ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FAMILY-SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN KENYA’S CHILD FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

by

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DECLARATION

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I declare that Assessment of the effectiveness of family- school- community partnerships in Kenya’s Child Friendly Schools 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.

ABSTRACT

Collaboration between the parents, the schools and the community has a powerful influence on a child’s development, academically as well as behaviourally. Such partnerships benefit the students, the educators and the families alike. However, home, school and community partnerships are weak in Kenya’s Child Friendly Schools (CFSs) at primary school level, particularly in Kakamega County. This study, therefore, was designed to assess the effectiveness of family-school-community partnerships in these schools. A literature study of local and international sources regarding family-school-community partnerships and the CFS initiative in Kenya was done to frame the sequential mixed method inquiry used in this study and also to inform the design of the data-collecting tools. The study was done in two phases. Phase 1 constituted the quantitative component (a survey) and Phase 2 the qualitative component (interviews). In Phase 1 a sample of 361 primary school teachers in 34 schools were selected from a population of 8964 teachers in 848 primary schools, distributed across the 12 districts in the county, by means of stratified random sampling. In Phase 2 thirteen parents, twelve Parent Teacher Association (PTA) chairpersons and ten District Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (DQASOs), as being information-rich informants, were purposively sampled for the interviews. The parent participants and the PTA chairpersons were nominated by the head teachers of the 34 schools indicated in the stratified random sample. A self-designed paper and pencil questionnaire was used to gauge the teachers’ views of home-school-community partnerships in the CFSs. The data were analysed and presented by means of descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and mean. Similarly, the researcher made use of semi-structured individual interviews, guided by interview schedules, in interviewing selected parents, PTA chairpersons and DQASOs. The presentation of the relevant data was done in a narrative format substantiated by verbatim quotations. The findings indicated inadequacies in parenting skills, home-school communication, volunteering, home-learning, decision-making and collaboration with the community as the key areas of focus in this study. It was ascertained that the family-school-community partnerships in the county were largely ineffective. The findings could be used to improve practice involving these partnerships and implementing the CFS initiative with a view to attaining meaningful learning among the children.

Key words: Kenya, Child Friendly School initiative, family-school-community partnership, Kakamega County, Epstein’s typology, mixed method inquiry, questionnaire, interviews.
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Above everything, I thank the Almighty God for the gift of life and good health.
DEDICATION

To my dad, the late Simon Nyatuka and mum, Pauline Kemunto, for diligently playing their parenting role against all odds.
COMMONLY USED ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIDS         Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BOM          Board of Management
CEB          County Education Board
CFS          Child Friendly School
CGOK         County Government of Kakamega
DQASO        District Quality Assurance and Standards Officer
EPE          Ecologies of Parent Engagement
FPE          Free Primary Education
HIV          Human Immunodeficiency Virus
MOE          Ministry of Education
NEB          National Education Board
PA           Parent Association
PTA          Parent Teacher Association
ROK          Republic of Kenya
SPSS         Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UNESCO       United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF       United Nations Children’s Fund
UPE          Universal Primary Education
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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY, PROBLEM FORMULATION, AIM, AND METHOD

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The quality of education and training that children receive greatly influences the level of development of a nation. Research suggests that a comprehensive pedagogical approach that uses individualized instruction as well as the development of strong bonds between the family, school and community ensure that children acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills they require for life outside of the school (UNICEF, 2003:9; Republic of Kenya [ROK], 2010a:185; Florez, 2011:4). Such an approach reiterates the school’s responsibility in providing an environment to transform learning into a child-centred endeavour. It emphasizes the need for children to interact with their classmates, teachers, families, the school and the community so as to enhance the achievement of learning outcomes.

Research has indicated that the development of strong bonds between the school, the family and the community ensures benefits for the children, their parents and for the teachers (Erlendsdottir, 2010; Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Florez, 2011; Koros, 2006). The walls of the traditional classroom are thus permeated by bonds between the school, the family and the community forged by participation. Getswicki (2010) reinforces this fact by means of her observation that creating home-school-community partnerships is no longer an option but an integral role and responsibility of the teacher. In particular, the idea that the school belongs to the community fosters a sense of belonging as decisions are made jointly by the learners, the teachers, the parents and other local entities.

According to the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP, 2005), home-school collaboration refers to families and schools developing relationships as collaborative partners. Such partnerships involve the families, the educators and the community members working together to support the learners’ educational needs. As opposed to parent involvement activities which support the passive roles of the parents, home-school collaboration involves both the families and the educators actively working together to develop shared goals and plans that enhance the success of learners. This point of view is being shared by E-Lead
(2008) where it is held that parental involvement should include the participation of the parents in regular, two-way and meaningful communication involving the learners’ academic learning as well as other school activities.

Florez (2011:59) and Chrispeels and Gonzalez (2006) assert that the relationship between the parents and the school requires the rethinking of the traditional collaboration and mutual aid between the school and the community. The involvement of the parents should be expanded to include their making decisions about their children’s education, administration, evaluation, supervision and monitoring. The active participation of the parents in the school tends to reduce the traditional blaming of the teacher for the learners’ failures, or consolation that their children do not learn because it is, say, a rural school (Florez, 2011:53; Sirvani, 2007). Accordingly, parental involvement and participation increase the parents’ capacity to learn with their children, whereby attracting them to school to learn and help the teachers. It is also known to develop parent-teacher partnerships as the parents help the teachers to successfully use curriculum guides and to change their perceptions of the children, hence giving their children more time to study rather than to shoulder household and farm chores.

But, in order to engage everyone requires that the concepts of family, community, interaction and respect for each individual and for different opinions, cultures, beliefs and plans are honoured and made operational. Such a democratic climate is said to enable especially the rural communities to cultivate new hope about their children’s school and their education (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006:119; Florez, 2011:28-30). Accordingly, the importance of parent participation in the educational process implies developing new social and political meanings that will contribute to the poor, rural schools increasingly becoming places for dialogue and an opportunity for a meeting of the minds and experiences among children and adults. It also implies them becoming institutions for their appreciation of their worth as a group with all that a community thinks, knows and aspires to, in an effort to meet their needs within a new meaning of rurality (Florez, 2011:54).

According to the NASP (2005), the benefits of such collaboration are significant for the learners, the educators and the families. Similarly, the learners demonstrate more positive attitudes towards learning at school, higher achievements and test scores, improved behaviour, increased completion of their homework, greater participation in academic activities, improved school attendance with fewer referrals to special education. Furthermore,
the educators experience greater job satisfaction, higher evaluation ratings from the parents and administrators and more positive associations with their families. On the other hand, the parents realize enhanced self-efficacy, better understanding and more positive experiences with the educators and the schools, improved communication with their children and better appreciation for their role in their children’s education.

But parent participation, according to the Centre for the Education and Study of Diverse Populations (CESDP, 2012), should not be restricted to indicate only the parents, fathers and mothers. Instead, it should be interpreted broadly to include all the adults who play an important role in the child’s family life, since other adults, including the grandparents, aunts, uncles, step-parents, siblings and guardians may be responsible for the child’s education, development and well-being. Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansom and van Voorhis (2002) assert that the home – school – community partnership makes the school subjects more meaningful for the learners. This includes reading, writing, mathematics, science, planning for college, as well as for work.

The literature provided a broad picture upon which this study was conceptualized.

1.1.1 Basis of the Child Friendly School (CFS) initiative in Kenya

The centrality of quality formal education for both individual wellbeing as well as the wider socio-economic development is clearly stipulated in a number of policy documents in Kenya. As the official blueprint in the education sector, Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 on a policy framework for education, training and research, commits the government to provide every Kenyan with quality basic education (Uwezo, 2011:1). Consequently, the government constituted the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) so as to direct the education delivery system. The main purpose of KESSP is to improve the quality, equity, relevance, efficiency and access to education (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2011a:5; ROK, 2005a). It places great emphasis on primary education in a bid to attain the country’s Vision 2030 development plan, achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE), Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MOE, 2011a; ROK, 2005b; ROK, 2007b). One of the goals of Kenya Vision 2030 is to make the country globally competitive and prosperous. It reiterates the importance of providing quality education to the people, particularly in its social pillar.
The new Constitution of Kenya, promulgated on August 27, 2010, provides for the creation of administrative units, called counties. One of its objectives is to promote the social and economic development, as well as the provision of proximate and easily accessible services, including education, throughout the country. Article 53 (1) (b) of the Constitution’s Bill of Rights stipulates that every child has the right to free and compulsory basic education (ROK, 2010b:38). Kenya has the daunting task of providing an environment conducive to learning that will ensure child-centred and rights-based teaching methods and a qualitative education that is capable of providing healthy, creative, confident and peace-loving citizens (ROK, 2010a:v). This prompted the Ministry of Education and UNICEF-Kenya Country Office to introduce the concept of a Child Friendly School (CFS) in 2002 in 11 pilot districts. After the successful piloting, the CFS initiative has now been mainstreamed to cover all the schools in the country.

According to ROK (2010a:2), a CFS is community-based, recognizing the rights of all children, irrespective of gender, religious or ethnic affiliation, physical or mental abilities or disabilities, and any other differences. In a CFS a child-centred approach is used so as to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classrooms by motivating and empowering the learners, the teachers, the parents and the communities. In particular, the staff members of the school is expected to be friendly, and the health and safety needs of the children should be adequately met (ROK, 2008b; ROK, 2009c; UNICEF, 2003).

Although the government has launched the CFS initiative in all the primary schools, the implementation of the policy is faced with a number of challenges. In particular, the fact that the teachers, learners, parents and communities have not been adequately inducted with a view to its implementation. The failure to empower the stakeholders on their roles and responsibilities, outlining clearly the rationale of embracing CFSs and the expected outcomes negates one of the key themes of a CFS, which is, namely to enhance family-school-community partnerships. It is therefore unlikely that such critical players will effectively and efficiently carry out their respective roles and responsibilities to ensure the achievement of the goals envisioned in the CFS initiative.

An effort to explore the roles of the various stakeholders in family-school-community partnerships was undertaken in this study.
Kenya’s Ministry of Education Strategic Plan (ROK, 2006a:31) considers parent and community participation in school matters as critical to the success of the CFS initiative. However, the parents’ and community’s roles and responsibilities should not be restricted to resource mobilization, utilization and decision-making, but also to contribute in many other ways towards the education of the children, the participation of the government notwithstanding. According to the ROK (2010a:184), the investment of families, community leaders, private sector, community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders is important in getting all the children in school and helping them to learn successfully. Epstein (2000) and Richardson (2009) assert that families and communities, for instance, offer a wealth of information and practical knowledge that can be used to improve teaching and the children’s learning. Furthermore, partnership between the schools, families and communities is crucial in meeting the children’s needs in such other areas such as health, nutrition, safety and protection (ROK, 2009a:20; ROK, 2009b:29; ROK, 2009c:30; ROK, 2008a:1; ROK, 2008b:60; ROK, 2007a:36; ROK, 2006b; ROK, 2001). Erlendsdottir (2010:24) asserts that parental involvement, in particular, has a most powerful impact on a child’s education, both academically as well as behaviourally. Indeed, the guidelines for quality assurance and standards assessment of schools in Kenya take into account the parents’ as well as the community’s involvement in the children’s progress in learning, and in school management and financial issues (ROK, 2010d:10).

Despite the critical role played by family-school-community partnerships in the promotion of meaningful and engaged learning among the learners, there seems to be little effort being made to enhance them, especially at the family, school and community levels in Kenya’s Kakamega County. This was indicated during a workshop involving stakeholders in education where the participants felt that collaboration among the stakeholders in Kakamega was weak (MOE, 2010). In particular, the teachers, parents and the community were said to be rarely involved in making decisions regarding matters affecting their schools. This has been considered to be a major impediment to the provision of quality education and in the implementation of government policies.

Against this background, this study sought to assess the effectiveness of the family-school-community partnerships in CFSs in Kakamega County.
1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The key research question was formulated as follows, namely

*How effective are family-school-community partnership practices in Child Friendly Schools in Kakamega County, Kenya?*

The main research question was sub-divided into the following questions:

a) What are the perspectives of and theories underlying family-school-community partnerships in schools?

b) What is the context and structure of the education system in Kenya? What policy and legislation provide the framework for educational provision in Kenya? What is the Child Friendly School initiative and how does it relate to the implementation of family-school-community partnerships in Kenya? What is the context of primary schooling, CFS initiatives and family-school-community partnership in schools in Kakamega County?

c) What are the practices regarding family-school-community partnership in CFSs in Kakamega County, Kenya in a selected sample of primary schools as explored by a mixed method study using a questionnaire to be completed by selected educators and interviews with parents, Parent Teacher Association (PTA) chairpersons and District Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (DQASOs)?

d) Based on the findings of the literature study and the empirical inquiry, what recommendations can be made for the improvement of practice of the family-school-community partnerships in CFS primary schools in Kenya with special reference to Kakamega County?

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of family-school-community partnership practices in Kakamega County with a view to providing policy recommendations to facilitate the successful implementation of the CFS initiative.
1.3.1 Objectives of the study

i) To review the perspectives of and the theories underlying family-school-community partnerships.

ii) To describe the context and structure of the education system in Kenya; policy and legislation providing the framework for educational provision in Kenya; the Child Friendly School initiative and its relation to the implementation of family-school-community partnerships in Kenya; and the context of primary schooling, CFS initiatives and family-school-community partnership in schools in Kakamega County.

iii) To explore the practices regarding family-school-community partnerships in CFSs in a selected sample of primary schools in Kakamega County, Kenya, through a mixed method study using a questionnaire to be completed by selected educators and interviews with parents, Parent Teacher Association (PTA) chairpersons and District Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (DQASOs).

iv) To formulate policy recommendations to enhance the implementation of the CFS initiative with regard to family-school-community partnerships in primary schools in Kenya with special reference to Kakamega County.

1.4 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The problem was investigated by means of a literature study and an empirical investigation using a mixed method design.

1.4.1 A review of the literature

The literature study set the investigation within a framework of theoretical work relevant to family-school-community partnerships. Furthermore, the literature that was reviewed concerned the contextual background of the study, including the legal and policy provisions for the CFS initiative and family-school-community partnerships in Kenya, with particular reference to Kakamega County. The literature reviewed included books, scholarly journals, theses and dissertations, relevant government policy documents and legislation, as well as internet-based sources.
1.4.2 Empirical investigation

A mixed method approach was used, namely the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data in two research phases. During Phase 1 quantitative data were collected by means of a researcher-designed questionnaire. During Phase 2 qualitative data were gathered by means of interviews. The phases followed a sequential pattern. Phase 1 was conducted first to uncover areas that could further be probed further during Phase 2. A detailed account of the research design is given in chapter 4.

1.4.2.1 Sampling

The data for this study were drawn from teachers, parents, Parent Teacher Association (PTA) chairpersons in primary schools and DQASOs in Kakamega County. These respondents were considered to be vital sources of information concerning family-school-community partnerships in CFSs due to their specific tasks and responsibilities.

a) **Phase 1:** Stratified random sampling was employed to select a total of 368 (N=368) teachers from 34 primary schools out of a population of 8,964 teachers distributed across the 848 primary schools in the 12 districts in Kakamega County, Kenya. Stratified random sampling ensures that the desired representation from various subgroups in a population (Mertens, 2005:63) is achieved. Further, a sample size of 368 is recommended for a randomly chosen sample from a population of 9,000 cases ((International Program for Development Evaluation Training Handbook [IPDET], 2007:455).

b) **Phase 2:** Twelve parents, 13 Parent Teacher Association (PTA) chairpersons and 10 DQASOs were purposively sampled to be interviewed in this study. In purposive sampling, the researcher’s judgment is used to select those respondents who best meet the purposes of the study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003; Kathuri & Pals, 1993:52).

1.4.2.2 Data-gathering

a) **Phase 1:** The data for this phase were gathered by means of a researcher-designed questionnaire based on Epstein’s (2000) six types of parent involvement. The
questionnaire (cf. Appendix 1) comprised seven sections: Part A dealt with biographical data; Part B with parenting skills; Part C with home-school communication; Part D with volunteering; Part E with learning at home; Part F with decision-making at school, and Part G with collaboration with the community. All the items, besides two open-ended items, were closed items, where the respondents had to choose between predetermined responses (Johnson & Christensen, 2008:94-95).

b) **Phase 2**: Individual semi-structured interviews using researcher-designed interview guides for the parents and the PTA chairpersons (cf. Appendix 2) and DQASOs (cf. Appendix 3) were conducted after Phase 1 had been completed.

1.4.2.3 **Data-analysis**

The data were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

a) **Phase 1**: The quantitative data were appropriately coded, scored then keyed in the computer to be analyzed by means of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Joyce Epstein’s typology formed the basis for the areas of analysis. Descriptive statistics, including arithmetic means, frequencies, percentages, tables and graphs, were used to present the data.

b) **Phase 2**: The recorded interviews were transcribed, and the data were analysed by means of content analysis, a technique that can be used to examine information or content, in written or symbolic material (Neuman, 2000:34-35). In analysing the data from the interviews a coding methodology was used, namely transcribing the interviews, conducting a textual analysis to identify numerous codes, clustering these into code ‘families’, identifying several emergent themes from the code families, linking the identified themes to the literature study while locating them within the theoretical framework of the study, presenting the findings and finally, offering recommendations.
1.4.2.4 The validity and reliability of the data

The instruments used in this study were validated bearing in mind both the aim and specific objectives of the study. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003:96,100), an instrument that yields valid data will necessarily yield reliable data and that there should be many items in the questionnaire on a particular construct so that a conclusion is objectively made. These principles were applied in this study. The reliability of the items involving a four-point Likert scale was statistically determined using the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient, details of which are provided in Chapter 4. To enhance the validity of the instruments, a pilot study was conducted in two primary schools in the neighbouring Vihiga County which has similar characteristics to those of the schools involved in the actual study. In particular, the information obtained during piloting was used to revise the instruments before they were used in the main study, as well as to address other hitches. This also helped to avoid the contamination of results. Thus, eight teachers completed the pilot questionnaires while two parents, two PTA chairpersons and two DQASOs were interviewed using pilot interview schedules. All the data-gathering instruments were also scrutinized by the supervisor and an external expert before their finalisation.

1.4.2.5 Ethical measures

The compliance with ethical measures was implemented by obtaining the following written permission:

i) a research permit from Kenya’s National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (appendix 4);

ii) an ethical clearance certificate from the College of Education, University of South Africa (appendix 5);

iii) from the Kakamega County Director of Education’s office (appendix 6);

iv) from the head teachers of the selected schools (appendix 7);

v) and the consent of the participating teachers (appendix 8), the parents and the PTA chairpersons (appendix 9) and DQASOs (appendix 10).
1.5 DEFINITION OF THE TERMS

The key terms used in this study are defined as follows:

1.5.1 Assessment

*Assessment* involves making a judgment or forming an opinion about something.

In this study it refers to observing, collecting data on the ideal and real practices regarding family-school-community partnerships in CFSs and then making decisions based on such information according to their effectiveness.

1.5.2 Child Friendly School (CFS)

According to ROK (2010a:2), a CFS is community-based, takes cognizance of the rights of all children, irrespective of their gender, religious or ethnic affiliation, social, emotional, linguistic, physical or mental abilities or disabilities, and any other differences or characteristics. It encourages the participation of the parents, the community and the learners in its activities. Thus, in a CFS the environment is conducive to learning, the staff members are friendly, and the health and the safety needs of the children are adequately met.

1.5.3 Partnership

A *partnership* refers to two or more groups of people joining together in a shared and mutually beneficial relationship, working together towards a common goal (Lemmer, 2013a; Najjuma, 2006:255). In this context it refers to families, communities, individual persons, groups of people or organizations working as partners with the schools to promote the ideals of the parents’ involvement within the CFS initiative.

1.6 CONCLUSION

This study focused on the effectiveness of family-school-community partnerships in CFS primary schools in Kakamega County, Kenya. The research shows that the establishment of strong bonds between the school, the family and the community ensures that the children
learn the skills they require for life, both inside and outside school (Florez, 2011:4-5; Erlendsdottir, 2010:82; Getswicki, 2010; Epstein & Salinas, 2004). Parental involvement increases the parents’ capacity to learn with their children, thereby attracting the parents to the school to support the teachers. Accordingly, a parent-teacher partnership enhances, guides and changes the perception of the children, hence giving them more time to study rather than to shoulder household and farm chores.

The next chapter explores the theoretical frameworks underpinning school-family-partnerships.
CHAPTER TWO
THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS UNDERLYING SCHOOL-FAMILY-
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the theoretical frameworks that guided the study on family-school-community partnerships. Firstly, the chapter highlights the benefits associated with family-school-community partnerships, the roles of partners in such collaboration and barriers to effective family-school-community partnerships, before presenting Urie Bronfenbrenner’s (1986, 1979) Ecological Systems Theory. The five environmental systems advanced by Bronfenbrenner and other scholars are discussed. The systems are the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. Epstein’s (2001, 1995, and 1987) Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence as well as the model on school, family and community partnerships are then elucidated. These are followed by the social capital theory. Social capital in families, schools and communities, as well as socio-cultural capital and parent involvement are examined. Also reviewed are other theoretical models on parent involvement, including the ecologies of parent engagement model, advanced by Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis and George (2004), dimensions of parent involvement, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s (2005) model of the parent involvement process, as well as Hornby and Lafaele’s (2011) model of factors acting as barriers to parental involvement. The chapter ends with conclusions drawn from the theoretical frameworks reviewed so far. Further, the term learner and its alternative, student, have been used according to the literature of origin which reflects the usage of the terms within national education systems.

