PRI : Good afternoon.

RES: Are you well this afternoon?

PRI : Very well yourself?

RES: I am also well. As I indicated to you in our telephone conversation, I would like to spend about forty five to sixty minutes of your time asking you about the management of parent volunteers at your school. Can we start?

PRI : Yes, we can start.

RES: Thanks, what do you understand by a parent volunteer?

PRI : I understand a parent volunteers as meaning those parents who sacrifice some of their times to come and assist teachers at school.

RES: Okay.

PRI : These are parents who are concerned about the quality of the education of their children at school.

RES: Okay. In which way do you use departmental policy documents on the management of parent volunteers at your school?

PRI : As of now, I cannot say we have enough policy documents supplied by the education department on this subject and hence their utilisation is not satisfactory. I can say without any doubt that in most of the schools in this vicinity even the word volunteer cannot be well interpreted

RES: Surely?

PRI : I am telling you, most of the school managers, educators and parents themselves believe only unemployed professional educators are expected to volunteer at schools. On the other hand, parents at large are not ready to spare some time to visit schools and volunteer, may be because of inferiority complex as most of them are not educated, but the question of ignorance cannot be ruled out.

RES: Ignorance?

PRI: Yes, sometimes are called to attend parents meetings but they would not turn-up without any valid reasons. Some can tell you to the face that they do not work at school. What do you call that?

RES: I see.

PRI: That is exactly the situation here.

RES: How do you use the departmental policy documents on the management of parent volunteers at your school?

RES: At our school, we do not necessarily any specific policy document for this purpose, actually what do is to call the parents through learners when there is a need for their assistance. The only documents that we have at our disposal are not clear when it comes to parent volunteering, I mean the Constitution and the South African Schools Act at least say something about the involvement of parents in the education of their children, but that is very general. We just use our discretions when we involve the parents.

PRI: We did this in 2001 when a big number of volunteers came to our school after a call by the MEC for education for them to volunteer for a month in government institutions. We gave them different tasks such as repairing the doors and cupboards, chairs and tables and cleaning the school toilets and premises while others repaired the fence.

RES: Was that the only time they came to volunteer?

PRI: No, they also come when we call them but not on their own free will. Actually, their interest in school matters is a bit low, may be it is because they did not go far with school themselves.

RES: Okay, now to what extent are the parents of your learners involved as volunteers at your school? if not why not?

PRI: Jaa, as I indicated to you, there are many problems in schools like ours, actually all schools, especially secondary schools. Some think they will disappoint their children if they appear in schools. Since I was appointed at this school as headmaster, I have never seen a parent who voluntarily came to assist at this school, they only come when we request them, but in small numbers too.

RES: So they respond only when invited.

PRI: Yes, but not very well, mostly you will see women honouring our invitations, even during the MEC's call, the majority of the people who came were women.

RES: What about men?

PRI : Men seemingly felt inferior if they were to work with women, as it is always the case in our culture. However, there were men, who came to volunteer, they did the works, which are not easy for women such as repairs and renovations.

RES : I see.

PRI : The reason why most parents do not feel like coming to volunteer is because they undermine themselves. They don't think there is a role they can play at school.

RES : How were parents motivated to volunteer here?

PRI : On the first day, they were introduced to members of the staff and welcomed to volunteer in any form in the activities, which matched their skills and knowledge.

RES : How were their reactions?

PRI : They welcomed the move and promised to participate actively and so they did.

RES : Okay.

PRI : By this, I do not mean that there is a proper programme at our school with proper motivation for parents.

RES : Ehe?

PRI : It is very difficult, as many of the parents do not have that positive attitude about volunteerism.

RES : Why?

PRI : Well, there are many factors, the question of their level of education, unemployment and time are very contributory factors.

RES : In those cases where parent volunteers are involved, what are the problems that are experienced?

PRI : Yes, problems are there. Sometimes parents arrive at school and find that there is nobody to direct them. We at school do not have a programme to follow. This leads parents to lose interest and go home to do other jobs.

RES : Okay.

PRI : We as schools also do not show these parents respect. I can say that our attitude towards parents is not inviting. We quickly want to do away with parents who visit our schools sometimes without even listening to them. Knowing that they are not as learned as us, we think they cannot contribute to the improvement of our school and that is a great mistake we are making.

RES : I see.

PRI : Another problem is that the department has not taken a strong initiative with regard to parent volunteering. Most of our teachers do not even know what to do with parents who visit schools. They would refer everything to the school manager, as there is no school policy when it comes to the management of these volunteers. Educators need some sort of in-service training or workshops about how to handle parents, manage their volunteering activities as well as how to sustain these programmes. We definitely need the state intervention in this regard.

RES: In reference to these problems, what do you think would be possible solutions?