2.1.1 The benefits of family-school-community partnerships

In recent years partners from education, business, philanthropy, health and social services have increasingly assumed responsibility for the education of a country’s children. However, although the value of family-school-community partnerships is not questioned, the reasons for success and failure are not sufficiently understood (Leonard, 2011:987-988). Being a partner in education, Leonard (2011:989) argues, implies three aspects, namely a deliberate association (voluntary or not), which results in an exchange of knowledge, goods or services (one way or reciprocal), the effect of which is intended to be beneficial to the learners, the
teachers, the parents and the school administrators. According to the Neperville Community Unit School District 203 (NCUSD, 2013), and Epstein and Sanders (2006:86), and Epstein and Sheldon (2006:119) and Epstein (2001, 1995), such partnerships can improve the school’s programmes and climate, provide family services and support and increase parents’ skills and leadership, connect families with others in the school community, and help teachers with their work. However, the main reason to create such partnerships is to help all the learners to succeed at school and in adulthood. Accordingly, when the parents, the teachers, the learners and others view one another as partners in education, a caring community forms in respect of the learners.

According to The Net Industries (TNI, 2013:1), although parental involvement may be reflected in current educational policies and practices, what this means is not always clear. Parental involvement includes a wide range of actions but generally refers to both the parents’ and family members’ use of and investment in resources in their children’s schooling. Such investment can occur in or outside of the school with the intention of improving children’s learning. Parental involvement at home includes discussions about schoolwork, helping with homework and reading with children; parental involvement at school can be in the form of the parents volunteering in the classroom, attending workshops, and cultural and sporting events (TNI, 2013:1).

High levels of parental involvement correlate with improved academic performance, higher grades, more positive attitudes toward school, higher homework-completion rates, fewer placements in special education, academic persistence, lower dropout rates and fewer disciplinary actions (Xu & Filler, 2008:54). The general school effects of parental involvement include increasing the skills and achievement of all the children in the school along with the responsiveness of the school to the community’s needs. According to Chrispeels and Gonzalez (2006:34), home-learning activities can be helpful to all families, hence building social networks and relationships between schools and diverse families.

Effective parental involvement practices are the result of a collective effort between the schools and the families. Thus, activities at home and school require additional commitment and efforts from the schools. Accordingly, the schools need to invest in human capital embedded in the staff, the learners and the families, if they want to improve learning and achievement (Chrispeels & Gonzalez, 2006).
According to Epstein (2009, 2001), parental involvement is the most powerful influence in a child’s education and can have various effects on the learners, both academically and behaviourally. Jeynes (2007) suggests that parents who monitor their children’s homework and school attendance into junior and senior high school continue to influence their achievement later in life. Sirvani (2007) established that once parents became involved, the performance of low-achieving learners improved dramatically. Rygus (2012) notes that even with the current climate of achievement testing and school accountability in the U.S., many schools have failed to exploit the parents as a readily available resource. Thus, Rygus (2012) agrees with Epstein’s observations and notes that parents are an effective resource for improving student achievement and that parental involvement has a positive effect on the learners, the teachers as well as the schools.

Many researchers maintain that the more parents are involved in their children’s education, the greater the effect on achievement. According to Cooper and Crosnoe (2007) and Littky (2004), this is especially observable in the early years. This is illustrated in a study conducted in 2000 concerning parental involvement, and included elementary school principals from middle-class neighbourhoods in urban Alberta, Canada (Rygus, 2012). Accordingly, parental involvement was found to have created a home environment favourable to learning, aiding communications between home and school, volunteering at school, attending school functions, assisting with homework, and decision-making at school, as well as collaborating with the community. The study (Rygus, 2012) revealed that building firm relationships and regular communication enhanced learning among young children. Because the principals involved in the study realized that, although relationship-building is time-consuming, it is their and the teachers’ responsibility to build relationships with the parents.

Furthermore, the children’s own perceptions of their parents’ involvement and expectations are also effective and influential in their education. At home, the parents can demonstrate their involvement by reading to their child, assisting with homework, having regular discussions about the school or schoolwork with their child, and conveying their expectations for their child’s future (Obeidat & Al-Hassan, 2009:124-125). On their part, the teachers need to contact the homes to notify the parents of a job done well or their child’s progress, not only when they are lacking in their performance, or when their behaviour is causing problems. Sanders and Sheldon (2009), assert that the schools that have improved their partnership programme with the parents and the community have fewer learners sent to the principal,
given detentions or suspensions. This claim is reiterated by Richardson (2009) who notes that better behaviour among learners is a major advantage of parental involvement.

Parental involvement affects the achievement in such core subjects as reading, mathematics and science, the behaviour of learners, their school attendance and their attitude, as well as their adjustment to the school (Sheldon, 2002; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). In particular, parents can have positive effects on their children’s reading skills and boost their reading comprehension by reading to them and making sure there are always books available in the home (Erlendsdottir, 2010:25). Studies indicate an overwhelming connection between literary resources in the homes and the children’s reading skills (Sheldon, 2002; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009; Glasgow & Whitney, 2009). According to Sheldon (2002), although the teachers and the schools have a significant influence on the children’s learning to read in the first grades, the parents still remain very influential later. The parents can also assist their children with the transition from one school level to another, or from one school to another.

Learners who observe their parents’ support for their education and enjoy good communication are more likely to continue their studies beyond secondary school. Erlendsdottir (2010:30) observes that parental involvement affects the learners’ academic achievement, attitudes and engagement with school, and their perception of their own potential.

Their socio-economic and cultural backgrounds also influence the involvement of the parents in the education of their children. Socio-economic status incorporates the parent’s income, level of education and his or her occupation (Erlendsdottir, 2010:23). A positive relationship between the socio-economic status of the family and the academic achievement of the learners is well-established. According to Caro, McDonald and Willms (2009), socio-economic status correlates positively with academic achievement. Muscott, Szczesiul, Berk, Staub, Hoover and Perry-Chisholm (2008) argue that involvement is more likely to occur in families with a more educationally and financially stable background.

Epstein and Van Voorhis (2001) assert that schools that are effective in raising the academic achievement of low-income children usually have strong parental involvement programmes, and the schools endeavor to extend invitations for involvement to such families. Although the learners from higher-income families tend to do better at school, the learners from all
backgrounds benefit if their parents become involved (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Malecki and Demaray (2006) conclude that learners from a low socio-economic background achieve better if their parents become engaged in their schools. According to Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2007), although the family’s socio-economic status and parental involvement appear to be positively linked, socio-economic variables do not directly explain the often large variability found in the levels and effectiveness of involvement within the socio-economic groups.

2.1.2 The roles of the partners in family-school-community collaboration

In this section the roles of the schools, families and communities as the key partners in promoting children’s education are discussed.

2.1.2.1 The role of the school

Epstein and Sanders (2006:86) and Madison (2000) assert that every member of the school staff should promote partnerships that will increase the parents’ involvement and participation in enhancing the social, emotional and academic growth of the children. According to MOE (2011b:17-18), school management bodies should ensure that there are functional school committees, work closely with all the relevant partners in advocacy and creating awareness on the delivery of basic education, mobilize the community members to help provide such essential facilities like toilets at the schools, purchase approved instructional materials and involve the parents and communities in making decisions on the school’s expenditure.

According to CESDP (2012), the school staff may include the teachers, the district or school-family liaison officers, teaching assistants, school counselors, principals, support staff, cafeteria and custodial staff. Accordingly, for a creative teacher the community can be a rich source of expertise, financial support as well as volunteer services. Thus, the schools should develop partnerships with community organizations, individual families and local businesses or corporations. While these partnerships can serve the school with support services, the school can serve the community by providing an educated population of learners. The roles of the teachers, according to MOE (2011b:19), include, namely encouraging the parents to take all their children, regardless whether they are boys, girls or children with special needs
to school; make the school a gender-responsive and child-friendly learning environment; serve as role models to the pupils, and ensure discipline during school hours; counsel and guide the pupils; advise parents where necessary on their children’s welfare, and work with the head teacher to facilitate linkages to rehabilitation, as well as counseling, especially for street children transitioning into the school system. Thus, the teachers are expected to cooperate with and support the parents and other partners in their efforts towards improving the learning environment, as well as the academic achievement of the children.

NASP (2005) stipulates the key components for developing positive family-school-community collaboration as having a school framework for interaction with the parents, developing positive values and perceptions about such partnerships, and a welcoming climate. Notably, NASP (2005) identifies the role of the schools as providing a positive environment, supporting the efforts of families and educators, working with families from diverse backgrounds, and promoting a view of education as a shared responsibility. Firstly, the schools should create an environment and culture that is invitational for all families. This involves consistently sending messages home, including to those with limited literacy skills or educational resources. Secondly, the schools should encourage collaboration by eliciting and understanding the perspectives and expectations of the parents. The fact that individual families from diverse backgrounds will support their children in different ways should be recognized. Accordingly, the schools should provide space for parental decision-making and governance, provide time for the teachers to meet with the families in the community and create a family support system in the school. Thirdly, since families are diverse and have different perspectives, expectations and communication styles, the schools need to provide training for the staff and the families that encourages understanding and a celebration of diverse family norms, cultures, ethnicities, linguistic backgrounds and socio-economic status (NASP, 2005). Particularly, diversity should be viewed as a strength that provides multiple perspectives and information about a child. Indeed, collaboration is based on the assumption that families, children and educators are just doing the best they can, and not judge them as either being right or wrong (NASP, 2005). Fourthly, since family-school-community collaboration is a process guiding the development of goals and plans, it should be characterized by open communication, mutually agreed-upon goals and joint decision-making. Therefore, the schools should develop programmes to promote effective family-school-community partnerships to support positive academic, behavioural and social competencies in all the learners. They should deliberately engage in efforts to increase mutual
respect, understanding, caring and flexibility among the families and the school community. In addition, any problems that arise should be addressed jointly in a respectful, collaborative and solution-focused manner (Epstein, 2009; NASP, 2005).

2.1.2.2 The role of the family

Although role of the family should be broadly conceived, it needs to be individually applied since individual families face multiple challenges with unique sets of resources, skills and preferences (Florez, 2011:73; NASP, 2005). Accordingly, opportunities should be offered forth families to participate with the knowledge that the families will differ in their choices. Florez (2011:52) asserts that developing capacities in the parents, especially those from disadvantaged groups, greatly enhances participation in their children’s education. As stipulated in MOE (2011b:21), the parents should form school committees to support the teachers in running the schools, to monitor their children’s progress and to support the teachers in their work, they should assist the children with their homework; facilitate every child’s access to school without discrimination, ensure that the school environment is free from crime, drugs and alcohol, ensure the proper use of the school funds and other resources, and ensure that the school environment is clean, and that the pupils have a sufficient supply of water and adequate sanitary facilities.

Florez (2011:55-57) and NASP (2005) identify the following potential channels for family participation, namely monitoring the completion of homework; regular communication with the school on the learners’ academic progress and conduct; sharing resources and seeking partnerships with the educators; engagement in school decision-making and governance; volunteering as committee members of parent bodies, and engaging in recreational reading with their children. Other activities include participation in problem-solving teams, adult educational opportunities offered by the schools and school functions, such as achievement and career days, athletics, music and drama. Madison (2000) observes that family-involvement programmes are effective ways of facilitating partnerships between the home and the school. Programmes developed by the school staff can provide a forum for the parents and children to experience learning in an atmosphere which is not the same as the usual classroom-setting. Suitable venues for this kind of activity include the school library, dining halls or school halls. Evening programmes may occur outside the school in community buildings (Madison, 2000).
Different initiatives have been implemented worldwide to bring schools and families together in an effort to ensure that all the children attend and remain in school. In Peru, for example, the parents have organized school-based councils to provide opportunities for them to participate in the general educational and administrative management of the school (Florez, 2011:55). Thus, the parents play a leading role as tutors and facilitators in the schools, including participation and in certain daily activities. Florez (2011:58) also reports that in Nicaragua the parents are frequently found at the schools, taking turns to help the teacher in the educational process. They are involved in child interactions, obtaining learning and teaching materials and resources when needed, as well as coordinating activities with the student councils inside and outside the classroom. Similar approaches have been implemented in Equatorial Guinea and Guatemala, modified to fit the needs of families, and adapted to contextual situations (Florez, 2011:24-25).

The Family Science Programme, which originated at the University of California, Berkeley and Portland State University, Oregon, the purpose of which is to reach out to those groups who have historically been underrepresented in mathematics, science and technology, has now been adapted for implementation at other universities (Madison, 2000). Accordingly, the children and the parents are encouraged to participate in a series of evening activities to explore science ideas. In particular, the engagement of the parents in these activities changes their own perceptions of science and science-related careers which, in turn, influences the attitudes of their children. Such parents convey to their children that they are lifelong learners and that learning is fun (Madison, 2000). Well-organized programmes involving family and school partnerships held at the schools or at higher education institutions produce several benefits for the schools and the learners (CESDP, 2012; Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Epstein et al., 2002).

2.1.2.3 The role of the community

MOE (2011b:27) identifies the significant role of the community in school-community-family partnerships, including parent committees and parent associations. Committees build a sense of ownership of schools in the society; involve the children in the decisions made regarding the school; mobilize added resources for use in the schools, like accommodation for the teacher, and motivate the parents to take the girls, orphans, vulnerable children, including those with special needs, to school. Madison (2000) asserts that community support
is an outgrowth of family involvement in the provision of education for their children. Accordingly, community awareness fosters a positive belief about the school and the effectiveness of the teachers. Positive community attitudes towards education may manifest in the approval of school budgets, the negotiations of teacher contracts, and the arousal of public pride in the school and the municipality (Madison, 2000).

To have a participatory process of analyzing the complex issues affecting the quality of education in rural schools, the community needs to be successfully engaged and its cultural practices should be honoured (Florez, 2011:54). Accordingly, priority should be given to the children’s interactions with their sources of knowledge, including the community and the municipality, classmates, the school, the teachers and families. Particularly, two-way communication with the community is critical. The community should be kept informed of school activities by a hotline, by parent-teacher association news or by notices of school programmes (Madison, 2000). The community can also work closely with the school through volunteers, for example, by giving non-school personnel an opportunity in the classroom to address the children about daily problems and issues in the society (Florez, 2011:56-57; Epstein et al. 2002; Madison, 2000). However, those who volunteer should undergo an orientation session so that they are clear about their role in the classroom (Madison, 2000). Community volunteers can learn the school’s routine, shop for and package materials that may be used in class, or work with individual learners on such areas as science, mathematics, reading skills, word-recognition or the editing of homework projects.

Another way to boost interaction between the school and the community is to have a project on the flora or fauna in the area, as this will give the children many opportunities to improve their oral and written language skills (Florez, 2011:55; ROK, 2010a:185). Enriched learning activities help the learners to do better at school. But not all the families have the extra resources for such activities. In such a case, community partners may provide part of the funds needed, for instance, transport and entrance fees for the learners and their families to visit museums and to attend cultural events (Sanders & Harvey, 2002; Sanders, 2001). Accordingly, often community partners are more willing to help when they know that their investments contribute to student learning and success in the school. It is important to have a two-way support system: a clinic may, for example, volunteer to provide the learners with health information, medical tests, presentations on medical careers and hobbies. The learners should conduct community service activities for the clinic staff, the residents in old age
homes, and children’s wards at hospitals, by creating art displays and performing items at special events (Sanders & Harvey, 2002; Sanders, 2001).

In addition, collaborating with the community should involve coordinating resources and services for the families, the learners and the school with the community groups, such as businesses, service agencies, cultural and civic organizations, sports clubs and universities. To further strengthen home-school-community partnerships, deliberate efforts should be made to enable the school to offer reciprocal services to the community (Epstein et al., 2002).

### 2.1.3 Barriers to effective family-school-community partnerships

According to Christenson and Sheridan (2001:18), there is more rhetoric than reality about the family and the school working together as authentic partners. Hornby and LaFaele (2011:37) observe that the chasm between rhetoric and reality in parental involvement has come about because of the parent and family, child, parent-teacher and social factors which act as hindrances to the development of effective parental involvement. The current reality, Hornby and LaFaele (2011:38) and Hornby (2000) assert, is that there is considerable variety in the kind and degree of parental involvement. The most common practice is at the more traditional end of the spectrum which focuses on a one-directional flow of support from parents to schools.

While the teachers are expected to play a crucial role in creating a positive partnership with the families and the communities of their learners, tension arises between the school and the family from the stressful impact of external social, cultural and economic factors that affect the families and the parents adversely due to the pressures of contemporary life (Getswicki, 2010). Traditionally, schools especially in rural areas have not been open to the involvement of the family and the community. Parental and community involvement is frequently limited to practical activities, such as painting, cleaning, repair jobs, building, food preparation and fundraising support (Florez, 2011:52). Furthermore, some teachers do not believe uneducated parents and migrants, and those who apparently have low expectations for their children’s education could be part of the educational effort.

Glasgow and Whitney (2009) observe that parents and teachers have a misconception about each other’s vision for parental involvement. According to Erlendsdottir (2010:35), parents
do not always respond to communication from the school, hence the teachers may feel that
the parents are not interested in becoming involved. Accordingly, the parents often believe
that the teachers do not actually desire their involvement. Some parents and teachers often
believe that the learners may not appreciate or support their parents’ involvement. In
particular, some teachers feel that the parents of teenagers should not be too involved, thus
they actively discourage the participation of such parents (Erlendsdottir, 2010:36;
Richardson, 2009).

Nichols and Read (2002) and Lemmer (2013a) claim that a significant obstacle to meaningful
communication is the traditional parent-teacher conference that only lasts 5-15 minutes. A
meeting that is so short does not allow meaningful communication about the child’s academic
and social progress. Cultural differences also cause communication problems, especially if
the teachers rely on their own cultural interpretations while interacting with heterogeneous
groups of parents. Similarly, Erlendsdottir (2010:35) and Richardson (2009) note that the
parents’ own negative school experiences may affect the building of a positive relationship
with their children’s teachers. Christenson and Sheridan (2001) mention financial and time
constraints as other obstacles to effective communication between the teachers and the
parents. In addition, the educational jargon that schools often use with the parents hampers
effective communication (Erlendsdottir, 2010:35). The parents’ work schedules may conflict
with the timing of the school events, thereby making it difficult for the parents to attend them.
The frequent turnover of teachers, as was the case at Combretum Trust School in Namibia
(Erlendsdottir, 2010:35), is another barrier to effective family-school-community
partnerships.

Indeed, working with families and communities will always be one of the more challenging
tasks for educators and may frustrate many otherwise willing teachers. NASP (2005)
confirms that families and educators often differ in their expectations, goals and
communication patterns, sometimes leading to annoyance and misunderstanding among
learners, families and educators. Open communication is therefore essential in order for the
educators and families to understand and respect each other’s perspectives.

According to The Net Industries (2013:3-4), important obstacles that limit the parents’ active
engagement in their children’s education include the teachers’ attitudes and family resources.
The beliefs that the teachers have about the impact of their attempts to involve the parents in
their children’s education do have an influence on their efforts to encourage family involvement. Similarly, poor levels of family involvement may be the result of the staff’s perceptions of the parents or the degree to which they feel parental involvement is important for their learners. On the other hand, not all the families have access to identical resources or opportunities to be involved in their children’s education. Families where both the parents work full-time, large families, families who are not proficient in English encounter major barriers to participation in their children’s education.

Epstein (2009) observes that the schools need to overcome challenges to family-school-community partnerships by providing the opportunities for school-home and home-school communication in a language and at a reading level all families can understand, ensuring adequate representation of the entire community of parents on school advisory councils or the school governing bodies, and disseminating information provided during workshops to the families who could not attend. Accordingly, the schools that make these kinds of efforts to reach all families will reap the rewards of appreciation from all the parents, thereby improving the achievement of all the learners. Furthermore, to address obstacles to parental involvement, teacher training, both pre- and in service, should cover the topic of parental involvement (The Net Industries, 2013:5). On the whole, teacher training programmes provide time and curriculum space to parental involvement (Epstein, 2013).

But effective family-school partnership should extend further than merely addressing these obstacles and should include discussing and determining the rights, roles, responsibilities and resources of the families, school staff and the learners (NASP, 2005). Florez (2011:54) notes that the traditional tension between the teachers and the learners and among the teachers and the family should be replaced by conversation. In addition, the teachers should consider the social and cultural contexts of the individual families and their offspring.

As a professional obligation, the teachers should develop constructive attitudes, philosophies, communication and practical skills to build productive relationships with the families (Getswicki, 2010). Accordingly, a sincere understanding of parenting is essential to determine positive home-school-community partnerships (Epstein et al., 2002). In particular, the educators should cherish a strong belief in the importance of family-school-community partnerships. This is not an add-on role, but is integrated into the concept of working with the whole child and demands thorough preparation (Getswicki, 2010). From the foregoing
literature it was clearly demonstrated that many factors militate against parental involvement and may account for the gap between what is said and what is actually done in so far as family-school-community partnerships are concerned.

2.2 URIE BRONFENBRENNER’S ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY

Urie Bronfenbrenner, a renowned scholar in the field of developmental psychology, is credited for the advancement of the Ecological Systems Theory. This is also referred to as development in context or the human ecology theory and emphasizes the environmental factors playing a major role in the development of human beings. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979:27), *human development* is the process by means of which the growing person acquires a more extended, differentiated and valid conception of the ecological environment. Such a person, he argues, becomes motivated as well as competent to embark in activities that reveal the properties of that environment. Accordingly, these activities include those to sustain or restructure the environment at levels of similar or greater complexity in form and content. Leonard (2011:990) argues that Bronfenbrenner’s theory (1979) is one of the original ecological models which focus squarely on the individual child. Yukti (n.d.:5) notes that the ecological theory is used to describe the development of children by looking at the environmental factors and influences that aid in their positive outcomes. Furthermore, Leonard (2011:990) notes that Bronfenbrenner’s theory is expansive yet focused, meaning that consideration is given to the complex layers of school, family and community relationships; at the same time consideration is given to the development of the individual child.

Bronfenbrenner (1979:3) specifies five types of nested environmental systems, with bidirectional influences within and between the systems. He postulates that the developing child is surrounded by layers of relationships like a set of nested Russian dolls. These five types of environmental systems contain roles, norms and rules that shape development. Accordingly, the interactions between the overlapping ecosystems affect a person significantly. Yukti (n.d.) credits Bronfenbrenner with being the leader in introducing researchers into examining the family, the economy and political structures as influencing the development of the child into adulthood.
By building on this theory, Yukti (n.d.) and the North American Community for Cultural Ecology (NACCE, 2012) view human development in terms of an ‘ecological system’ which is divided into five systems or layers of the environment which is essential in understanding the development of human beings from childhood to adulthood. According to Yukti (n.d.:3), Bronfenbrenner’s theory looks at the child’s development in terms of its quality and context. It attempts to explain the differences in an individual’s knowledge, development and competencies through the support, guidance and structure of the society in which he or she lives. According to this approach, parental involvement affects the learners’ achievement as these interactions affect their motivation, their sense of competence and the belief that they have control over their success at school.

According to Leonard (2011:1004), Bronfenbrenner’s analogy of nested Russian dolls to describe the layers of relationships surrounding the developing child reminds one of the hierarchical nature of the world. For instance, the school is often immersed in an entrenched culture with strong historical roots. Bronfenbrenner (1979:256) notes that the developmental potential of a setting is enhanced to the extent that there are direct and indirect links to power settings by means of which the participants in the original setting can influence the allocation of resources, the needs of the developing person and the endeavours of those who act on his or her behalf. Leonard (2011:1001) observes that Bronfenbrenner’s interest in power settings is similar to the more recent attention paid to social capital. Accordingly, partnerships sometimes give the learners and their teachers or advocates access to resources and influences that would otherwise have been unattainable. When the community partners begin to become directly involved in the learners’ lives, then new settings open up and this promotes learner development, particularly if the learner is interacting with “mature or experienced people” (Leonard, 2011:997). However, it is worth noting that Bronfenbrenner did not primarily set out to develop a theory on parental involvement. Nevertheless, his theory can be fruitfully used to understand the involvement of the parents.

The five environmental systems, according to Bronfenbrenner, with which an individual interacts are identified and discussed below.

a) **Microsystem:** This refers to the institutions and groups that most immediately and directly impact the child’s development, and include the family, the school, religious institutions, the neighbourhood and peers (NACCE, 2012;
Bronfenbrenner, 1979:3; Yukti, n.d.). Thus, it describes each setting in which the child has direct, face-to-face relationships with significant people such as his or her parents, friends and teachers. According to Samantha (2011), an individual encounters the most social interactions in the microsystem where he or she lives, hence they assist in creating and constructing the experiences they have. Thus any instability or unpredictability in the family life gives the children less interactions with their parents and other important adults in their lives and this, according to Bronfenbrenner, is the most destructive force in a child’s development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Yukti, n.d.: 4). The breakdown of a child’s microsystem leaves him or her with no strategies to explore other parts of his or her environment.

b) Supporting the primary relationships, therefore, is the key to the better development of children. As an obligation, educators must work to support these primary relationships by creating an environment that welcomes families (Yukti, n.d.:5). Accordingly, the teachers cannot become parents for the children. However, they can educate the parents about the developmental needs of their children. With the main problem being conflict between the work and family, government policies around the support of families should be the priority, that is, in providing support to families who stay together and raise their children. It has been argued that the deficiencies in a child’s microsystem cannot be replaced by over-compensating in other systems. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979:3), the primary relationships must be those that last a lifetime such as with parents, teachers and friends. The justification, as noted earlier on, is that this is where learners live their daily lives and where they develop. According to Leonard (2011:1007), Bronfenbrenner’s theory suggests that if the Microsystems adopt the same beliefs, values, norms, expectations and assumptions, then the development of the is enhanced.

c) **Mesosystem:** This comprises a set of interrelations between two or more settings in which the student participates (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:209). Thus, it involves relations between the Microsystems or connections between contexts. Ordinarily, there are cross-relationships between small settings, for example, parents talking to the teachers. Bronfenbrenner argues that a student’s development would be
enhanced through participation in multiple, structurally-different settings, especially when these relationships involve more mature and experienced people. Examples of such relations include the family’s experiences to the school ones, the school experiences to those of the church, as well as family experiences to the peer ones. It is in this ecosystem that two microsystems, say, the teacher and the parent begin to work together to educate a child (Yukti, n.d.:3). Leonard (2011:1000) observes that Bronfenbrenner’s theory of the mesosystem is particularly relevant when considering the most at risk learners. Accordingly, most ecological models focus on school improvement hence run the risk of reporting overall positive gains while overlooking the needs of vulnerable learners (Leonard, 2011:990).

d) **Exosystem:** It refers to one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant but in which events occur that affect or are affected by what happens in that setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:237). Accordingly, it involves people who are indirectly engaged in the child’s development, such as the parents’ employers, family healthcare workers or central school administrators (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:25). According to Samantha (2011), the exosystem refers to a system where the individual plays no role in the construction of experiences. However, these experiences have a direct impact on the microsystems the individual is part of. An example is where the home’s breadwinner is laid off thereby impacting on the family’s financial state that would affect their day-to-day lifestyle and also the stress level in the home. According to Yukti (n.d.:3), as external factors that are not directly related to the child influence his/her development, this ecosystem impacts the child’s development by interacting and changing its microsystem. For example, children who have been rejected by their parents may have difficulty developing positive relations with teachers.

e) **Macrosystem:** This ecosystem describes the culture in which an individual lives. It also describes the prevailing economic conditions of the society (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Accordingly, the child, his or her parent, the school and the parent’s workplace are all part of the large cultural context. Members of a cultural group share a common identity, heritage and values. The macrosystem evolves over time because each successive generation may change it, leading to the development of a unique macrosystem. Yukti (n.d.:3) notes that the macrosystem influences all the
other systems due to the fact that children are raised in particular societies and cultures. NACCE (2012) defines the *macrosystem* as the culture in which somebody lives, including the nation, ethnicity, religious group, economic or social class. Samantha (2011) asserts that the belief systems and the ideology of an individual’s culture influence the person directly. However, the individual does not necessarily have much freedom in determining his or her surroundings. Some examples of these influences could include the political or religious norms of the culture. With regard to the macrosystems, poor inner-city families have more social problems than rural or urban middle-class families.

f) **Chronosystem:** It describes how settings and their developmental importance change over time (Leonard, 2011:1005; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). It also serves as a reminder that this system of nested relationships is situated in time and shifts accordingly. According to NACCE (2012), the chronosystem involves the way in which environmental effects develop over time, and also the way transitions, such as divorce affect the individual’s growth and development. Similarly, Samantha (2011) asserts that the chronosystem reflects the cumulative experiences a person has in the course of his or her lifetime, and include those of environmental events as well as major transitions in life such as divorce, marriage or the birth of a baby. For example, researchers have found that the negative effects of divorce on children often peak during the first year after the divorce and that two years afterwards the family interactions are less chaotic and hence more stable.

According to Yukti (n.d.:3), understanding the interactions of the above systems is key in understanding how a child develops and what factors lead to the failure. Without adults and supervision or love, children look for attention in inappropriate places and these may give rise to problems, especially in adolescence, such as little self-discipline, no self-direction and anti-social behaviour. Accordingly, since the ecological model uses external influences, it is able to incorporate the student’s school, family, community and culture to provide a better understanding of all the factors that could be contributing to the person’s, say, depression (Yukti, n.d.:5). Indeed, the inclusion of the areas in a student’s life makes the ecological model a better framework for identifying appropriate interventions for learners with depression.
By collaborating with all the people involved in a child’s life, interventions can refocus from the person to rebalancing the systems of people, places and things that directly or indirectly influence the person.

2.2.1 Strengths and limitations of the Ecological Systems Theory

As one of its strengths, the Ecological Systems Theory looks at the children’s development in terms of both its quality and context. This helps in understanding the development of children, as the theory focuses on the environmental factors as well as on influences that enhance the realization of desirable outcomes among children. In addition, the theory is particularly relevant as it takes into account the most at-risk children as opposed to other ecological theories. Since this theory incorporates all the areas of influence on the development of children, it is much easier to assess the causes and also the solutions to some of the most common and increasing behavioural and emotional problems of the day (Yukti, n.d.:5). However, care should always be taken in applying this theory as its main focus is not on school settings but on the family, the economy and political structures.

2.3 THE THEORY OF OVERLAPPING SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

Joyce Epstein and her co-workers at the Center on Family, School and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University advance the Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence which posits that children learn better when the parents, educators and others in the community work together so as to guide and support the children’s learning and development (Epstein, Sanders, Sheldon, Simon, Salinas, Jansom & Williams; 2009; Epstein & Sanders, 2006:87; Epstein & Sheldon, 2006:118; Epstein, 2001, 1995, 1987). In this theory, three contexts, including the home, school and community overlap with unique and combined influences on the children through the interactions of the parents, educators and community partners as well as of the children across the contexts. Accordingly, each context ‘moves’ closer or farther from the others due to both external and internal actions (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006:118).

Epstein (2001, 1995) asserts that if educators view learners as children, they are likely to see both the family and community as partners with the school in the children’s education and development. Partners, she argues, recognize their shared interests in and responsibilities for
children. In this spirit therefore, they work together to create better programmes as well as opportunities for them. Similarly, Epstein asserts that when the schools conduct frequent communications and interactions with the families and communities, more children are more likely to receive common messages from various people about the importance of the school, of working hard, of thinking creatively, of helping one another and of staying in school. However, as much as Epstein does not explicitly mention Bronfenbrenner’s work, her Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence seems to build on his Ecological Systems Theory.

The overlapping spheres of influence are presented in Figure 2.1.

![Figure 2.1: Overlapping Spheres of Influence](Epstein et al., 2009).

Figure 2.1 locates the child at the centre (NCUSD, 2013; Epstein et al., 2009; Epstein & Sheldon, 2006; Epstein, 2001, 1995, 1987). This is because children are considered to be the main actors in education, development and success at school. Accordingly, school, family and community partnerships cannot simply produce successful learners; partnership activities can be designed to engage, guide, energize and motivate the learners to display their own
successes. The assumption, NCUSD (2013) asserts, is that if children feel cared for and encouraged to work hard, they are more likely to do their best in their studies, learn other competencies and remain at school for longer. Epstein (1995) reinforces the fact that the learners are crucial for the success of school, family and community partnerships. In particular, she asserts that learners are often their parents’ main source of information about the school. The teachers should therefore help the learners to understand and conduct traditional communications with their families, for example, by delivering memos or report cards. Similarly, the teachers need to help the learners to understand and conduct new communications such as interacting with family members about homework, or participating in parent-teacher-student conferences.

The external model of the overlapping spheres of influence shows that by design, the three contexts can be pulled together or pushed apart by important intersecting forces, including the family, school and community backgrounds or experiences, philosophies, opportunities and actions of the families, schools and communities (Epstein et al., 2009; Epstein & Sanders, 2006:87; Epstein & Sheldon, 2006; Epstein, 2001, 1995). Such forces also include the learners’ age and grade level, historical and policy contexts, as well as time (Epstein, 2000; Epstein & Sanders, 2000; Simon, 2000). In this model there are some practices that the schools, families and communities conduct separately while others are conducted jointly in order to influence the children’s learning and development.

On the other hand, the internal model of the overlapping spheres of influence identifies the institutional and individual lines of communication as well as the social interactions of the parents, teachers, learners and community members with the learners and with each other (Epstein & Sanders, 2006:87). Epstein and Sheldon (2006:119) argue that the social relationships may be enacted and studied at an institutional level, for example, when a school invites all the families to an event or sends the same communications to all the families. Similarly, such social relationships may be enacted and studied at an individual level, for instance, when both a parent and a teacher meet at a conference, talk on the phone or use e-mail to communicate. Connections between the schools or parents and community groups, agencies and services can as well be represented and studied within this model. Epstein and Sheldon (2006:119) argue that the Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence also grounds studies of the internal structure of the model by recognizing that there are many paths to
partnerships in the interactions between and among teachers, administrators, counselors, parents, community partners, learners and others.

In a partnership, Epstein (1995) argues, teachers and administrators create more family-like schools which recognize each child’s individuality, thereby helping each child to feel special and included. Accordingly, family-like schools welcome all the families as opposed to only those that are easy to reach. Similarly, in a partnership, the parents create school-like families which recognize that each child is also a learner. In such a case, the families reinforce the importance of school, homework and activities that build the learner’s skills and feelings of success. On their part, communities, which include groups of parents working together, create school-like opportunities, events and programmes that reinforce, recognize and reward the learners for good progress, creativity, contributions and excellence.

Also, communities create family-like settings, services and events to enable families to better support their children. Community-minded families and learners are known to help their neighbourhoods and other families. According to Epstein (1995), a community school refers to a place where programmes and services for the learners, parents and others are offered before, during and after the regular school hours. Thus schools and communities talk about programmes and services that are family-friendly. Accordingly, all the above concepts are consistent with the Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence. They serve as evidence of the potential for schools, families and communities to create caring educational environments. Indeed, when all these concepts combine, the children experience learning or caring communities.

Epstein and Sheldon (2006:119) observe that the Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence integrates and extends the ecological, educational, psychological and sociological theories and perspectives on social organization and relationships, for example, by Bronfenbrenner (1986, 1979) and Bandura (1986). Thus, the theory recognizes the interdisciplinary nature of school, family and community partnerships. Among others, the theory emphasizes the need for the reciprocal interactions of parents, educators and community partners to understand each other’s ideas, to identify common goals for the learners and appreciate each other’s contributions to student development. For example, teachers who hold parents as a reference group are more likely to design and conduct interactions and activities that account for the roles parents play in their children’s education. Similarly, parents who understand the
teachers’ work and the school’s goals for their children communicate with the school and organize home activities that support their children as learners (Epstein, 1987). On the other hand, Epstein and Sheldon (2006:119) argue that concepts of social capital, as advanced by Coleman (1988), are also relevant to the Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence. For example, by means of their interactions, the parents, educators and community partners establish social ties and exchange information that accumulates as social capital. This may be used to improve the children’s school and learning experiences.

According to Epstein and Sanders (2006:87), in school settings the Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence may be activated by action teams for partnerships involving the teachers, the school administrators, the parents and community partners who work together to design and implement involvement activities linked to the school’s improvement goals. Action teams should devise annual action plans to involve the families and the community in ways that boost the learners’ achievement in mathematics, reading and language skills. Similarly, action plans should be congruent with other school goals such as learner attendance, positive conduct and a welcoming climate of partnership.

As a key strength, the Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence serves as a lens through which to examine how future teachers and administrators are prepared to understand shared leadership in schools, including the educators’ shared responsibilities with families and communities to maximize the students’ learning (Epstein & Sanders, 2006:88; Epstein, 2001). For example, teachers who believe that they alone are responsible for the students’ learning may teach differently from teachers who believe that they share the responsibility with the parents and others for the students’ success. Similarly, administrators who believe that they and their teachers form a “professional community” may manage their schools differently from administrators who view schools as full “learning communities”, including the educators, learners, parents and community partners (Epstein & Salinas, 2004).

2.3.1 Epstein’s typology of family-school-community partnerships

A framework to help educators develop more comprehensive programmes of school, family and community partnerships has been advanced by Joyce Epstein. It consists of six major types or areas of partnership or caring and has evolved from many studies and years of work by educators as well as families in elementary, middle and high schools (Erlendsdottir,
Particularly, it is based on the findings from many studies of the factors that are most effective as far as children’s education is concerned. According to Epstein and Sheldon (2006:119), the framework identifies broad separable categories of practices that involve the parents with the teachers, the learners and the community partners in different locations and for specified purposes, all contributing to student learning and success. Indeed, it is important to note that the six types of partnerships are operationalized by hundreds of partnership practices. The framework helps researchers to locate their questions and results in ways that inform and improve practice (NCUSD, 2013; Epstein, 2001, 1995).

The term partnership is particularly used to emphasize that schools, families and communities share the goals and responsibilities for the children and work collaboratively. Thus, the framework places children at its centre as partnership activities including the teachers, parents and communities engage, guide, energize and motivate the learners so as to produce their own success. Each of the areas or types advanced in the framework can lead to a variety of results for the learners, parents, teaching practices and the school climate. However, if exercised well, all six the areas can have a positive impact on the learners, the teachers and the parents. Indeed, a well-designed and implemented programme will include all the types of partnership to some degree and be linked to individual school goals.

Other than involving different practices of partnership, each area poses specific challenges that must be met for the schools to reach out to and become partners with all the families, including those whose first language is not English, single-parent families, low-income families and families with whom the schools traditionally have had limited interaction (Epstein & Sanders, 2006:87-88). In addition, each area of the partnership contains the needed redefinitions of some basic principles of partnership for up-to-date understanding (Erlendsdottir, 2010:22; Epstein, et al., 2002; Epstein, 1995; 2001). Bearing in mind that such challenges ought to be addressed so as to strengthen the family-school-community partnership, Epstein and her colleagues find it necessary for each school to select factors that are believed to be the most likely to enable the school to realize its goals. These goals include those to do with academic success as well as in developing a climate of alliance between the homes and schools (Erlendsdottir, 2010:22; Epstein, 2009).
Evidently, even though the major focus of the six areas stipulated in Epstein’s framework regarding the family-school-community partnership is to boost academic achievement, they also contribute to various results for both the parents and the teachers. This fact is further demonstrated by the reasons, as advanced by Epstein (2009; 2001), for developing and establishing partnerships between the school, the family and the community. These reasons include assisting the learners to succeed at school, improving the school climate and programmes, advancing the parents’ skills and leadership, assisting the families to connect with others in the school and the community, and helping the teachers with their work.

As noted earlier, there are various outcomes for positive family-school-community partnerships among the concerned stakeholders. For example, it may be presumed that the parents will acquire more confidence in their role as parents, demonstrate leadership in decision-making, have more effective and productive communication with their children concerning schoolwork and also communicate more with other parents, especially at school (Epstein, 2009). Furthermore, the parents will also develop a more positive attitude towards the school and its staff and gain more confidence in assisting their children with homework, by means of their involvement in their children’s education. In addition, they are more likely to mobilize support for the school and its programmes in the community and become more active community members (Erlendsdottir, 2010:22).

In this framework the educators are judged on their responsibility of designing comprehensive strategies for partnerships. Hence the individual learners are provided with the resources and motivational framework to choose successful strategies (Erlendsdottir, 2010:21; Epstein, 1994). Thus for the teachers the benefits may be presumed to include better communication with the parents and the community, and a deeper understanding of their learners as well as their situation (Epstein, 2009). On the other hand, the schools will benefit from parental involvement through improved teacher-motivation, more support from the families and higher student academic achievement (Erlendsdottir, 2010:23). Indeed, Clarke (2007) reinforces this view by means of the assertion that schools function best when they cooperate with the community, remain active participants and have a sense of ownership of the school. However, most teachers and management teams still do not have access to training courses on partnerships and how they work (Epstein & Sanders, 2006:110). Educators, both in service and pre-service, need competencies in working as partners with families in diverse communities.
As contained in Epstein’s framework on family-school-community partnerships, the six types of family and community partnerships in children’s education include, namely promoting positive parenting, improving communication, enhancing student learning, supporting decision-making and advocacy, and collaborating with the community (NCUSD, 2013; CESDP, 2012; Epstein & Sheldon, 2006:119; Epstein et al., 2002; Epstein, 2001, 1995, 1987; Petronic, n.d.). Parenting involves assisting families with parenting skills, family support, understanding the child’s and adolescent’s development, and setting positive home conditions to support learning at each age and grade. It also entails assisting the schools in understanding the families’ backgrounds, cultures and goals for their children. According to Petronic (n.d.), families are to provide for the health and safety of the children. Thus, schools should provide the training and information to help the families to understand and promote their children’s development. Some studies (Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002; Feuerstein, 2000) suggest, though in a more general manner, that such factors as gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status and age all influence the impact that family collaborations have on student success.