PRI : As I have already explained, we as teachers need to change our attitude towards parents, we need to bridge both the social and educational gaps that exist between us and the parents of our learners, we need to guide parents on how they can assist us in schools, but most of all, the department of education needs to sort of conduct a research to find out if indeed there is effective parent involvement especially in the form of volunteering in South African secondary schools. In primary schools there are at least parents who are currently volunteering to cook for learners.

RES: Is there anything you would like to add?

PRI : I am now realising, with the help of this interview that indeed a lot is still demanding in this important aspect of education. This interview served as a mirror for me to see that not enough has been done so far by us as schools to improve parent volunteering but it has also opened my eyes to see how our schools need assistance from the department of education with regard to parent volunteering.

RES: Thank you, I enjoyed talking with you.

PRI : Me too, enjoy your day.

RES: Good afternoon Mr. Deputy principal.

DEP: Good afternoon sir.

RES: How are you doing this afternoon?

DEP: I am well and yourself sir?

RES: I am well also.

DEP: Thanks.

RES: Firstly, I would like to thank you for honouring our appointment.

DEP: Thanks.

RES: As you will recall, the purpose of our meeting is an interview where I am going to ask you questions about how you manage parent volunteers at your school.

DEP: I remember very well sir.

RES: Can we start?

DEP: Yes, we can start.

RES: To start with, how do you interpret the concept parent volunteer?

DEP: Okay, parent volunteer I think are those parents who sometimes visit schools to see how things go and assist where possible. We usually give them minor jobs such as repairing chairs and tables.

RES: You said parents who sometimes visit the school, what do you mean?

DEP: I mean that as volunteers they are not bound to come regularly, but only when they feel like.

RES: Okay. In what way do you use departmental policy documents on the management of parent volunteers at your school?

DEP: As those people are just volunteering, we do not even use policies.

RES: Why?

DEP: What we do is to welcome them when they come and organise the tools what will be needed when do the work. Furthermore, at our school we do not have many documents, which guide us in this regard except the South African Schools Act, which does shed much light on the management of parent volunteers.

RES: So you do not use any policy document?

DEP: Yes, because since I was employed at this school, I have never seen any document from the department, which guides us when working with parent volunteers. If you can go around, you will realise that every school has its own way of managing parent volunteers.

RES: Is there somebody who is assigned to work with them in case they come?

DEP: Not exactly, anybody who happens to be available just work with them, but sometimes they work without the involvement of teachers as teachers say that they have their own job descriptions.

RES: Okay.

DEP: Most of the time it is our principal who calls a parents meetings and so he becomes in charge. He will explain to them the needs of the school, which warrant their involvement, and to them how he thinks they can volunteer. When the parent comes alone it is not easy for us to welcome him or her. We sometimes do not know what to do with them.

RES: To what extent are the parents of your learners involved as volunteers at your school? If not why not?

DEP: They are of course involved but I wouldn't say in an effective and systematic way because we do not follow any programme or guidelines, which can be used by any teacher at our school in a uniform way. I think it is high time that schools be assisted with documents by the department to guide us in implementing proper programmes for managing parent involvement.

RES: Ehe?

DEP: But gain, I think even our parents need to be trained because as you know, most of our parents are illiterate and so they cannot help with anything at school. Only those with special skills like building or painting are usually expected to volunteer.

RES: What about the other parents?

DEP: As I indicated to you, most of the parents in these areas have negative attitudes towards school. They do not usually respond positively to our meetings. Even those who are retired professionals will talk of compensation when they volunteer.

RES: How were those parents motivated to volunteer?

DEP: At the meeting, the school principal, community leaders and civic members exchange in telling the parents that this government expects the parents to be

actively involved in the education of their children and indicate to them how they can volunteer in schools and other institutions in the community. But sometimes parents just indicate clearly that they are willing but as unskilled people, they do not know how to operate the machines or reading and so cannot volunteer.

RES: In those cases where parents are involved, what are the problems that are experienced?

DEP: Problems are there because parents are adults and always want to do serious business. If they come and find that nobody shows interest in them, they turn back and you will never see them again. Sometimes you find that they are given irrelevant jobs like cleaning the school which they as not important. However, one must also make mention of the fact that we as educators are sometimes not welcoming, we consider parents as not necessary at school as we think we are professionals who know their job.

RES: I get your point

DEP: This discourages parents from wanting to participate in schools.

RES: In reference to those problems, what do you think would be possible solutions?

DEP: Ja, it is a bit difficult but I think it is two ways. There are certain things that would need the attention of the department of education itself.

RES: Eh?

DEP: There are also things which would warrant the attention of school managers and their SMTs to change or implement while the parents also will need to be educated in order to play their roles as parents. As of now, we cannot safely say that there is proper parent volunteering going on in our schools. A lot still needs to be done in this regard.