Communication involves the creation of two-way communication channels between the school and the home in respect of the school programmes, and the students’ academic and behavioural progress. According to Epstein and Sanders (2006:86), it is increasingly becoming clear that the educators need to know more about how to communicate effectively, to share ideas, to solve problems and to work together as members of teams with other educators, the parents and community members. In particular, the schools should be accountable for reaching the families and for providing them with the information about the school’s progress and student performance. Accordingly, the means of communication should be appropriate for the parents and their cultural specifications while the process needs to be bidirectional (Petronic, n.d.). Similarly, volunteerism has to do with improving the recruitment, training, activities and schedules meant to involve the families as volunteers and as audience at the school or in other locations in order to support the learners and school programmes (NCUSD, 2013; Epstein, 2001, 1995). Epstein et al (2002) observe that the educators should be enabled to work with the volunteers who support the learners and the school. For instance, the parents may be involved in teaching extra classes or in giving any kind of assistance within their own profession. Other forms of volunteering include attending school events such as PTA consultations, prize giving occasions, fund-raising, doing translation where necessary, patrolling the school grounds and monitoring learner attendance.
According to Petronic (n.d.), the parents can make significant contributions to the environment and the functions of a school. Specifically, schools can gain the most from this process by creating flexible schedules so as to have more parents participating and working to link the interests and abilities of the parents to the needs of the learners, the teachers and the administrators.

Student learning involves families with their children in learning activities at home, including homework and other curriculum-related activities and decisions. The teachers should be encouraged to design homework that enables the learners to share and discuss interesting assignments (Epstein & Salinas, 2004).

Regarding decision-making, the schools should involve the families as active participants in the school’s decisions, governance and advocacy activities through school councils, parent-teacher associations, class committees, improvement or action teams, and other parent organizations. According to Petronic (n.d.), the schools can give the parents meaningful roles in the school’s decision-making process and help them to engage in decisions that affect them. This opportunity should be open to all the components of the community and not only to those who have the most time and energy to spend on school affairs.

Lastly, but by no means the least, collaborating with the community should involve coordinating the work, the resources as well as the services for the families, the learners and the school with the community groups. These groups include businesses, agencies, cultural and civic organizations, colleges and universities (Erlendsdottir, 2010; Petronic, n.d.). Indeed, collaborating with the community and its groups is meant to strengthen the school programmes, the family practices, student learning and development. On their part, the schools can help the families to gain access to support services offered by other agencies, such as health-care, sports clubs, cultural organisations, counselling and tutoring services, and after-school child-care programmes.

But research about the process and effects of family and community partnerships with the schools is said to be evolving, and does not yet provide explicit directions for the practitioners (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL, 2001). For example, the definitions of the concept are unclear and overlapping, including connections, parental
involvement and home-based relations, as well as its dimensions and measurements. However, in this study the term *partnership* is applied as defined above in chapter 1.

According to the SEDL (2001), the body of empirical work on family and community partnerships with the schools needs to be strengthened in various ways in a bid to generate a solid research base for this field. Experimental designs, for instance, are necessary to ascribe the direct impact on student achievement to specific family and community involvement practices. Accordingly, it is critical is to develop more cohesive theoretical models and frameworks that can be used to develop hypotheses that can inform the theory. Another characteristic pointing to the fact that family-school-community partnerships are evolving is the disconnection between qualitative and quantitative research. For example, Hoover-Dempsey, Battiato, Walker, Reed, DeJong and Jones (2001), in their review of the literature on parental involvement in homework, observe that the current body of research is basically descriptive forms of parental involvement, what the teachers and the schools do to initiate such involvement, and the student outcomes that are related to parental involvement.

### 2.3.2 The strengths and limitations of Epstein’s model

Among its key strengths, the model views schools, families and communities as being dynamic hence providing an opportunity for the relevant stakeholders to keep pace with emerging issues and trends in the children’s education. Although a number of frameworks have been developed that focus solely on parental involvement or the integration of family and community partnerships in the schools, Epstein’s framework is the only one that has undergone extensive review by the research community (SEDL, 2001). Indeed, the field of family-school-community partnerships has greatly benefited from Epstein’s framework. Most of the studies reviewed concur that the dimensions or six types of partnerships are clearly defined and provide vital guidelines for carrying out related research (SEDL, 2001). While implementing the model, Epstein advises, the developmental characteristics of the learners, historical and policy contexts as well as time, need to be taken into account to ensure the anticipated outcomes are realized. In addition, she asserts that larger schools can enhance the improvement in the entire six types of partnership. Notably, the framework is widely applied in education systems worldwide; several of which have implemented reform based on this typology. However, according to Kohl, Lengua and McMahon (2000), there are some components of family and community partnerships that are not part of Epstein’s model. For
example, the model focuses on teacher and school-initiated behaviours rather than parent-initiated partnerships. Furthermore, apart from suggesting that the educators invite all the parents into partnerships as well as varying their schedules to accommodate the needs of diverse families, the model is silent on political issues, power and status. Nevertheless, Epstein’s model stands out as an international benchmark for parental involvement.

2.4 THE SOCIAL CAPITAL THEORY

The central thesis of the Social Capital Theory is that ‘relationships matter’ (Field, 2003:1-2). Accordingly, social networks are considered to be a valuable asset, as interaction enables people to build communities, commit themselves to each other, and knit the social fabric. Bourdieu (1985:723) argues that the social world can be represented as a space with several dimensions, constructed on the basis of principles of differentiation and distribution. Agents and groups of agents are thus defined by their relative positions within that space. Such dimensions, he asserts, are constituted by properties that are active within the social universe in question, that is, capable of conferring the strength and/or power within the universe on their holder. Accordingly, the active properties that are selected as principles of the construction of the social space are the different kinds of power or capital that exist currently in the different fields. Capital, which may exist in objectified form like material properties or, in the case of cultural capital, in the embodied state, represents a power over the field (Bourdieu, 1985:724). Each relatively autonomous field of modern life such as education, economy, politics, arts, journalism, bureaucracy or science involves particular social relations wherein the agents engage their daily practice. Similarly, Bourdieu (1986:19) uses the term *habitus* to refer to both a system of schemes of production of practices as well as a system of perception and appreciation of practices. Accordingly, *habitus* implies a “sense of one’s place” as well as a “sense of the place of others”. He asserts that as socialized agents, people are capable of perceiving the relation between practices or representations and positions in the social space.

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:119) and Bourdieu (1983:249) view *social capital* as the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. Furthermore, Bourdieu (1984) asserts that each person occupies a position in the social space which is multidimensional in nature. Thus, every individual is not only defined
by being a member of a given social class, but also by every single kind of capital that one comes into contact with through social relations.

James Coleman, an American sociologist of the University of Chicago, is also credited for the use of the social capital concept. Accordingly, social capital is specifically defined by its function (Coleman, 1994:302). Coleman asserts that social capital involves a variety of different entities, having two common characteristics. Firstly, the different entities consist of some aspect of a social structure, and secondly, they facilitate certain actions by the individuals who are within the structure. Indeed, drawing upon a base of the rational choice theory, he looks at social capital as being part of a wider exploration of the nature of social structures (Coleman, 1994; Coleman, 1990). More specifically, Coleman contributes to the development of the notion of social capital through the illumination of the processes and experiences of non-elite groups (Coleman, 1988). He particularly argues that those living in marginalized communities or who are members of the working class could also benefit from its possession.

According to Coleman (1990), social capital refers to an asset that a person or persons can use as a resource. Social capital, therefore, could be considered to be any kind of social relationship that is a resource to the person. Coleman identifies two distinct component of social capital, namely as being a relation of construct, and as providing resources to others through relationships with individuals. And, although the concept of social capital may appear to be of a stable nature, he defines it as a relatively unstable construct that can change over time and in response to different situations (Coleman, 1994; Coleman, 1990). By highlighting the role of the family and kinship networks as well as of learning and religious institutions in the creation of social capital, Coleman emphasizes the fact that these institutions and social structures are better suited to the cultivation of reciprocity, trust and individual action.

To demonstrate the fact that social capital is very strong in social networks, Coleman’s definition of social capital additionally pays attention to the communication between family members. Communication skills are considered to be important in the family structure as they constitute the basic values and norms, thereby fostering personal obligations and responsibilities among family members. Indeed, a strong sense of community, common values, shared trust and a willingness to intervene in the problem behaviour of the youth are
essential in creating a positive atmosphere for children to develop and achieve (Coleman, 1994).

Social capital, according to the World Bank (1999), is used to refer to the institutions, relationships and norms that influence both the quantity as well as the quality of a society’s social interactions. Thus, according to this definition, social capital does not refer to the mere sum of the society’s institutions. Instead, it is the bond that unifies them. On his part, Putnam (2000:19) attempts to make a distinction between social capital and human capital. According to him, human capital refers to the properties of individuals, that is, social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. On the other hand, he argues, social capital is closely related to what some have called ‘civic virtue’. In his opinion, therefore, the difference is that social capital calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a sense network of reciprocal social relations. He concludes by observing that a society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital.

Similarly, Schaefer-McDaniel (2004), views social capital as being both the quality and the depth of the relationships between people in a family or even in a community. Accordingly, social capital emphasizes the ability of the family to work towards the child’s well-being as well as the ability of the community to work towards the common good. While the social capital of a family is considered to be the relation between the children and their parents, the social capital of a community thrives on the functional community, the social relationships that exist among parents, the nature of the structure of relations and on the parents’ relations with the institutions of the community.

The foundation of this definition, however, is the family system which is made up of financial, human and social capital (Halpern, 2005; Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004). While the financial capital refers to the financial resources for household and child-rearing expenses, human capital involves the parents’ education as well as economic skills. On the other hand, social capital refers to the more social and interpersonal aspects of family life.

There are three types of social capital. They include, namely bonding social capital, bridging social capital and linking social capital (Field, 2003:42; Woolcock, 2001:13-14). While bonding social capital involves the ties between people who are in similar situations, like the
immediate family, close friends and neighbours, bridging social capital entails the distant ties of like people, such as loose friendships and workmates. On the other hand, linking social capital involves reaching out to unlike people in situations that are not similar. This includes those people who are entirely outside the community, thereby enabling members to leverage a far wider range of resources than are available in the community (Field, 2003:42).

According to Schaefer-McDaniel (2004), there are three dimensions of social capital among young people, and include social networks and sociability, trust and reciprocity, and a sense of belonging or place attachment. Firstly, incorporating Coleman’s understanding of relationships, children should be asked to describe their interactions with and among peers, parents and other family members, teachers and people in the community such as neighbours. Secondly, in order for people to benefit from relationships and to use them as resources, one needs to be able to trust that network-members are providing correct and helpful information and genuine support. In particular, children need to establish trustful relations with family members, neighbours, peers, teachers and other role models. It is worth noting that trust and reciprocity also refer to authentic fairness, overall trustworthiness and acts of helpfulness such as engaging in helping behavior without necessarily gaining direct benefits. A case in point is helping a person to fill in a form.

Finally, the sense of belonging or place attachment has been found to influence a child’s development through the formation of a proper identity. Accordingly, people are likely to be happier or more comfortable in those environments where they feel at home, and hence where they have more positive interactions (Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004). In particular, scholars attribute academic success to a sense of belonging to a school, while they explain that violent behaviour, for example, is more prevalent in schools where children do not feel that they belong.

### 2.4.1 Social capital in families and schools

Although Coleman (1990) defines social capital as a concept that can be applied to different environmental settings and across different populations, he particularly stresses the importance of family and school systems as the most typical settings for investigating social capital. Despite his earlier focus on social capital in the family, Coleman notes that social capital is extremely important in school settings as well (Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004; Coleman,
He identifies six types of interpersonal relationships in the school setting. These include relationships among the learners, the teachers and the parents. The others are those between the teachers and the learners, the teachers and the parents, and between the learners and the parents. Accordingly, the six types of these interpersonal relationships are bidirectional in nature. This means that one has to examine all the relationships and interactions among the parents, the teachers and the learners in order to fully understand and assess social capital in the school environment.

Coleman believes that increasing social capital in the school would increase the academic achievement of the learners. In other words, strengthening the social relationships between the learners, the parents and the teachers would boost the academic achievement of the learners. Furthermore, Coleman asserts that parental involvement is important in the school as it increases personal awareness, thereby enhancing the relationships with the teachers, the learners and other parents. For example, the participation of the parents, especially in extracurricular activities has been found to increase the social capital in Chicago schools (Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004; Coleman, 1994). Thus, social capital not only plays a role in promoting the already existing relationships but is also crucial in creating new ones. This, in turn, increases the learners’ academic achievement.

### 2.4.2 Social capital in the communities

Robert Putnam, an American political scientist, extends the definition of social capital to apply to societies and communities in general. His interpretation of social capital has been referred to as a ‘collective asset’ and a ‘common good’ of neighbourhoods and communities (Warren, Thompson & Saegert, 2001:1; Putnam, 2000). Social capital in the neighbourhoods, the communities and the schools has been shown to be essential in developing successful school-community collaborations. However, these relationships are productive to the extent that they are based on a common set of expectations, shared values and a sense of trust among people. Putnam differentiates between physical, human and social capital. In his view, whereas physical capital refers to the physical objects, human capital involves individual properties (Putnam, 2000).

Both Putnam and Coleman concur that the notions of trust and reciprocity arise from social networks and relationships (Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004; Putnam, 2000; Coleman, 1990). In
particular, Putnam (2000:19) observes that these social networks and relationships generate civic virtue or a trusting community where the residents not only know one another but are actively involved in one another’s’ lives and maintain trustful and helpful relations, such as looking after a neighbour’s children.

However, in contrast to Coleman’s understanding of social capital primarily being a ‘private good’ including beneficial outcomes for the individual like academic success, Putnam’s theory solely understands social capital as a ‘public good’, such as reduced crime or increased political participation. Through this enhanced participation, he argues, the children will also develop group skills that will contribute to an increase in democratic participation among themselves. It is important to note that democratic participation in childhood prepares the children for their duties as citizens, such as the involvement in politics and voting. In addition, the children will learn to get along with others, and respect each other’s ideas and opinions. Furthermore, Chawla and Heft (2002) observe that social capital leads to an improved self-esteem, efficacy and decision-making. By means of this participation, the children will become mindful of the society including the initiation of social change, as well as encouraging the participation of the entire family.

Evidently, social capital has many benefits, including increasing the children’s social networks and resources. A sense of belonging, the concrete experiences of social networks and the relationships of trust and tolerance are all important among people. Notable benefits of social capital include an enhanced understanding of the expectations, as well as obligations of trust and reciprocity and establishing appropriate norms and values in relationships. Social capital has also been linked to beneficial health outcomes for adults. Thus it is probable to assume that the same holds for children and adolescents, particularly in respect of the quality of life and levels of stress.

Schaefer-McDaniel (2004) and Putnam (2000) note that at the community level, social capital will increase participation in social and informal groups like play groups, youth and sports groups, after-school activities and even participation and/or membership of religious organizations. Halpern (2009) notes that there now exists a range of evidence that communities with a good ‘stock’ of social capital are more likely to benefit from lower crime figures, better health, higher educational achievement and better economic growth.
However, social capital in communities can lead to socially unacceptable outcomes. For example, gangs or the mafia are collective groups high in social capital (Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004; Putnam, 2000). This fact is reinforced by Halpern (2009) who observes that groups and organizations with high social capital have the means, and sometimes the motive, to work to exclude and subordinate others.

2.4.3 Socio-cultural capital and parental involvement

As observed earlier, research suggests that cultural and socio-economic backgrounds shape the levels of parental involvement in children’s education. That is, these factors influence the ways families become involved in their child’s schooling. An important aspect of the abovementioned and similar studies is the control of valued cultural knowledge that the schools embody in their contact with the learners and the families (Chrispeels & Gonzalez, 2006:9). Family-school relationships are shaped by differences or similarities in the socio-cultural capital of the families and the teachers. According to Epstein et al. (2002), well-organized, systematic and sustained efforts to match cultural capital in the home and the school lead to increased home-school collaboration that benefits both the parents and the learners. Generally, the schools reward the learners on the basis of their cultural capital. For example, the teachers communicate more easily with the learners and families who share a common background, giving them more attention and specific support (Chrispeels & Gonzalez, 2006).

According to Bourdieu (1984:66), the acquisition of cultural capital depends heavily on the total, early, imperceptible learning within the family from infancy. Thus, he argues that people inherit their cultural attitudes and the accepted definitions that those in authority offer them. To understand capital, one should attend to all the features of social conditions associated from the earliest childhood of those from families who have a high or a low income respectively. These characteristics tend to shape the tastes adjusted to such conditions. At equivalent levels of educational capital, social origin remains a major factor in determining such dispositions among people in society as the likes in food, cultural events and dress (Bourdieu, 1984:177).

Chrispeels and Gonzalez (2006:9) observe that a number of studies recognize a home-school gap because of the differences in socio-cultural capital. Accordingly, the schools have
normative ideas of the proper role of the parents in schooling; social class leads to variations in the parents’ resources such as social networks to comply with the schools’ and the teachers’ requests. Families from diverse backgrounds who are not proficient in English in English-speaking countries are less able to understand or comply with these expected roles.

Hong and Ho (2005) argue that parental involvement is multidimensional and multifaceted. Some of the dimensions they identify include the backgrounds of the parents, their goals and practices, home-learning activities and parent-school contacts. In addition, studies show that the parental role construct (i.e., the parents’ beliefs and perceptions about what their role should be in supporting their children’s education) is a determinant of the type and level of parental involvement in their children’s education. Knowing how parents perceive their role could assist the teachers in forging connections with the parents from diverse cultures and backgrounds (Chrispeels & Gonzalez, 2006:32). Green et al. (2007:534) assert that the parents’ perceptions of personal skills and knowledge shape their ideas about the kinds of involvement activities they might undertake. For example, they note that a parent who feels more knowledgeable in mathematics compared to social studies may be more willing to assist with mathematics homework. Similarly, a parent who feels comfortable and effective in public speaking may be more likely to agree to talk about his or her occupation in front of a class of learners than a parent who does not believe he or she has such skills.

According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997), the parents’ beliefs and perceptions are linked to their socio-cultural and human capital. For example, the parents’ educational aspirations and level of comfort with the school and staff have been shown to predict their levels of involvement. In addition, the parents’ beliefs about their responsibilities, their efficacy to affect their children’s education and their insight into their children’s interests in school subjects have been shown to predict their involvement at home and at school. The parents’ thinking about involvement (Green et al., 2007:534) is also influenced by their perception of other demands on their time and energy, especially in line with their domestic responsibilities or limitations. For example, the researchers observe that the parents whose work is relatively demanding and inflexible tend to be less involved than the parents whose jobs or life circumstances are more flexible. Similarly, the parents with multiple child-care or extended family responsibilities may be less involved, particularly in respect of school-related activities.
In their study to determine whether a parent education programme can boost the socio-cultural capital of Latino families and change parent-involvement behaviours, Chrispeels and Gonzalez (2006) found that the parent’s role construct is an important motivator for involvement activities and that it can be shaped through a parent education programme. Similar studies (Green et al., 2007:532; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005) also reveal that the parents’ beliefs about child-rearing, and development, and about the appropriate home-support roles in their children’s education influence the parents’ role construction. Chrispeels and Gonzalez (2006) observe that the parent construct is not static, hence it can be reshaped through a family education programme. Participating parents reported dramatic changes in their parenting behaviours, such as praising their child, engaging in less physical punishment for mistakes and establishing rules and limits to viewing television, which supported more time for engaging in learning activities. Additionally, the findings point to the value of discussing parenting practices that provide the children with strong socio-emotional support. At the same time they emphasize the need to give the parents information about academic standards, school operations and college options.

To illustrate, Chrispeels and Gonzalez (2006) undertook a study to explore the social and cultural capital of Latino parents and other diverse groups in the U.S. through parent education programmes. When the parents are given the opportunities to learn about the education system in culturally-sensitive ways, they respond positively, using what they had learnt to assist their children and to connect with the school.

According to Cheng and Balter (1997), parent education programmes build on the families’ strengths and their existing cultural and educational values. They can also dramatically influence and reshape their beliefs about involvement. To be effective, therefore, such programmes should be culturally sensitive, acknowledge the group’s values, beliefs and customs, and avoid perceiving differences as deficits. Furthermore, to ensure that they remain relevant, the parents’ education programmes have to be provided in the form of professional development for the families and the school staff. They can be enhanced, deepened and sustained more effectively if the schools avoid a deficit model and instead act on a strengths-based model by first inquiring into the families’ strengths, respecting their socio-cultural and educational experiences, and making the parents aware of positive home-school experiences (Chrispeels & Gonzalez, 2006:35). Cheng and Balter (1997) note that the success of
culturally-sensitive parent education depends on the programme’s goals, content and implementation, as well as on the facilitator’s attitudes and beliefs about the group involved.

The characteristics of the learners and the family affect the levels of parental involvement. For example, working-class families and those where the mothers work full-time tend to be less involved in their children’s education. Also, the parents of primary school learners tend to be more involved in their children’s education than the parents of the older ones. Indeed, parental involvement has been consistently shown to decrease as the children age, both by grade level and by the differences in the school’s structures or the school’s transitions (Green et al., 2007:534). Accordingly, developmental reasons support such decreases in parental involvement as the child moves from early to middle childhood and into adolescence. As children mature their needs for independence and for same-age relationships increase. Notwithstanding, appropriate parental involvement practices have been shown to increase positive learner outcomes throughout the children’s schooling, including at secondary school level. According to Chrispeels and Gonzalez (2006:38), at primary school level, the teachers should help the parents to understand that it is not too early to begin thinking about the child’s university education as this may help to reconstruct the parents’ perceptions of their role and parenting practices. On the other hand, school leaders must strive to integrate authentic opportunities for the teachers to experience success in working with families and for parents to effectively become involved in activities that change their children’s performance for the better (Chrispeels & Gonzalez, 2006:38).

Park and Palardy (2004) showed that the parents’ expectations are a predictor of parental involvement at home. Chrispeels and Gonzalez (2006) confirmed that the parents’ expectations for post-secondary education should be emphasized in parent programmes, and explicit information should be provided to families about the universities’ admission requirements, subject choices and financial aid. Hong and Ho (2005) assert that the parents’ expectations are important to the students’ achievements after school. Their study indicates that a programme that repeatedly focuses on the possibility and requirements for attending university and that provides information about the route to university can enhance the parents’ and the learners’ expectations. Such programmes should also be culturally sensitive. Thus, knowledge is a powerful predictor for involvement (Chrispeels & Gonzalez, 2006:2).
As mentioned previously, the study by Chrispeels and Gonzalez (2006:8) revealed that Latino parents had only a limited knowledge about the school system, how to help their children at home and how to conduct meetings with their child’s teacher. After attending a parent programme the parents changed their attitudes and behaviour toward involvement. They indicated they then better understood their role and the school’s expectations, and how to be involved. Furthermore, the study indicated that Latino parents and the community leaders can be resources for conducting family education programmes and for improving student performance. This study indicates the role of the school to assist minority parents with important knowledge about the school.

The schools where there are significant levels of family involvement are usually those where the entire staff shares a genuine commitment toward this process. However, the process of building home-school relationships might cause stress and anxiety to the teachers who often do not fully understand the process of parental involvement and how to deal with families from diverse backgrounds (Chrispeels & Gonzalez, 2006:37). According to Garcia (2004:309), most teachers feel frustrated in their attempts to involve the parents; many discontinue their attempts after a few unsuccessful attempts because they lack the knowledge and skills to engender the process of parental involvement.

Research has indicated that low-income and ethnically and linguistically diverse families are less involved at school because of the differences in socio-cultural capital between the school staff and the families. For example, the U.S. Department of Education released data on the students’ achievement showing that the students from low-income and diverse linguistic backgrounds, at all grades, lagged behind White and Asian learners in academic performance (USDE, 2004:3). In an attempt to close this achievement gap, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was enacted. This has led to higher standards and greater accountability in the American education system, including in the provision for parental involvement. Under the Act, the schools have to keep the parents informed about their child’s performance, provide supplemental educational services and information about the school choices for children, and develop ways to get the parents more involved in their child’s education (USDE, 2004, 2002).

As mentioned before, research on the effects of parental involvement has shown a consistent and positive relationship between the parents’ engagement in their children’s education as
well as in learner outcomes (TNI, 2013:1). However, many educators remain sceptical of the parent involvement programmes. Lareau and Horvat (1999) raised concerns about the widespread and uniform implementation of the parent involvement policy and practices. They argue that many schools and teachers use a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach, which confirms White, upper and middle-class values, and disadvantage learners from other backgrounds. The discussion in this chapter stressed the differences in parental involvement, the parents’ beliefs and the home-school relationship across socio-economic, ethnic and racial groups. Whether and how the parent involvement programmes can be sensitive and equitable to families from all backgrounds remains an issue for discussion.

Another research issue regarding parental involvement emerging in the late 1990s and early 21st century is the systematic examination of the role of the community. Sanders (2001) reported that schools in the U.S. have a wide range of community resources available but use only a small percentage of them in their efforts to educate the learners. Sophia Catsambis and Andrew Beveridge (2001) argue that neighbourhood conditions can dilute the effect of parental involvement, and argue that this has an indirect effect on learner achievement. This scenario suggests that the full role of the community and its impact on the schools and the families are still unclear.

Understanding parental involvement as a developmental phenomenon is also emerging as an important issue. Research is needed to understand the most appropriate forms of involvement given (TNI, 2013). For instance, effective primary school parental involvement activities may not be appropriate with middle or secondary school learners. The schools need to understand how parental activities can help the learners and families to successfully transit from one level of schooling to another. Understanding the influences and effects of parental involvement and different forms of involvement as the learners move through school remains a process requiring research.

Similarly, concern that the schools may not be reaching out to all the families and that they may not be aware of how families from different cultures perceive the schools and the school staff have raised questions about the effects of parental involvement for some learners. Nevertheless, when the schools reach out, understand the needs of all the families and create different kinds of parental involvement activities, the children are more likely to experience success at school (TNI, 2013; Florez, 2011).
2.4.4  Strengths and limitations of the Social Capital Theory

The benefits that accrue from developing strong social capital, whether at the family, school or community levels, as well as in other institutions in society cannot be overemphasized. In particular, understanding the Social Capital Theory in its entirety, especially among educators, becomes paramount. For instance, the networks involved in social capital act as channels allowing the flow of useful information, thereby facilitating the achievement of the set goals (Putnam, 2000:288). Additionally, social capital provides the citizens with an opportunity to resolve problems that particularly require to be approached collectively more easily. According to Putnam (2000:296, 306), the development of a child is significantly influenced by social capital. He asserts that trust, networks and norms of reciprocity involving a child’s family, peer group, the school and the larger society have a huge impact on the opportunities and choices available to them, their level of educational achievement, behaviour and development.

Furthermore, studies indicate that where trust and sound social networks exist, individuals, organizations, neighbourhoods as well as countries prosper economically (Putnam, 2000:319). This implies that enhanced social capital can help in addressing such issues as poverty and related socio-economic disadvantages. Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) and Putnam (2000:333) agree that the regular attendance of a club or church, volunteering and other civic connections are some of the ways of promoting social capital. In addition, there appears to be a strong relationship between high social capital and better health (Putnam, 2000:331). Thus, such health issues as HIV/AIDS, stress and depression could be reduced if social capital is enhanced in families, the schools and the society at large.

However, the Social Capital Theory has some limitations. For example, Coleman’s interpretation of social capital focuses on examining the quantity and not the quality of interpersonal relations (Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004). Although spending time with children is crucial for their development, how that time is spent and what types of activities are undertaken seem to be more important than a quantification of the time that is spent with the child. Secondly, despite the fact that previous research found differences in social networks between boys and girls, the Social Capital Theory does not address the important issue of how individuals of different genders, ethnicities and cultures experience and view social
capital. Furthermore, research on social capital has also focused primarily on the poorer communities, while the role of social capital in wealthy communities has been ignored.

Similarly, there exists a debate concerning the relationship between social capital and inequality. In particular, where Putnam (2000:359) views the community and inequality as ‘mutually reinforcing’, Rothstein and Uslaner (2005) argue that it is inequality that affects trust, as opposed to being the other way round. Conversely, Woolcock (2001:13-14) argues that types of social capital, such as the bonding social capital, the bridging social capital and the linking social capital cannot be definitely distinguished. These limitations notwithstanding, the Social Capital Theory reiterates the importance of fostering social relationships among teachers, parents and communities in a bid to improve the academic performance and behaviour among the learners.

2.5 ADDITIONAL THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Other influential contributions to parental involvement are discussed in this section. These include the Ecologies of Parent Engagement (EPE) Framework (Barton, et al., 2004); the three-dimensional model of Grolnick, Benjet, Kurosowski and Apostoleris (1997); Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s model of the parent involvement process, as well as Hornby and Lafaele’s (2011) model of the factors acting as barriers to parent involvement.

2.5.1 Ecologies of Parent Engagement (EPE) framework

Barton et al. (2004) assert that parents who spend time in the school develop relationships with the school staff and feel more comfortable addressing teachers when their children experience difficulties. The term ecology is used because it focuses on the whole system, that is, the parents in relation to their environment (Barton et al., 2004:4). Apart from expanding the understanding of parental involvement, engagement includes the parents’ orientations to the world and how those orientations frame the things they do. Indeed, other than marking a fundamental shift from focusing primarily on what the parents do to engage with their children’s schools as well as with other actors within those schools, the EPE framework also considers how the parents understand the hows and whys of their engagement, and how this
engagement relates more broadly to the parents’ experiences and actions both inside and outside of the school community.

Engagement also includes the situations or contexts that surround an individual’s decision to participate in an event, including his or her relationships with other individuals, the history of the event and the resources available to both the individual parent and the event designers. The above researchers therefore, define parent engagement as parental involvement that is dynamic, an interactive process in which the parents draw on multiple experiences and resources to define their interactions with the schools and among school actors (Barton et al., 2004:3). More importantly, they advance a case for a new data-driven framework for understanding parental engagement in urban elementary schools. Accordingly, the EPE framework offers a way to understand the connections between ‘what’ parents engage in and ‘how’ they manage to do so. It is worthwhile to note that the data were collected from urban populations as opposed to many similar studies which concentrate on rural settings.

In justifying the need for developing the framework, the researchers argue that early care and education programmes often lack the mechanisms for the inclusion of the parents in making decisions regarding their children’s early experiences. Amongst others, they examined federal and school-based partnership models which provided an opportunity to learn about the unique ways in which parents may become involved in decision-making. The researchers also argue that parental involvement in schools cuts across two areas. These areas include how and why parental involvement is important, as well as the structural barriers that impede parental participation (Barton et al., 2004:3).

Rygus (2012) and the SEDL (2012) echo the relevance of the EPE framework by noting that it is crucial in understanding and studying parental involvement, more especially with the emphasis being on how and why the parents become involved, rather than focusing on the ‘what’, that is, the activities in which the parents participate. Accordingly, the framework offers a new way to conceptualize parental involvement as an interactive process that draws upon multiple experiences and resources. Xu and Filler (2008:59) note that the EPE model explains how the parents’ practices in relation to their children’s school can constitute a transformative process in which the parents draw on multiple experiences and resources to define their interaction with the schools and school activities. Accordingly, instead of using the word ‘involvement’ to describe the specific things they do, the researchers use
‘engagement’, so as to include the parents’ orientations to the world and how those orientations frame the things they do. In other words, the concepts of parental and family involvement go beyond a given individual and his or her participation in an event (Xu & Filler, 2008:59; Barton et al., 2004). Additionally, the concepts include the contexts involved in an individual’s decision to participate in an event and the intra-familial resources available that may be utilized to support either participation or engagement.

The EPE model views the family as a complex organization of individuals with unique patterns of communications and responsibilities. Such patterns, it is argued, at times overlap while at other times they remain unique to the sub-systems that exist within the larger family system. These include the parent-child sub-system, the spousal sub-system, the sibling sub-system and the parent-grandparent sub-system. Accordingly, an intervention that focuses on any one individual is likely to affect any sub-system to which that individual belongs which, in turn, affects the entire family (Xu & Filler, 2008:60).

In this framework, therefore, parental engagement is situated as a relational phenomenon that relies on activity networks. In particular, the crucial importance that both space and capital play in the relative success the parents and the teachers have in engaging the parents in the academic venue of urban schooling is clearly highlighted (Barton et al., 2004:3). And, drawing from their understanding of the intersections between space and capital in the worlds of the parents and the school, the researchers advance the argument that parental engagement ought to be thought of as the mediation between space and capital. Accordingly, the spaces are defined by the individuals who come together for particular reasons, just as the teachers and the children do for the teaching and learning of academic disciplines in schools, as well as the roles they play in the different spaces. Furthermore, the spaces are shaped by the rules as well as the expectations for participating together in that space, such as a state-testing mandate or a classroom-based policy on group work, the tools typically enacted for the shared participation, like the curriculum selected by a district, school or teacher. Similarly, the spaces are shaped by the mediating artifacts produced in that participation such as the school’s decision to build a community garden or the weekly test-preparation experiences required in, say, a mathematics class (Barton et al., 2004:5).

The researchers assert that all those qualities that define spaces are themselves dynamic culturally as well as historically, thereby underscoring the changing and shifting nature of the
space. Additionally, the researchers categorize space along three dimensions. Firstly, there are school-based academic as well as school-based no-academic spaces. School-based academic spaces involve those spaces that reflect the curriculum and instruction, such as the teaching of science or mathematics. On the other hand, school-based non-academic spaces are those spaces that reflect the social and organizational qualities of schooling not directly implicated in academic learning, such as waiting for the bus or managing student behaviour in the cafeteria. Secondly, there are the home/community spaces which involve those spaces where the parents may interact with others about the concerns of schooling, such as in church-based groups, parent networks and community organizations (Barton et al., 2004:5). It is important to note that the researchers have also categorized spaces along a continuum from a formal, school-structured space to a personal, individually-authored and enacted space. For instance, in a science class, space is framed formally by mandated learning standards, by the school’s adopted curricula and more personally, by the teachers’, the learners’ and the parents’ understanding of what science is about, as well as what they ought to be doing together in the classroom.

Regarding capital, Barton et al. (2004) adopt Bourdieu’s (1977) definition. In particular, capital can be thought of as the human, social and material resources one has access to and can activate for their own desired purposes. Accordingly, capital can be thought of in both macro- and micro- contexts. At the macro-level, capital can be understood to be framed by the space and the social, political and cultural boundaries that frame such space. This includes the importance of science curriculum and laboratory materials, or access to those who know science and the school science policy well, as may be the case in a school-based academic space (Barton et al., 2004:5). And, at the micro-level, capital can be thought of as being framed by the individuals who occupy that space at any given moment, such as the knowledge and experiences in science that the teachers or the parents bring to a school science setting.

According to Barton et al. (2004), and SEDL (2012), there are three important conjectures in the EPE framework that come to light when parental involvement is examined through the concepts of space and capital.
Firstly, parental engagement is the mediation between space and capital by the parents in relation to others in the school settings. Secondly, such mediation must be understood as both an action and an orientation to action. Thirdly, the differences in parental engagement across the different spaces within the schools are micro and macro in nature (Barton et al., 2004:6). Accordingly, engagement as mediation consists of three parts, namely mediation as action, authoring and positioning as key actions, as well as the importance of understanding orientation to action as an element of engagement. Whereas actions are defined as the acts, processes or forms of doing something, reactions are those things that the parents do that are endorsed within prescribed structures and norms set up by the institution in power, such as attendance at a Parent-Teacher Association meeting. These kinds of actions, the researchers
argue, position the parents as the receivers of school structures rather than the framers and show only how the parents fit into an already pre-conceived structure (Barton et al., 2004:8).

On the other hand, critical actions are those actions that the parents do when they carefully examine the assumptions that frame school-based conversations about the role of the parents and the families or the common practices and policies of the schools. Actions that engage are both concerned with how the parents activate the resources available to them in a given space in order to create a place of their own in the schools and about how they use or express that place to position themselves differently so that they can influence the life in the schools (Barton et al., 2004:8). An analysis of the material sent home with the children, including letters, handouts and assignments, carried out by these researchers, indicated that the vast majority of these materials related to academic concerns, especially on mathematics and literacy. Accordingly, the exchange of information opened up channels of communication between the teachers and the parents, allowing both the level of education and comfort to be shared between them in the areas of mathematics and literacy (Barton et al., 2004:10).

As its major strength, the EPE framework enables us to understand engagement in relation to many things as opposed to only those things that are traditionally deemed important in the schools. The fact that the EPE framework frames what the parents ‘do’ with and for their children’s education in empowering them, the researchers assert, is relevant in understanding parental engagement in high-poverty urban schools. This is particularly so because it uncovers how the parents activate non-traditional resources and improve relationships with the teachers, other parents and community members in a bid to create a place of their own in the schools. More importantly, this perspective lays emphasis on how the parents can and do use their abilities to create new places in the schools to position themselves differently so that they can influence life in the schools in non-traditional as well as in informal ways (Barton et al., 2004:11).

2.5.2 Dimensions of parental involvement

Grolnick et al. (1997) conceptualize three dimensions of parental involvement based on how parent-child interactions affect the student’s schooling and motivation. According to this approach, parental involvement affects the learners’ motivation, their sense of competence and the belief that they have control over their success at school. Accordingly, the three
dimensions are relatively independent and are associated with the children’s motivational resources as well as their school performance (Grolnick et al., 1997:538). The first dimension is that of behavioural involvement, and refers to the parents’ public actions that represent their interest in their children’s education both at school as well as at home. Whereas participation in the activities at school include attending parent-teacher conferences, an open-house or volunteering, those at home include such aspects as helping with homework and asking about school (Grolnick et al., 1997:538; TNI, 2013:2).

The second dimension has to do with personal involvement, which includes parent-child interactions that communicate positive attitudes about the school, as well as the importance of education to the child. In other words, it involves knowing about and keeping abreast of what is going on with the child at school. The third dimension is that of cognitive or intellectual involvement, and refers to the behaviours that promote the children’s skill-development and knowledge, like reading books, going to museums and libraries, as well as talking about current events. Thus, this dimension involves exposing the child to intellectually stimulating activities.

Grolnick et al. (1997:539) examined three sets of factors, in a hierarchical manner, that predict the dimensions of involvement discussed above as individual, contextual and institutional factors. While the individual factors focus on parent and child characteristics that might influence involvement, the contextual ones involve viewing individuals as acting within a context. Notably, in their study, family circumstances are seen as providing the context in which parent involvement occurs. On the other hand, institutional factors involve taking into consideration those institutions that interact with the family. In this way, the researchers assert, the school may set the parameters for parental involvement.

Grolnick et al. (1997:546) established that the parents, specifically the mothers, who were very active in the behavioural and cognitive development of their children, had children who felt more competent at school and more in control of the outcomes at school than those who were less involved. The mothers who felt efficacious, who saw their role as that of a teacher and who viewed their children as less difficult, the study established, were more involved in cognitive activities. Furthermore, the study revealed that parents who are extremely stressed or whose values and attitudes clash with those of the teacher may not receive the teacher’s message, even if he or she is attempting to involve them (Grolnick et al., 1997:547). The
study also found that child and parent characteristics had strong relations with cognitive involvement, and to a lesser extent, personal involvement when also considering the other factors. Similarly, teacher characteristics were associated with involvement at school. For example, the parents who see themselves as teachers and feel efficacious, as well as those in more optimal contexts, become more involved when the teachers are involved, whereas those who never see themselves as being involved or fall in difficult contexts are the least affected by the teachers’ attitudes and behaviours.

Grolnick et al. (1997) argue that the parents may need strategies to help them work with their children if their involvement efforts are aimed at increasing the involvement of the home. In particular, the researchers argue that cultural factors such as the parents’ ideas about their children’s learning have to be considered in efforts to increase parental involvement, and that interventions beyond the traditional classroom-based activities are necessary to reach all the families. Accordingly, without considering the social realities as well as the cultural characteristics of the parents, school practices targeting the parents may lead to larger discrepancies in educational outcomes rather than greater equality.

2.5.3 Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s model of the parental involvement process

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) define parent involvement broadly to include such home-based activities as helping with homework and discussing school events or courses, while school-based activities have to do with volunteering at school and coming to school events. Accordingly, when the parents get involved, their children’s schooling is affected by means of their acquisition of knowledge and skills, and an increased sense of confidence that they can succeed at school. The authors argue that parental involvement is a function of a parent’s beliefs about parenting roles and responsibilities, the parent’s sense that he or she can help the children succeed at school and the opportunities for involvement provided by the school or the teacher. But, the involvement of the parents in the education of their children is a process as opposed to being a mere event. According to Green et al. (2007:532), although parental involvement is an important contributor to the children’s positive school outcomes, much less is known about the factors that motivate the parents’ involvement practices. This sentiment is echoed by Walker, Shenker and Hoover-Dempsey (2010:27) who observed that although the schools often dedicate precious resources towards the goal of increasing the incidence and effectiveness of family involvement in their children’s education, their efforts
are not always informed by systematic investigations of why the parents become involved or how their involvement influences their children’s academic engagement and achievement. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model (2005) addresses this knowledge gap, that is, it discusses these factors.

Accordingly, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) advance a model of the parental involvement process which is a representation of decades of research on the family’s involvement in their children’s education. The model addresses the following three main questions, namely “Why do the families or don’t they become involved?” “What do the families do when they are involved?” “How does family involvement make a positive difference in student outcomes?” (TPI, 2012:2; Walker et al., 2010:27; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). The model is unique because it focuses on understanding the process of parental involvement rather than on identifying associations between the parental involvement practices and the students’ academic achievement (Walker et al., 2010:28). Accordingly, the model views human behaviour as part of a reciprocal system that also includes personal factors, for example, beliefs. In addition, it includes environmental factors, such as social interactions and the physical surroundings.

The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) model of the parent involvement process, which is structured in five levels, is illustrated in Figure 2.3 as follows:
Figure 2.3: Model of the parental involvement process (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005)
Level 1 of the model describes the parents’ motivations for their involvement in their children’s education. The model suggests that the variety and frequency of the family’s involvement are influenced by three major factors, namely the parents’ personal motivators, the perceptions of the invitations to be involved, as well as the life context variables.

Accordingly, these factors interact to shape the forms and frequency of the family’s involvement as detailed below.