RES: Is there anything you would like to add?

DEP: I can only repeat my sentiments that we need intervention by the department of education if we want to succeed in this respect.

RES: I see.

DEP: School managers need to be capacitated with skills and prepared documents, which will guide them in the management of parent volunteers.

RES: Okay.

DEP: Not only that, we also need a person at school level who will administer the affairs of parents coming to volunteer at schools during working hours, not only volunteers but any parent who would visit the school anytime.

RES: Oh yes.

DEP: We need to have receptionists and clerks who will attend to parents when educators are still busy in the classes.

RES: Is that all?

DEP: For now I can say yes sir.

RES: It was a pleasure talking to you.

DEP: My pleasure too.

RES: Enjoy your day.

DEP: Many thanks.

INTERVIEW D:

Deputy Principal

CODES: RES = RESEARCHER
DEP = DEPUTY PRINCIPAL

RES: Good afternoon Mr. Deputy principal

DEP: Afternoon to you sir.

RES: Are you doing well this afternoon?

DEP: Very well, thanks and yourself sir?

RES: I am also fine. As agreed when I came and made an appointment, I am here to interview you on the management of parent volunteers at your school. I must also indicate that this interview will be recorded and that you will be free to discontinue at any point if you feel so.

DEP: You welcome.

RES: Can I start?

DEP: Yes sir.

RES: What do you understand by parent volunteers?

DEP: Parents who come to school to help in any way, who are not working at the school.

RES: Thanks, now in what way do use departmental policy documents on the management of parent volunteers at your school?

DEP: Okay, as a school we sometimes request parents to come and volunteer at our school, but we do not have enough policy documents to refer to or to guide us on managing parent volunteers.

RES: Ehe?

DEP: The parents who come to volunteer are not the same parents all the time.

RES: So parents do not come voluntarily?

DEP: I think the reason why they do not come on their own is that they are not sure whether they are needed or not, whether they will be utilised or not as there is no specific person who liases with them at our school.

RES: Why is that so?

DEP: Parent volunteering at our schools is not given the attention it deserves, actually we do not communicate effectively with our parents.

RES: How do you communicate with them?

DEP: We usually use learners to invite their parents but the response is not that good. Some learners do not even tell their parents, in fact some learners feel ashamed to see their parents at school.

RES: Ashamed of their parents?

DEP: Yes, most of the parents here did not even start school, so both parents and their children do not see any necessity for these parents to visit schools. To them there is no contribution that the parents can make at school.

RES: Okay, to what extent are the parents of your learners involved as volunteers at your school? If not why not?

DEP: Well, if I were to talk in terms of percentage, I would say not even fifty percent. Usually it is only when we request their services. I must also mention that not a good number of parents do come and volunteer. Sometimes the school is bound to hire a person to come and do a particular work after parents failed to come and volunteer.

RES: Okay.

DEP: May be one of their reasons of failure to come is that they do not have time come and work for no pay as most of them are unemployed.

RES: Oh yes

DEP: They spend much of their time looking for piece jobs in order to survive, but besides that, their interest on school matters is very low, they are not concerned.

RES: I see.

DEP: The school also plays a role in demotivating our parents from volunteering, a parent may come here but only to find that he or she is not recognised, even when they come with complaints such as when they are called to be informed of their children's behaviour.

RES: In those cases where parents are involved as volunteers, what are the problems that are encountered?

DEP: Problems are there because there are no working documents that we follow and everything is done only through experience and discretion of school managers and there is no consistency in this regard. Sometimes parents are willing but when they come, they find that the teachers at school are not welcoming.

RES: Okay.

DEP: The attitudes of some parents also pose problems, they refuse to volunteer because they think schools have money budgeted for this but school managers want to use the money for something else.

RES: Is that all?

DEP: I think this misunderstanding must be solved if parent volunteering is to improve.

RES: In reference to these problems, what do you think would be possible solutions?

DEP: The solution cannot come from a single individual.

RES: Okay.

DEP: All the stakeholders in education and interest groups must contribute in developing the idea. The department must assist school managers on how to understand the importance of parent volunteerism in schools and how to draw and implement those programmes as well as how to manage them. Presently we only rely on the South African Schools Act (SASA), which does not provide any policy on parent involvement or parent volunteerism

RES: All right.

DEP: You see in rural schools like this one, the understanding of parents when it comes to how the school operates is very low, they need some education and even training and to be involved before they can volunteer on their own.

RES: Is there anything you would like to add?

DEP: I would suggest that schools and communities must have regular meetings where they can share about the problems of their schools, that is when the parents will realise the importance of their involvement in the form of volunteering. It is in these gatherings where school managers and parents volunteer programmes can be introduced and be implemented.

RES: Thank you very much; it was a pleasure talking to you.

DEP: Thank you too