- **Personal motivators.** The notion that the parents’ motivations for involvement are a function of the social systems to which they belong is central to the model. In particular, the parents’ role-construction and sense of efficacy, which help their children to succeed at school, are influenced by their own family and academic experiences during their childhood, the current family systems and recent experiences at the school that their children attend (TPI, 2012:2; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Green et al., 2007; Schaufer-McDaniel, 2004; Yukti, n.d.). Role-construction involves the parents’ beliefs about what they are supposed to do in relation to their children’s schooling (TPI, 2012:3). In essence, it is their job-description from their own viewpoint. On the other hand, self-efficacy refers to the parents’ beliefs about whether or not their involvement is likely to have a positive influence on their children’s education. Just as the learners’ self-efficacy influences them academically related behaviours and the parents’ sense of self-efficacy shape what the parents do.

- **The parents’ perceptions of invitations to be involved.** Accordingly, the contextual motivators of involvement take the following three forms:

  a) General invitations from the school. The school invitations are manifested, for example, in the creation of a welcoming and responsive school atmosphere, school practices that ensure that the parents are well-informed about their children’s progress, the school’s requirements and school events (Green et al., 2007:533; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). These researchers assert that such invitations should be reflected in the school
practices. In particular, they argue, such school practices need to convey respect for and responsiveness to the parents’ questions and suggestions. Thus, examples of the questions to be asked may include the following, namely “Is the school welcoming?” “Do all the school staff members, including the front office staff, custodians and others greet the parents warmly?” According to Florez (2011:24), the parents feel that the teachers can develop closer relationships with their children because they have the opportunity to learn more about the children’s style, as well as their pace of learning. Thus, they perceive that the teachers understand the reality at home and family-life in general. This helps to build a circle of trust and teamwork.

b) Specific teacher invitations – These include teacher requests for supporting learning at home, as well as attending, say, a parent-teacher conference (Green et al., 2007; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). The teachers’ invitations are partly influential, since they emphasize the teachers’ valuing of the parents’ contributions to the learners’ educational success. Therefore, to make such invitations more effective, the teachers need to discard the notion that rural families are ignorant, thereby bringing their wisdom and experience into the school. Fullan (2007) notes that the teachers today cannot educate the children on their own, hence they need the cooperation of the parents. Similarly, it may be effective for the schools to conduct regular orientation sessions with the parents where the teacher can assist the parents on how they can give their children more effective support with their education. Such sessions, it is argued, may bridge the gap between the school personnel and the parents, and improve communication (Lumpkin, 2010). However, the teachers and the facilitators should appreciate the fact that these processes are slow, hence they must be ready to encourage, convince and negotiate this way of participating (Florez, 2011:54).

c) Specific invitations from the child. These can be explicit such as, “I need help”, “I just don’t understand this”, “I hate school”, or can also be implied. For example, the child might be struggling with homework or procrastinating to get a school project done (TPI, 2012; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). The promotion of a variety of interrelationships, including those of specific invitations from themselves, fosters values that help the learners. Florez (2011:20) asserts that children develop their knowledge and personalities
through social contact with their classmates in the same grade and other grades, different ages, teachers, parents and members of the community where they live. According to Green et al. (2007:533), specific child invitations can be powerful in fostering parental involvement. This is partially because the parents generally expect their children to succeed. For this reason, the parents are motivated to respond to their children’s needs. On the other hand, implicit invitations to become involved may emerge as the learners experience difficulties either at school or with aspects of schoolwork. However, as is true of all types of invitations to involvement, invitations from the children may be increased by the school’s actions. This is important in a bid to enhance the family’s engagement in their children’s schooling (Green et al., 2007:533).

- **Life-context variables.** According to Green et al. (2007:532) and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005), these are the personal life variables that influence the parents’ perceptions of the forms and timing of involvement that seem feasible, and include the parents’ skills and knowledge for involvement, as well as the time and energy for involvement. These variables are discussed below.

**The parents’ understanding of their skills and knowledge.** This influences their thinking about the kinds of involvement activities they engage in. When the learners’ or the teachers’ requests fit the parents’ beliefs about their skills, knowledge and abilities, they are more likely to act. However, if the parents believe their skills or knowledge are inadequate, they may be reluctant to take action. The parents can become active members of the school, learning what their children are taught, thinking about the learning guides and using other resources that the school has to offer them (Florez, 2011:55). Another way of empowering the parents is by means of literacy courses and similar educational programmes coordinated by different agents in the community and the civil society.

**The parents’ perceptions of the time and energy available for involvement:** These influence their decisions about involvement. The parents may be constrained by long work hours, varied family obligations and the reality that opportunities to become involved in many educationally-related activities are scheduled for the
school’s convenience. Traditionally, the schools, especially in the rural areas, have not been open to the involvement of the family, the community and the local culture thereby making their participation in the learning process and in improving the students’ achievements far from the minds of many teachers (Florez, 2011:17). Today, the parents have to become directly involved in the learning of their children, and they have to ask questions such as, “How do I help my son? How does my daughter study? How can I learn from what they are learning?” (Florez, 2011:53).

**Family culture:** This may play a significant role in the parents’ perceptions about the ways they can and should be involved in supporting their child’s learning. For example, even if the schools are inviting, the families whose cultures have traditionally suggested that the parents should play a limited role in the learners’ formal schooling may stay “on the sidelines” (TPI, 2012:3). Conversely, the families whose cultures expect regular and direct family involvement may be considerably more engaged than their learners would expect. To promote learning among children, Florez (2011:53) notes that the parents are expected to internalize the following, namely all the children should learn to read and write in the first grade; what is learnt at school should be applied in the family and/or the community; girls should participate on an equal footing with boys in academic, social and cultural activities; and the parents should develop skills in administration, organization and leadership through continuing educational activities.

2.5.3.2 Level 1.5

Level 1.5 of the model defines several forms of involvement, including the following:

a) The incorporation of the parents’ clear communication with their children about their personal and family values, goals, expectations and aspirations for their learning. The communication of these goals and expectations, in turn, shape the learners’ beliefs and behaviours related to learning (TPI, 2012: 4). Florez (2011) observes that the positive effect of the learners interacting with their parents and community members on the children’s education occurs not only in the classroom.
Accordingly, the learners begin learning in their families, and from the neighbours and other community members who may interact with them. In particular, the community’s customs and traditions help the children to strengthen their identities. And, for this reason, the guides they use and the activities they are assigned encourage their communication with family and community members (Florez, 2011:23).

b) Acknowledgement that the families support learning through involvement activities at home. Home-based involvement denotes interactions that take place between the child and the parent outside of the school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). This kind of involvement often includes such activities as talking about the school day, expressing interest in the student’s learning and monitoring and reviewing the student’s work. According to Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2007:534), these parent behaviours generally focus on the individual child’s learning-related behaviours, attitudes or strategies, and include parent activities like helping with homework, reviewing for a test, and monitoring the child’s progress. The learners turn to their parents to clear up their doubts (Florez, 2011:23). Once they have received answers and information through these interactions, the children can then transmit what they have learnt, and engage in activities that enable them to appreciate their achievements and their capacity to apply their learning to the immediate context. Studies indicate that interactions among children and adults ensure a high quality and equitable education. In addition, such interactions are known to strengthen the learners’ self-esteem, develop their self-confidence and their ability to work together with others.

c) Effective family-school communication influences the learners’ academic progress. The value of effective communication is generally strongest when the communication is consistently characterized by mutual respect, careful listening and the school’s responsiveness to the parents’ questions, ideas, suggestions and concerns. The families and the schools should foster the development of skills for peaceful social interaction (Florez, 2011:24). These vital skills include those of communication. Interacting with adults, it is asserted, prepares the children for assuming their future roles in society responsibly. More importantly, such relationships are crucial towards developing autonomy among the children, as well as sustaining a high level of communication with adults where they are heard and respected.
Participation in school-based activities. Educators sometimes assume that the parents who are not at school are not involved. The breadth of the involvement-forms described in levels 1.5 and 2 of the model are important reminders that involvement at school is not necessarily a good indicator of the parents’ actual breadth and level of involvement. Regarding the parental involvement forms in levels 1.5 and 2, Walker, Shenker and Hoover-Dempsey (2010:29) note that the parents’ aspirations and expectations for their children’s learning appear to have more influence on student achievement than other forms, including home-based involvement. Green et al. (2007:534) note that school-based activities broadly involve activities typically undertaken by the parents at school and focus on the individual child. These include attending a parent-teacher conference and observing the child in class, as well as watching the child’s performance in a school activity or club. According to Florez (2011:19), arranging the school’s environment, organizing cooperative group work, using didactic sequences proposed by the interactive guides, and bringing the family and community into the educational process should be a continuous process in the schools.

2.5.3.3  Level 2

Level 2 indicates that parents influence the student attributes necessary for school success via four specific kinds of activities or active ingredients, which include encouragement, modeling, reinforcement and instruction (TPI, 2012:4). Amongst others, monitoring the quality of student learning in the schools should involve the family as well as the community (Florez, 2011:53). For example, a community may contain markets, stores, crops, green areas and many other places where the children can use the concepts they have worked on in the learning guides. Thus, they practice and use what they learn.

2.5.3.4  Level 3

Level 3 asserts that these mechanisms, that is, encouragement, modeling, reinforcement and instruction, remain inert unless the learners perceive their parents’ actions. In this way, the students’ perceptions of their parents’ use of the four mechanisms are essential channels whereby the parents’ beliefs and behaviours are translated into attributes that lead to academic success (TPI, 2012: 4; Walker et al., 2010:29; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005).
For example, when the parents encourage their children to persist in academic work, and the children perceive this encouragement, the parents contribute to the development of student academic self-efficacy or confidence in their children’s ability to learn. Also, when the parents attend meetings and events at the school or ask their child about the school day, and the child is engaged in these activities, the parents are modeling the importance of education (TPI, 2012:5). Social learning theories hold that learning depends on the learner’s attention to, retention of, and later reproduction of the modeled behavior (Bandura, 1986). According to Walker et al. (2010:30), in order to obtain a more complete understanding, research also has to attend to the children’s perceptions of their practices as well as the larger interpersonal climate in which those practices are used.

2.5.3.5 Level 4

Level 4 views the learners as the authors of their academic success. It describes a set of four student beliefs and behaviours associated with academic achievement:

a) Academic self-efficacy. Here, efficacy is the belief that “I can”. It is the learners’ belief in their ability to master the academic material (Walker et al., 2010:30). When the learners believe that they are capable of learning, they are more likely to persist in the face of new and sometimes challenging academic work. If they do not hold this belief then they are less likely to persist. Just like role-construction, self-efficacy is socially constructed (Green et al., 2007:533; Bandura, 1997). Accordingly, it is influenced by the personal experiences of success in parental involvement, and the vicarious experiences of similar others’ successful involvement experiences, as well as verbal persuasion by others.

b) Intrinsic motivation to learn. Highly effective learners have a genuine interest in mastering the content, and this curiosity sustains their engagement in learning, both in and out of school. Walker et al. (2010:30) assert that the intrinsic motivation to learn is a construct with a long association with significant learning.

c) Self-regulatory skills. This means that the learners behave in ways that support their learning, including managing their time well, setting goals and monitoring their progress. According to Walker et al. (2010:30), the use of a self-regulatory
strategy involves important meta-cognitive behaviours that support learning, such as goal-setting and self-monitoring.

d) The fourth attribute underscores the social dimensions of school success. According to Walker et al. (2010:30), it involves the learners’ belief in their ability to approach the teachers for help and support. Successful learners know how to ask for help when they are confused and how to work cooperatively with others in the classroom (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). Indeed, it is important to note that these attributes are crucial to academic success.

2.5.3.6 Level 5

Level 5 clearly indicates that the ultimate goal of strengthening parental engagement is to improve the students’ achievement. The model asserts that parental involvement, as described at each level of the process, influences and to some degree, predicts student outcomes. Walker et al. (2010) conclude that Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s (2005) model of the parent involvement process can increase effective parent participation in the children’s education. However, although Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s (2005) model, and even the three dimensions of parental involvement advanced by Grolnick et al. (1997), clearly dwell on the parents’ motivations and actions, such focus is largely done without taking into account the school context, hence a notable limitation.

2.5.4 Hornby and Lafaele’s (2011) model of factors acting as barriers to parental involvement

Hornby and Lafaele (2011:38-39) presented a model to clarify and elaborate on the barriers to effective parental involvement in children’s education. The researchers categorized the various barriers by adapting Epstein’s (2001) Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence to become broader societal factors, which influence the functioning of both the schools and the families, parent-teacher factors, individual parent and family as well as child factors.

These barriers are illustrated in figure 2.3.
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<tr>
<th>Individual parent and family factors</th>
<th>Child factors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- The parents’ beliefs about</td>
<td>- Age</td>
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<td>parental involvement</td>
<td>- Learning difficulties and disabilities</td>
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<td>- The perceptions of the invitations</td>
<td>- Gifts and talents</td>
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<td>to parental involvement</td>
<td>- Behavioural problems</td>
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<td>- Current life-contexts</td>
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<td>- Class, gender and ethnicity</td>
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<tr>
<th>Parent-teacher factors</th>
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<td>- Differing goals and agendas</td>
<td>- Historical and demographic</td>
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<td>- Differing attitudes</td>
<td>- Political</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Differing language used</td>
<td>- Economic</td>
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**Figure 2.4: Model of the factors acting as barriers to parental involvement** (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

These barriers to the establishment of effective parental involvement in education are discussed below.

a) **Parent and family factors**

Here, individual parent and family barriers are discussed, focusing on the parents’ beliefs about parental involvement, the parents’ current life-contexts, the parents’ perceptions of invitations for involvement, as well as class, ethnicity and gender.
• The parents’ beliefs about parental involvement

Firstly, the way the parents view their role in their children’s education is crucial. Parents who believe that their role is only to get their children to school, which then takes over the responsibility for their education, will not be willing to be actively involved in either school-based or home-based parental involvement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:39). Accordingly, some parents’ lack of confidence in helping their children may be because the language of instruction is not their first language. Thus, such parents feel they cannot communicate effectively with the teachers. And, for others, it can be due to their having had negative experiences with their children’s previous schools, or even through their experiencing either learning or behavioural difficulties during their own schooling. Similarly, a lack of confidence may also come from the parents holding the view that they have not developed sufficient academic competence to enable them to effectively participate in their children’s education. Such views serve as barriers to parental involvement, in spite of the wide acknowledgement that the ability to support their children’s learning does not require a high level of education from the parents (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:40; Hornby, 2000).

According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997), the parents’ views about their children’s intelligence as well as how the children learn and develop their abilities are also critical. The parents, the researchers assert, who believe that children’s intelligence is a given, and that school achievement is mainly due to the children being lucky enough to have a high ability, will not see the point in getting involved in their children’s education. On the other hand, the parents who believe that the way they rear their children will have a significant impact on their development are much more likely to be positive about parental involvement compared to the parents who believe they can have merely little impact on their children’s development.

• The parents’ perceptions of invitations for involvement

Hornby and Lafaele (2011:40) and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) argue that when the parents think that their involvement is not valued by the teachers or the schools, they are less likely to get involved. Parents are most effectively involved when the teachers actively encourage parental involvement. Accordingly, schools that are welcoming to the parents and
make it clear that they value parental involvement develop more effective parental involvement than schools that do not appear to invite the parents.

- **The parents’ current life-contexts**

A number of aspects of the parents’ life contexts can act as barriers to parental involvement. For example, the parents’ level of education will influence their views on whether they have sufficient skills and knowledge to engage in different aspects of parental involvement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:41; Green et al., 2007). Similarly, family circumstances can be major barriers to parental involvement. For instance, single parents as well as those with young or large families may find it more difficult to become involved because of their caretaking responsibilities. The parents’ work situations can also be a factor. For example, if the parents are not employed, finances could be an issue, as they may not be in a position to afford, say, a car, or to pay babysitters in order to get to school meetings. On the other hand, where both parents are working, there will possibly be less time available for either home-based or school-based parental involvement. Again, while some jobs allow little flexibility for taking time off for school-based parental involvement, other jobs may leave the parents too tired at the end of a day to help their children with homework (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:41; Catsambis, 2001). Lastly, the parents’ overall psychological resources may be a barrier to parental involvement. For example, parents with poor physical or mental health or without an effective social support network, including extended family members, may find it difficult to effectively engage in parental involvement.

- **Class, ethnicity and gender**

While the rhetoric on parental involvement does include suggestions of how to overcome the typical disadvantages of social class and ethnicity, it does so with an essential bias of White middle-class values that ignore differences as well as diversity (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:41; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 1997). Those typically involved are, as defined by the teachers, the ‘good parents’ who are the White middle-class, married and heterosexual (Reay, 1998). Accordingly, it is these parents who possess cultural capital which matches that generally valued by the schools. Amongst others, the White middle-class parents have the resources and power to enable them to continue to seek
advantages for their own children, for example, by engaging home-help to free up time for greater involvement at school. In contrast, the working-class parents, though possessing their own undervalued cultural capital, are aware of the difference between the cultural capital they possess and that of the teachers. The minorities are generally less involved, less represented and less-informed. They are also less likely to have access to resources, but more likely to have problems associated with language, transport, communication and child-care (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:41). Reay (1998) argues that this type of class-related parental involvement helps to maintain the current inequalities in the system and the gap between rhetoric, as well as reality.

It is imperative to note that a failure to understand the impact of ethnicity on parental involvement and to incorporate programmes that are genuinely inclusive of other cultures is probably another reason why the practice of involving the parents in the schools is typically less effective than it could be (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:42). It is also important to note that despite policy and research supporting the importance of parental involvement in the schools, the reality is that it is predominantly the mothers’ involvement. And, since most of the rhetoric and research ignore the issue of the gendered nature of parental involvement, the researchers argue, it also fails to consider and evaluate its impact on practice. Accordingly, an analysis of the ‘mothers’ world’ does clearly show there are tensions, power issues, contradictions and compromises involved in determining the levels of parental involvement.

According to Hornby and Lafaele (2011:42), there have also been significant changes over a couple of the last decades in family structures, the political, economic and historical contexts in which the mothers’ involvement occurs. Particularly, the mothers now face balancing issues of working with the schools, negotiating boundaries, participating in the labour market, as well as the effects of class, marital status and ethnicity. Notably, these issues contribute to the reasons for the discrepancy between the rhetoric and the typical practice of parental involvement.

b) Child factors

The child factors that are addressed focus on age, learning difficulties and disabilities, gifts and talents, and behavioural problems.
• **Age**

The age of the children can be a barrier to the involvement of the parents, since it is widely acknowledged that parental involvement decreases as the children grow older, and is at its lowest level for children of secondary school age (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:42). The tendency, the researchers assert, for parental involvement to be greater for parents of younger children may be partly because younger children are more positive about their parents going into school. Unfortunately the parents, and sometimes the teachers can assume that older children do not want their parents to be involved in their education, which can act as a barrier to effective parental involvement.

• **Learning difficulties and disabilities**

When children are struggling with their schoolwork, due to learning difficulties or disabilities, then the parents are generally more inclined to be active in respect of parental involvement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:43). According to Seligman (2000), many authorities on special needs education consider that involving parents is an essential aspect of effective education for children with disabilities or learning difficulties. But this is never always the case as there are many possible areas for disagreement between the schools and the parents of children with learning difficulties or disabilities, which can act as barriers to effective parental involvement.

• **Gifts and talents**

It is usually a pleasure for the parents whose children are doing well at school to attend parent-teacher meetings. Therefore, the children who are gifted and talented are normally a facilitating factor for parental involvement. However, barriers to effective parental involvement can be evident when the parents consider their children to be academically gifted, yet this view is not shared by the teachers (Montgomery, 2009). Many children who are academically gifted become frustrated at school, simply because they are being insufficiently challenged. They either begin to underachieve or even develop behavioural problems (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:43). There is also the potential for conflict between the
teachers and the parents of children who are talented in extra-curricular areas like sport or music. Accordingly, in developing their talents in these areas demands that the children have to put in a lot of time and effort practicing or competing, which often requires from them to take time off from school, and can lead to them falling behind with their academic studies. When the parents consider that the schools are not responsive to the extra-curricular demands on their children it can prove to be a barrier to positive involvement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:44).

- **Behaviour problems**

When the children develop a reputation for displaying challenging behaviour, their parents can be reluctant to go to school for fear of receiving more bad news (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:44). Indeed, there is usually a negative correlation between parental involvement and the children’s behaviour problems, so that the more disruptive the behaviour the less are the parents inclined to be involved with the school.

c) **Parent-teacher factors**

The parent-teacher factors focus on differing agendas, attitudes and the language used.

- **Goals and agendas**

Hornby and Lafaele (2011:44) argue that the parent involvement rhetoric that exists is not merely a function of a simplistic desire to benefit the children, but also the result of differing and sometimes opposing goals and agendas. For instance, the governments and the schools may, according to their perspectives of the goals, view parental involvement as a tool for increasing the school’s accountability to their communities, as well as for increasing the children’s achievements, or as a cost-effective resource, a method of addressing cultural disadvantages and inequality. However, the parents’ goals are more likely to involve improving the children’s performance, wishing to influence the ethos or curriculum within the school, as well as the desire to increase their understanding of school-life (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:44; OECD, 1997). Accordingly, the parent-teacher meetings present a good case of how much the goals and agendas of the parents and the teachers can differ. There are
both similarities and differences in the parents’ and the teachers’ agendas for these meetings, which could serve as barriers to the establishment of effective parental involvement. Understanding these underlying and typically covert agendas, Hornby and Lafaele (2011:45) observe, provides an example of the influence of the complex context in which parental involvement occurs.

• **Attitudes**

According to Hornby and Lafaele (2011:45), teachers and parents bring to the melting pot of parental involvement their personal attitudes that are deeply rooted within their historical, economic, educational, ethnic, class and gendered experiences. Thus, there are chances that the parents and the teachers may differ in their interpretation of the relationship between schooling and education. Again, there are many assumptions about parents, including a pervasive notion that they are increasingly not meeting their responsibilities today, as was the case previously. Indeed, some parents are often ignorant of the curriculum and processes. On their part, many teachers, for example, make assumptions that some parents are just not interested or do not really care about their children’s education (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:45; Hornby, 2000). This is partly because the media and television constantly highlight examples of parenting, and often portray parents as weak and incompetent, and besieged by problems. Nevertheless, it is widely accepted that the vast majority of parents do care about their children’s education and that working-class parents care just as much as middle-class parents (Epstein, 2001). In this context, however, it is not surprising that there is a lack of mutual understanding between the parents and the teachers, with the result that mistrust builds up as the barriers increase (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:46).

• **Language**

Language is a major factor in understanding the rhetoric-reality split. Particularly, the use of concepts such as partnership, sharing, mutuality, collaboration, reciprocity and participation masks the inequalities that exist in reality in the practice of parental involvement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:47; Reay, 1998). This clearly demonstrates that there is a gap between rhetoric and reality, in part because the language of the rhetoric and reality is not in harmony with the substance of that rhetoric (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:48; Lueder, 2000:6).
d) Societal factors

The societal factors include historical and demographic, political and economic issues.

- Historical and demographic factors

According to Hornby and Lafaele (2011:48), the historical context in which parent involvement occurs provides a silent and often unacknowledged barrier to involving the parents in education. For instance, the fact that the school is historically structured along commercial-production approaches is still being witnessed today. Interestingly, this is a largely accepted practice of our school tradition that is however, an obstacle for both the teachers and the parents in their efforts to collaborate more. Accordingly, many schools continue to bear the hallmarks of the formality, inflexibility as well as timetabling that hitherto have characterized schooling, and which are counter-productive to forming parent-school partnerships that instead, require flexibility.

- Political factors

At the national government level, a number of factors are known to act as barriers to parental involvement. A case in point is the absence of specific legislation on parental involvement. Therefore, it is not surprising that espoused policy on parental involvement, which relies on voluntary participation in schools, leads to uneven practice (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:49; Hornby, 2000). Notably, inconsistency within different sections of education legislation as well as differences between government policy and action plays a role in inhibiting the practice of parental involvement. In particular, the governments may outwardly support parental involvement, yet concurrently undermine it through other policies that are in blatant conflict with such support. Indeed, unless the government’s policy on parental involvement is accompanied by relevant action, including strategic implementation, the dissemination of information and training, it is unlikely to be effective in improving parental involvement.

Another determinating factor in the levels of parental involvement that are decided on in a political arena is the way the school systems are organized. Schools in New Zealand (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:49), for example, have catchment zones which mean that the vast majority of
the pupils attending the schools live in the community where the school is located. Accordingly, where school zones do not exist, as is the case in most parts of the U.K., many of the pupils live outside the community where the school is located. Such a situation makes it more difficult for the schools to build partnerships with the parents (Epstein, 2001; Hornby, 2000).

Furthermore, another example of how decisions at national government level affect parental involvement concerns teacher training. Particularly, the content of teacher education programmes in New Zealand and the U.K. has in the recent years been to a large extent formulated by the government’s education policies. The importance of providing the teachers with the skills to work effectively with the parents has been widely acknowledged (Epstein, 2001). Unfortunately, because the government policies do not require it, they are simply not included. For instance, despite there being policies meant to boost parental involvement in New Zealand and the U.K., there is still no requirement to include courses on involving the parents and the families in teacher education programmes.

However, in the United States of America, accreditation standards require the topic of parental involvement to be a compulsory course in teacher education programmes (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), 2002). However, according to Hornby and Lafaele (2011:49) and Flanigan (2007), a recent survey of the staff members who teach courses to do with parental involvement has concluded that they do not include sufficient practical experiences of parental involvement to ensure that teachers are adequately grounded to discharge their roles effectively.

- **Economic factors**

Essentially, education practices have to justify their share of the available funding while operating in a field that is continually assessed for increased performance, using such means as national tests, including numeracy and literacy (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:49; Sanders, 2006). It is worth noting that in many Western countries, free market policies have come to dominate the economy leading to education being organized to serve the needs of the market. Accordingly, programmes aimed at increasing parental involvement are disadvantaged in such a climate since they are merely concerned with a process that focuses on long-term as opposed to short-term goals. The end-result of these conflicting forces between the
educational market on the one hand, and funding on the other, is that little or no money is allocated in order to develop parental involvement. This clearly hampers programmes, resources, training and further research (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:49; Sanders, 2006).

2.6 CONCLUSION

A number of theories and models have been advanced by researchers in various fields regarding the need to foster the engagement of the stakeholders, including the learners, the teachers, the parents and the communities in children’s education. These researchers come from such disciplines as sociology, developmental psychology, political science, anthropology, philosophy and biology. The wide range of researchers involved underscores the importance of family-school-community partnerships, which is the focus of this study. Since its publication in 1979, Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory or the ecology of human development has had widespread influence on the way psychologists and others approach the study of human beings and their environment. These environments, which range from the family to economic and political structures, have come to be viewed as part of the life-course from childhood through adulthood.

Notably, the Ecological Systems Theory of development has been proven beneficial in providing insight into all the factors that play a role in the growth and development of individuals (Yukti, n.d.:7). The most useful aspect of this model is that we as a society can raise our children together if we work in harmony, providing our children with a community that supports each other. The outcome on our children will be profound (Yukti, n.d.: 8). Accordingly, our goal should be to educate our children to follow in their own directions with love, respect and care of each other. Thus if the parents, teachers, communities and societies work together then ours will be a nation of success, good health, respect and love. The ecological model has been found helpful in developing governmental policies and programmes that can benefit our society, allowing for the treatment of various emotional and behavioural problems. For example, the educators can use this model to assess the problems in a child’s life and aid in the rebalancing of the child’s environment to begin the healing.

The Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence helps educators and researchers across disciplines to ‘think new’ about family and community partnerships in children’s education (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006:120). Indeed, with the attention given to contexts and social
relations, the theory changes the narrow focus of parental involvement from what an individual parent does to a broader, more realistic representation of how learners move, continuously, in and out of several contexts, and how the influential people in those contexts may work together to contribute to the children’s education and development. On the other hand, Epstein’s framework of school-family-community partnerships is a product of extensive research conducted by renowned researchers, and who reiterate its significance in the promotion of children’s education. Among its key strengths the model views schools, families and communities as being dynamic, hence the need for relevant stakeholders to keep pace with emerging issues and trends in children’s education. While implementing the model, Epstein asserts, the developmental characteristics of the learners, the historical and policy contexts as well as time need to be taken into account.

The Social Capital Theory emphasizes the need to promote social relationships, including communication among learners, teachers, families and communities. It advances three dimensions of social relationships, that is, social networks and sociability; trust and reciprocity, as well as a sense of belonging. Accordingly, people are likely to feel at home in those situations that include more interactions. For example, researchers associate academic success with a sense of belonging to a school. On the other hand, they link violent behaviour to environments where children do not feel comfortable. Amongst others, researchers should devise the appropriate means to improve social capital, like developing homework or educational programmes for school-age children in the after-school hours.

Apart from Epstein’s Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence and the typology of the six areas of family-school-community partnerships, another recent model of parental involvement in children’s education is the Ecologies of Parental Engagement (EPE) framework. Other than presenting a major shift from what the parents do to engage in their children’s education, as well as other stakeholders, the EPE framework is quite useful as it indicates how such parents understand the ‘hows’ and ‘whys’ of engagement with respect to the parents’ experiences and actions inside and outside of school. And, on their part, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler appreciate the fact that parental involvement in children’s education is not a mere event, and therefore they presented a model to guide the relevant process.

Various barriers encountered with regard to family-school-community partnerships were indicated. In particular, the barriers to effective parental involvement, discussed in Hornby
and Lafaele’s (2011) model provide an explanation for the existence of the gap between rhetoric and reality with regard to parental involvement. The model particularly makes it clear that parental involvement is determined and limited by divergent ranges of barriers related to the parents as well as the families, children, parent-teacher differences and societal issues (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:50). Accordingly, the model is intended to be used in the pre-service and in-service training of teachers, educational psychologists, counselors, social workers and other professionals who work in the broad education system. More importantly, studying the model will enable these professionals to gain greater insight into the factors which serve as barriers to and facilitate the development of productive parental involvement.

The following chapter presents the contextual basis of the study which is the education system of Kenya.
CHAPTER THREE
KENYA’S EDUCATION SYSTEM WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO KAKAMEGA COUNTY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the context of the study, namely the education system of Kenya, with particular reference to Kakamega County. In particular, the emphasis is placed on the relevant legal and policy documents regarding family-school-community partnerships in Kenya. Thus, a description of education in Kenya is presented while the legal and policy frameworks for family-school-community partnerships in Kenya are explored. Similarly, the themes of a Child Friendly School (CFS) and the implications of CFSs to family-school-community partnerships in Kenya are highlighted. The discussion then moves to Kakamega County where the empirical inquiry was done, and the barriers to effective family-school-community partnerships in this County are identified.

3.2 CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

3.2.1 Geographical and demographic features

The Republic of Kenya lies between 5° N and 5° S latitude and between 24° and 31° east longitude (ROK, 2010f). The equator almost bisects it. Its land area is 580,367 km$^2$ of which land occupies 569,140 km$^2$ while water covers the remaining 11,227 km$^2$. To the north it is bordered by Ethiopia, Somali (north east), Tanzania (south), Uganda and Lake Victoria (west), South Sudan (northwest) and the Indian Ocean (east). The country has a wide variety of physical features, among them the Great Rift Valley in which Africa’s highest mountains lie. They include Kilimanjaro, Kenya and Elgon. Lakes Nakuru and Magadi, numerous rivers as well as wildlife reserves remain key tourist attractions, while Kakamega and the Mau forests are relics of a rain forest and the largest forest complex in East Africa, respectively.

According to the 2009 Population and Housing Census (ROK, 2010c), Kenya consisted of 38,610,458 inhabitants, of whom 19,417,639 were female and 19,192,458 male. In 2009 about 14.1 million persons attending school were distributed as follows, namely pre-school (2.2 million or 16%), primary school (9.4 million or 67%), secondary school (1.8 million or
13%), tertiary institutions (290 000 or 2%), universities (198 000 or 1%), youth polytechnics (35 000 or 0.2%), non-formal education (15 000 or 0.1%) while 142 000 (1%) were attending basic literacy classes (ROK, 2010c). Accordingly, about 6.1 million (17%) of those aged 3 years and above had never been to school. Of the children who were out of school in the formal education system, 2.1 million or 58% were supposed to have been attending pre-primary school, 1.9 million or 23% primary school and 2.7 million or 76% secondary school.

As regards gender, in 2009 the proportion of boys to girls in primary, secondary, tertiary and university education was 0.95, 0.87, 1.13 and 0.72, in that order (ROK, 2010c). Thus, there were more boys compared to girls who were attending school at all levels, with the exception of the tertiary or middle level colleges. The life expectancy of a female and male Kenyan in 2009 was 59 and 56 years, respectively.

3.2.2 Historical background

Long before Kenya was colonized politically by Britain, the introduction of modern education was mainly done by Christian missionaries of different societies (Bogonko & Sifuna, 1986; Wosyanju, n.d.). During the 16th and 17th centuries, for example, one group of such missionaries came through the town of Mombasa and was responsible for the establishment of education along the coastal as well as central regions of the country. Other missionaries came from Uganda and occupied the now defunct Nyanza and Western provinces of Kenya. Another group was led by Johann Ludwig Krapf and Johannes Rebman who arrived in 1844, interacted with the locals in the coastal town of Mombasa and set up one of the earliest missionary schools in the country at Rabai in 1846 (Bogonko, 1992). This event stimulated the opening of similar schools at Freretown in 1875 for freed slaves, Taita in 1882, and at Taveta in 1890.

The establishment of British colonial rule in 1895 and the building of the Kenya-Uganda railway (1895-1901) saw the missionaries establish their schools up-country. For example, while the Consolata Fathers stationed themselves at Kiambu, Limuru and Mangu, the Mill Hill Fathers split into western-Kenya. It is worthwhile to note that while those communities that warmly received the missionaries received formal elementary education with more and more schools being built, those who were hostile missed the opportunity to reap the benefits
of Western formal education (Sifuna, 1986). This could partly explain the regional disparities in the distribution of learning institutions in the country to this day.

The provision of Western education in Kenya during the colonial era was mainly the undertaking of the missionaries who had exclusive, vast and informed experience (Sifuna, Chege & Oanda, 2006:73). The colonial government initially had neither a policy nor a development plan to guide its participation in education. Bogonko (1992) indicates that if the provision of primary education in Kenya during the colonial period was limited, then the development of secondary education was simply neglected. The main reason for this scenario was that the colonialists wanted to meet the immediate and visible needs of both the middle as well as the low-level human resources in the colonial and political structures.

Consequently, Christian mission schools provided the first secondary education for Africans in Kenya, mainly up to junior secondary level. For example, by 1940, all the four secondary schools in Kenya, including Alliance, Mangu, Maseno and Yala, were of this nature. According to Bogonko (1992), formal education was designed to serve the colonial minority. This was reflected in racial segregation and the gross imbalances, especially in educational opportunities. Notably, the opportunities for education for the Africans were limited. The colonialists also feared that formal education would make it difficult for the Africans to take orders. This, they argued, would slow down the process of industrialization as had happened in India which gained its independence in 1947.

After the Second World War ended in 1945, a number of colonialists accepted academic education for Africans. According to Sifuna et al. (2006:99), post-war developments in African education in Kenya included the expansion of primary teacher education, the opening of schools for artisans at Sigalagala, Kwale, Machakos, Mombasa, and the establishment of the Kenya Polytechnic (now the Technical University of Kenya), as well as the Jeans School, to offer community development courses. The colonial government also continued to give priority to both European and Asian education. For example, as a way of consolidating white settlements, Egerton College (now Egerton University) was opened to instruct the European youth in agricultural skills.

The limited number of educational opportunities was very dissatisfying to the Africans who started pressing for better education, especially after the end of the Second World War in 1945 (Sifuna et al., 2006:100). This was particularly the case after the return of African ex-
servicemen who had served in the Allied forces and who had gained high economic as well as political awareness during the war. In Kenya the Africans campaigned the hardest for the opening of secondary schools in every district, and in 1956 the Government African Schools, including Kakamega, Kisii, Kagumo and Machakos, become fully secondary schools. However, secondary education remained an area of low priority until a few years before independence in 1963. This was also the case with the development of higher education until the opening of the Royal Technical College (now the University of Nairobi) in the mid-1950s.

3.2.3 Political and economic systems

Kenya holds general elections every five years, with the last one having been held in March, 2013. This was also the first one to be conducted since the new Constitution was promulgated on August 27, 2010. Article 4 (2) of the Constitution stipulates that Kenya shall be a multi-party democratic state founded on the national values and principles of governance, which include patriotism, national unity, the rule of law, human dignity, equity, social justice, sharing and the devolution of power. Other aspects include inclusiveness, equality, human rights, good governance, integrity, non-discrimination and the protection of the marginalized, transparency, accountability, and sustainable development (ROK, 2010b: 16).

Article 93 (1) of the Constitution provides for the establishment of the Parliament of Kenya, which consists of the National Assembly and the Senate. While the National Assembly represents the people of the constituencies and special interests, the Senate serves to protect the interests of the counties and their governments (ROK, 2010b:64). The National Assembly consists of 290 members who are elected by the duly registered voters of their constituencies; 12 members are nominated by the parliamentary political parties according to their proportion of members to represent the special interests, including the youth, persons with disabilities and the workers. In addition, the National Assembly has 47 women members, elected by the registered voters of the counties (ROK, 2010b). The Senate consists of 47 members elected by the registered voters of the counties, 16 women members to be nominated by political parties and 2 members, each to represent the youth and persons with disabilities (ROK, 2010b:64).
Article 130 (1) provides for the National Executive, comprising of the President, Deputy President, Attorney-General and not fewer than 14 and not more than 22 Cabinet Secretaries, but who are not members of the parliament (ROK, 2010b: 95). Among the Cabinet Secretaries, one is designated to be in charge of education. Under the devolved governments, Article 176 (1) of the Constitution provides for the establishment of county governments whereby each county consists of an assembly and executive. Article 174 of the Constitution outlines one of the objects of devolved governments as promoting social and economic development and the provision of proximate, easily accessible services to the people of Kenya. These services include education. Other objects of the devolved governments include facilitating the decentralization of the state organs, their functions and services; protecting and promoting the interests and rights of minorities and marginalized communities; fostering national unity by recognizing diversity; and giving powers of self-governance to the people, as well as enhancing their participation (ROK, 2010b).

The county assembly consists of members elected by the registered voters of the wards, a number of special seat members considered necessary to ensure that not more than two-thirds of the membership of the assembly are of the same gender, and a number of marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities and the youth (ROK, 2010b: 114). The County Executive Committee consists of the Governor, the Deputy Governor and members appointed by the governor but with the approval of the assembly, from among persons who are not members of the assembly. The functions of the County Executive include managing and coordinating the functions of the county administration and its departments, including education, and implementing county legislation (ROK, 2010b:118).

Kenya consists of predominantly an agricultural economy. About 75% of Kenya’s population is employed in agriculture, with half of the sector’s output being subsistence production. The agricultural sector contributed 22% and 23% of the GDP in 2007 and 2008, respectively (ROK, 2009b). The principal cash crops include tea, horticultural produce and coffee. In 2008, tea, flowers and coffee jointly accounted for 45% of the total export earnings. In its economic strategy, Kenya Vision 2030 has identified tourism, agriculture, manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, business process outsourcing and financial services sectors to deliver the anticipated 10% economic growth rate annually (ROK, 2009b: iv, 28).
The service sector in Kenya, which is dominated by tourism, contributes about 63% of the GDP, thus becoming its largest foreign exchange earner. On the other hand, the manufacturing sector accounted for 11% of the total GDP in 2008. Other major sectors of Kenya’s economy include telecommunication, transport and construction. It is worth noting that a significant portion of Kenya’s foreign inflows is from remittances by non-resident Kenyans who work, especially in the United States (US), Middle East, Europe and Asia. Kenya is considered the main alternative location to South Africa for major corporations seeking to do business in Africa (Economy of Kenya, 2012).

However, the consistently poor growth performance of the Kenyan economy has failed to keep pace with the population growth, a situation that has been attributed to external shocks and internal structural problems, including world recession, bad weather and the poor infrastructure. This has contributed to the deterioration in the overall welfare of the population. Although there was remarkable economic growth from 2003 which peaked at an impressive 7.1% in 2007, real GDP nose-dived to a mere 1.7% in 2008 due to both domestic and external shocks, including high food and fuel prices, drought, global financial crises and post-election violence, following the heavily disputed presidential results (ROK, 2009b).

3.2.4 Ethnic and religious diversity

According to the Kenya Population and Housing Census conducted in 2009 (ROK, 2010c), the population by ethnic affiliation is distributed as follows, namely Kikuyu (6,622,576), Luhya (5,338,666), Kalenjin (4,967,328), Luo (4,044,440), Kamba (3,893,157) and Somali (2,385,572). Others included Kisii (2,205,669), Mijikenda (1,960,574) and Meru (1,658,108). The rest of the population comprised of Kenyan Arabs, Asians, Europeans and Americans.

Many languages are spoken in Kenya according to the number of ethnic groups and nationalities. Article 7 (3) of the Constitution explains the role of the State in promoting and protecting this diversity of language. Accordingly, it should endeavour to foster the development and use of the indigenous languages, Kenyan Sign Language, Braille and other forms of communication and technologies accessible to persons with disabilities (ROK, 2010b:15). While Article 7 (1) stipulates that Kiswahili and English are the official languages, the former remains the national language. Whereas languages of the various ethnic groups, particularly in the rural areas are taught in the lower grades of primary schools (up to
Class Three as mother tongue (ROK, 2002), Kiswahili and English are offered as compulsory and examinable subjects up to secondary school level. However, they remain optional at tertiary and university levels.

There is no state religion in Kenya (ROK, 2010b:15). According to ROK (2010c), in 2009 48% of the Kenyans belonged to the Protestant Church, while 24% and 11% were Catholic and Muslim, respectively. Those who reported to belong to other Christian churches were 4,559,584, Hindu (53,393) while traditionalists were 635,352. Another 557,450 people belonged to other religions, while 922,128 did not belong to any religion. The subject religious studies forms part of the syllabi in the learning institutions in Kenya with Christian, Islamic and Hindu Religious Education being taught and nationally examined at primary school level. They are offered as optional subjects at the secondary, tertiary as well as university levels (ROK, 2002).

3.3 EDUCATION IN KENYA

3.3.1 Post-independence development (1963-2000)

Kenya became independent in 1963 and adopted the British education system where a learner spends seven years in primary school, four in secondary school, two in high school and a minimum of three years at the university (ROK, 1964). Critics of this system of education argued that much of the content was foreign, examination-oriented and only produced people for white-collar jobs (Sifuna & Otiende, 1994; Bogonko, 1992). The second President of the Republic of Kenya, Daniel Arap Moi, initiated the introduction of the current 8.4.4 system of education in 1985, namely eight years are spent in primary school, four in secondary school and at least four years in university.

Although the 8.4.4 education system initially laid emphasis on enabling school graduates at all levels to either enter self-employment or secure employment in the informal sector (MoE, 2011a), a number of curriculum reviews have seen the technical subjects, essential to the goals of the 8.4.4 system, suffer a major blow, since these subjects, especially at secondary level, remain optional. The number of examinable subjects was drastically trimmed. A growing number of experts in various fields have currently called for a revision of the education system, arguing that the reforms were never piloted and the education system failed
to produce graduates who could join the technical fields and drive the various industries required to enable the country to compete globally.

The major education reports that have had a significant impact on education and training in Kenya include those of the Kenya Education Commission (ROK, 1964), which sought to reform the education system inherited from the colonial government and to make it more responsive to the needs of the country, and the Presidential Working Party on the Second University in Kenya (ROK, 1981), that led to the establishment of Moi University, the expansion of other post-secondary institutions and the introduction of the 8.4.4 education system. Similarly, the report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Education System in Kenya (ROK, 1999), identified ways and means to enable the education system to facilitate national unity, mutual social responsibility and lifelong learning, and to accelerate industrial and technological development as well as the adaptation in response to changing circumstances. Its recommendations provided a road map on university education in Kenya (ROK, 2012a:5). Other important reports are those of the National Education Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies (ROK, 1976) and the Presidential Working Committee on Education and Training for the Next Decade and Beyond (ROK, 1988).

3.3.2 Major education reforms in Kenya (2001-2013)

Key reforms in the field of education since 2001 have been facilitated by political goodwill, a variety of policy documents and Acts of Parliament. The National Alliance of the Rainbow Coalition which saw President Mwai Kibaki come to power in 2002 had the provision of Free Primary Education (FPE) in its manifesto. Thus, FPE was introduced in 2003 and was a commitment to realize Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 2005, Education for All, as well as the Millennium Development Goals (MOE, 2011b:5). However, although FPE has led to increased enrolment, there has been no commensurate increase in infrastructure and personnel in the schools. This has led to overstretched facilities, overcrowding and high teacher to pupil ratios, thereby compromising the quality of education at this level (ROK, 2009b). Furthermore, Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 on education, training and research (ROK, 2005b) led to reforms through a sector-wide approach to planning. However, although the emphasis was on access, equity, quality, relevance, the strengthening of governance and management, the expected returns of investment in education in terms of a productive and skilled human resource have not been fully realized (ROK, 2012a:6).
In 2008 the government prepared the Kenya Vision 2030, a development plan to accelerate the transformation of the country into a fast industrializing middle-income nation by the year 2030 (ROK, 2009b: ii). Under its social pillar, the Vision intends to provide globally competitive and quality education, training and research for development. It is important to note that the promulgation of the new Constitution of Kenya (ROK, 2010b) and the Vision 2030 development plan, which embraces globalization and the internationalization of education and their attendant challenges, especially with the onset of information and communication technologies, are the major instruments informing decision-making in the education sector in Kenya today. Article 10 (2) of the Constitution sets out the national values and principles of governance and include the sharing and devolution of power, the rule of law and the participation of the people, equity, inclusiveness, equality and human rights. The rest are non-discrimination and the protection of marginalized groups, good governance, integrity, transparency and accountability as well as sustainable development (ROK, 2010b:16; 2012a:6).

Indeed, the new Constitution articulates on a variety of issues in education at the national, county, regional and international levels. In particular, Article 53 (1) of the Constitution’s Bill of Rights stipulates that every child, irrespective of such considerations as gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status or disability, has the right to free and compulsory basic education (ROK, 2010b:38-39). Furthermore, the quest to achieve the Education for All, Millennium Development Goals, other international commitments as well as conventions to which Kenya is a signatory, and a number of emerging issues in the 21st century, also explain the country’s resolve to address the persistent challenges facing education which have to do with access, retention, equity, quality and relevance, among others (ROK, 2012a:2).

It is important to note that the new Constitution of Kenya (ROK, 2010b) did away with the former provinces, and divided the territory of Kenya into 47 administrative units called counties, including Kakamega County, the site of this study. One of the objectives of such devolution is to promote social and economic development as well as the provision of proximate and easily accessible services, including education, throughout the country (ROK, 2010b:113). According to the Constitution, education and training in Kenya is governed and managed under a two-tier government, that is, the national and county governments. The functions of the national government with regard to education involve the formulation of policy, ensuring that good quality education standards are maintained, the development of the
curriculum, the management of national examinations, of universities and other tertiary educational institutions and research institutions (ROK, 2010b:185). The other functions have to do with special needs education, the promotion of sports and sports education, as well as primary and secondary education (ROK, 2012a:6; 2010b:185).

On the other hand, the functions of the county governments in relation to education are limited to pre-primary education, village polytechnics, home craft centres and child-care facilities (ROK, 2010b:188). Every county government has an Executive Committee Member in charge of the dockets, assisted by officers stationed at both the sub-county and the ward levels. Although the Constitution lays emphasis on the devolution or decentralization of services, including education, throughout the country, the provision of education in Kenya still largely remains the national government’s mandate. Given this scenario, the education sector is run in a manner that is similar throughout the entire nation. Sotz (2011) observes that since the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution allocates to the national government, the responsibilities to do with education policy, standards, curricula, examinations and the granting of university charters, it leaves no room for devolution to the counties, with the exception of pre-primary schools, village polytechnics, home craft centres and child-care facilities.

More recently, the Basic Education Act (2013) was enacted by parliament to facilitate the provision of basic education in line with the new Constitution (ROK, 2013:220). In addition to the new Constitution, other major legislation that has helped to guide the education sector are, namely the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) Act (2012), the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) Act (2012) and the Children’s Act (2001). A brief description of the functions of each of these pieces of legislation is presented in the following table.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislation</th>
<th>Functions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Children’s Act (2001):</strong> It was enacted to:</td>
<td>- Stipulates education-related provisions regarding children (ROK, 2001:507). These include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- make provision for the parents’ responsibility, fostering, adoption, custody, maintenance, guardianship, care and the protection of children;</td>
<td>(i) Every child is entitled to education and this responsibility is vested in both the parent and the government;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- give effect to the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child /and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and for connected purposes (ROK, 2001:500).</td>
<td>(ii) every child is entitled to free and compulsory basic education;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(iii) every child is to be protected from abuse, inhumane treatment and violence;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(iv) every child has a right to religious education subject to appropriate parent guidance.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Constitution of Kenya (2010):</strong> Is the supreme law of the Republic of Kenya and binds all the persons and the state organs at both national and county levels of government. Accordingly, all the sovereign power belong to the people of Kenya and shall be exercised in accordance with this Constitution (ROK, 2010d:13).</td>
<td>- Spells out education related provisions, especially in the Bill of Rights (Article 53). More particularly:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(i) every child has a right to free and compulsory basic education;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(ii) children are to be protected from abuse, inhumane treatment and violence;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(iii) the youth are entitled to government measures which include affirmative action to ensure access to relevant education and training, employment and protection from harmful cultural practices and exploitation;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- distributes functions between the national and county governments.</td>
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<td><strong>Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) Act (2012):</strong> It was enacted to provide for the:</td>
<td>- setting and maintaining examination standards;</td>
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<tr>
<td>- establishment, powers and functions of the KNEC and the conducting of examinations;</td>
<td>- conducting public academic, technical and other national examinations within Kenya at the basic and tertiary levels;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- connected purposes (ROK, 2012c:1629).</td>
<td>- awarding certificates or diplomas to candidates in the examinations;</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>- confirming the authenticity of certificates or diplomas issued by the KNEC upon request;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- undertaking research on educational assessment;
- advising any public institution on the
development and the use of any system of
assessment when requested;
- promoting the international recognition of
qualifications conferred by the council;
- doing anything incidental or conducive to the
performance of any of the preceding functions

| Teachers Service Commission (TSC) Act (2012): | It was enacted to make further provision for:
| - the TSC established under Article 237 of the Constitution, its composition, functions and powers;
- the qualifications and procedure for the appointment of members;
- connected services (ROK, 2012b:1084). |
| the registration, employment and discipline of teachers;
- manage the payroll of teachers in its employment;
- facilitate career progression and the professional development of teachers;
- do all such other things as may be necessary for the effective discharge of its functions and the exercise of its powers (ROK, 2012b:1093). |

| The Basic Education Act (2013): | It was enacted to:
| - give effect to Article 53 of the Constitution and other enabling provisions;
- promote and regulate free and compulsory basic education;
- provide for the accreditation, registration, governance and management of institutions of basic education;
- provide for the establishment of the National Education Board, the Education Standards and Quality Assurance Standards Commission, the County Education Board and for connected purposes (ROK, 2013:220). |
| Outlines provisions for:
(i) the establishment, powers and functions of the National Education Board, County Education Boards, Boards of Management and Parent Associations;
(ii) the system and structure of education;
(iii) governance and the management of basic education and training;
(iv) standards, quality assurance and relevance;
(v) licensing, registration and accreditation procedures in basic education. |
3.3.3 Current structure of education in Kenya

Education and training in Kenya is currently structured into basic, tertiary and higher or university education.

Figure 3.1 is a diagrammatic representation of the schooling system in Kenya.

![Diagram of the schooling system in Kenya]

Figure 3.1: Diagrammatic representation of the schooling system in Kenya
Basic education covers two years of pre-school education, eight years of primary school education and four years of secondary education. On the other hand, tertiary education includes certificate and diploma levels of training in education, health and forestry, among other fields. The certificate and diploma courses take up to two to three years respectively. Tertiary education also includes technical, industrial, vocational and entrepreneurship training (TIVET). According to ROK (2012a:104), TIVET refers to a range of learning experiences which are relevant to the world of work. Accordingly, such experiences occur in a variety of learning contexts, including education, training institutions and workplaces. Although most courses in TIVET are offered at tertiary level, they are also taught at the basic as well as higher education levels (ROK, 2012a:2). Furthermore, depending on the performance at the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examination, one undertakes either tertiary or higher education. In particular, those candidates who score a mean grade of C plus (C+) in the KCSE examination are directly admitted to pursue university education. Otherwise, one may access higher education after successfully pursuing tertiary education. Depending on the course being studied, university education takes a minimum of four years for one to earn a degree.

As noted earlier, the management and governance of education in Kenya is carried out by both the national and the county governments. In addition, there are numerous Semi-Autonomous Government Agencies (SAGAs) with specific mandates which have been reviewed in the light of the Constitution (ROK, 2012a:10). These include the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, which develops basic education curricula and relevant materials; the Kenya National Examinations Council, charged with setting and administering national examinations as well as the certification of successful candidates; the Jomo Kenyatta Foundation and the Kenya Literature Bureau, which publish the required books and related resources. Other SAGAs are the Kenya Education Management Institute, which is the education sector capacity-building and development agency; the Kenya Institute of Special Education; the Centre for Mathematics, Science and Technology in Africa; the School Equipment Production Unit and the Board of Adult Education.

3.3.4 Achievements and challenges in education

In the over fifty years since Kenya gained its independence, a number of efforts have been made to tailor the provision of education to the social, economic and political needs of its
citizens as well as attempting to embrace the emerging ideals of the regional and international communities. This has been demonstrated by the growth of the number of institutions, increased enrolment, increased transition rates, and increased teacher numbers, amongst others (ROK, 2012a:5). For example, while there were 6058 primary schools in 1963, the number rose to 27489 in 2010. In the same period, the number of secondary schools grew from 151 to 7308. Where there were 892 000 pupils enrolled in primary schools in 1963, the figure rose to 9.4 million in 2010. Within this period, the number of learners in secondary schools went up from 30 000 to 1.7 million. Enrolment and growth in universities have also been increasing since the establishment of the first Kenyan university, the University of Nairobi in 1970. There are now 22 public and over 25 recognized private universities in the country (ROK, 2012a:12). These milestones are largely attributed to the implementation, whether fully or partially, of the recommendations of various commissions, committees and taskforces highlighted earlier on, which constitute the evolution of policy on education and training in independent Kenya.

Regarding the teachers, Article 237 (1) of the Constitution provides for the establishment of the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) whose functions are to register and employ trained teachers, and to recruit, promote, transfer, discipline and terminate the employment of teachers (ROK, 2012b:1093; 2010). Indeed, the TSC Act was enacted by parliament in 2012 to make further provision for the TSC established under Article 237 of the Constitution (ROK, 2012b:1084). Amongst others, the TSC is mandated to review both the demand for and supply of teachers and the standards for the education and training of persons entering the teaching service as well as to advise the national government on matters relating to the teaching profession (ROK, 2010b). Teachers are recruited when vacancies in schools arise, hence it is demand-driven.

However, the teachers’ levels of training differ. There are Form Four graduates who hold certificate and teachers diploma qualifications after two to three years of pre-service training, and also degree-holders, with the majority of the latter teaching at secondary and post-secondary institutions (MOE, 2004). Furthermore, there is the inequitable distribution of teachers with very low pupil-to-teacher ratios in the rural and marginalized regions (ROK, 2012a:20). There is also the challenge of equipping the teachers with the appropriate knowledge, attitudes and skills, as opposed to merely giving instructions (MOE, 2004). According to Kafu (2011), the teachers do not seem to have a good understanding of their
role in the profession other than the instructional responsibilities, thereby demeaning their stature, integrity and image both in the profession and the society at large.

Other issues to be addressed in the teaching profession include their poor conditions of service compared to those of other professionals; inadequate, obsolete and dilapidated facilities and resources for training the teachers; the poor management of teacher education and globalisation which has prompted the increased cost of financing teacher education (Kafu 2011, 2006). However, an effort has been made to recruit teachers, based on their competence in the subjects they intend to teach as opposed to the mean grade scored. The professional sharing of ideas and growth among the teachers are now highly encouraged as well as the mounting in-service programmes to prepare the teachers to cope with the curriculum changes and the emerging challenges in teaching, including the use ICTs (Kafu 2011, 2006; MOE 2004).

In spite of the increase in the enrolment at the pre-primary, primary and secondary school levels, the transition rates remain low. Notably, disparities, including gender and regional ones in access to education remain a challenge. For example, during the 2009/2010 academic year, female learners constituted only 36.3%, that is, 45193 of the 124563 learners registered in the public universities. In the same academic year, 41.1% of the 14462 learners in the private universities were females (ROK, 2012a:12). On the other hand, a boy stands a 26% chance of going to school if he was born in Marsabit compared to the Migori, Nyeri and Nairobi counties.

According to ROK (2010c,e), the country is adding about one million people through natural increase to its population every year, thereby presenting a big challenge for sustainable socio-economic development. This situation is worsened by the economy’s inability to create jobs at a rate to match the rising labour force, a bulk of which constitutes the youth who have acquired a wide range of knowledge and skills (ROK, 2009b). A report on the poverty levels prepared by the Ministry of Planning, National Development and Vision 2030 among counties in 2011 revealed that 46% of Kenya’s population live in poverty. Accordingly, more than half of the people in 23 of the 47 counties in the country live below the poverty line, which is taken to be $2 or 160 Kenyan Shillings per day. It is most unlikely that children from such socio-economic backgrounds will have access to, leave alone quality, education if deliberate efforts are not made by all the relevant stakeholders to assist them.
Another major criticism of the Kenyan education system is that it promotes rote learning and memorization and is examination-oriented. Thus it tends to lay more emphasis on the academic component of the curriculum compared to being practical-oriented as well. Walaba (2004:125) observes that even the examinations given to the candidates are cognitive, confessional and content-oriented, hence he recommends that the future ones should be more analytical, attitudinal and life-centered. According to Uwezo (2011) and ROK (2010a:iv-v), Kenya also faces the challenge of providing an environment conducive to learning that will ensure child-centered and rights-based teaching methods and a qualitative education capable of producing creative, healthy, confident and peace-loving citizens. In recognition of this fact, the Ministry of Education launched the Child Friendly Schools (CFSs) initiative in all the primary schools. In a CFS, a child-centered approach is supposed to be used so as to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classrooms through the motivation and empowering of the learners, the teachers, the parents and the community as well. This is discussed in detail in an ensuing section, which is 3.5.

3.4 FAMILY-SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN KENYA

3.4.1 Policy and legislative frameworks

According to Republic of Kenya (ROK, 2012a:99), the government faces challenges in establishing an environment conducive to facilitating partnerships between the government, households, communities, the industry and commerce, the private sector providers of educational services, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and educational foundations. Nevertheless, family-school-community partnerships are legalized in Kenya, sometimes implicitly, as is evident in a number of relevant documents. Every district in Kenya has a District Quality Assurance and Standards Officer (DQASO) who is mandated by the Ministry of Education to, amongst others, oversee the implementation of the curriculum at the basic education level, provide advice on related policies, including family-school-community collaboration, as well as carry out relevant assessment in the schools with a view to maintaining quality and standards. Additional officers at the lower or zonal level in each district help the DQASOs to accomplish their mandate. As previously indicated, the Basic Education Act (ROK, 2013) provides for the establishment of the National Education Board (NEB), County Education Boards (CEBs), Boards of Management (BOMs) and Parent
Associations (PAs) to manage education matters, including those to do with family-school-community partnerships at the national, county and school levels.

3.4.1.1 The National Education Board

At the national level, Section 5(1) and (2) of the Basic Education Act provides for the establishment of the NEB to advise the Cabinet Secretary (CS) or Minister in charge of Education, the Department of Education and related departments on policy matters in respect of collaboration with the Quality Assurance and Standards Commission, the Teachers Service Commission and with other stakeholders to promote the standards in basic education and training (ROK, 2013:227). The composition of the membership of the NEB underscores the need to promote partnerships among various stakeholders in the field of education. As stipulated in the Fourth Schedule of the Basic Education Act (ROK, 2013:293-295), members of the NEB should comprise an educationist of at least five years standing to be the chairperson, two representatives of the Teachers Union, two representatives of the Parents Teachers Association, one representative each of the Kenya Private Sector Alliance, persons with disability, the Primary School Head Teachers’ Association as well as the Secondary School Principals’ Association. Where applicable, there should be one person each representing jointly, the National Council of Churches of Kenya and the Evangelical Fellowship of Kenya, the Kenya Episcopal Conference and the Muslims Education Council.

Another legal document that provides for family-school-community partnerships is the Children Act (ROK, 2001). Apart from stipulating that every child has a right to education, it goes further to vest this responsibility in both the government and the parents. A rights-based approach to education requires that children and other learners from diverse backgrounds and abilities should claim their rights from the duty-bearers such as the parents, the teachers and the communities (MOE, 2011b:6). Based on this approach, education service delivery requires a partnership between the parents, teachers, communities, political leaders, faith-based organizations, civil society, trade unions, private investors and development agencies. In addition, a rights-based approach implies accountability of all those with duties or obligations in fulfilling, respecting and protecting the right to education (MOE, 2011b:14-15). It is important to note that the success of the strategic plan of the Ministry of Education is hinged on, amongst others, strong family-school-community partnerships (ROK, 2006a:31) and the CFS initiative (ROK, 2010a).
3.4.1.2 County Education Boards

To manage the schools at the county level, the Basic Education Act stipulates that every county establishes a County Education Board (CEB) consisting of a chairperson and 12 other members appointed by the CS (ROK, 2013:234-235). Section 20 (2) of the Act states that in appointing the CEB, the CS should observe the principle of gender equity, regional, ethnic and religious balance, transparency, openness and competitiveness, as well as giving due regard to the principle of equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. All the members of the CEB should have a minimum qualification of a secondary education certificate (ROK, 2013:236).

The composition of the CEB includes the chairperson who should be an educationist of at least five years standing and based in the county, the County Director of Education (who is in charge of primary and secondary school education) or his/her representative as the secretary to the CEB, a representative of the County Government Executive Committee in charge of education (pre-school level, youth polytechnics and child-care centres only), a representative of the Teachers Service Commission, a representative of the association of private schools, two representatives of a trade union representing the interests of the teachers, and two representatives of the Parents Associations (ROK, 2013:235). Other members of the CEB are two members nominated by the Primary School Head Teachers’ Association and the Secondary School Principals’ Association; a representative of the Children’s Rights organization, a representative of persons with disabilities, and where applicable, one person each representing the Christian churches of Kenya as well as the Muslim Education Council.

Section 18 (1) of the Act outlines the functions of the CEB as collaborating with the BOM, the principal, the head teacher and other appropriate authorities in the management of the schools (ROK, 2013:233-234), to coordinate with all the relevant agencies to ensure that all the barriers to the right to quality education are removed, and with the National Government to facilitate the realization of the right to education within the country. Section 24 of the Act stipulates that the CEB may, from time to time, co-opt into its membership persons not exceeding three, as it is satisfied who possess the skills and experience to help in the discharge of its functions (ROK, 2013:236). As stated in Section 18 (1) of the Act, the CEB may, in consultation with the NEB and the relevant stakeholders, appoint a sub-county education office with clear functions and powers (ROK, 2013:234). In consultation with the
County Government, the County Director of Education should advise the CEB on the selection and appointment of the BOMs, the school management committees and the coordination of partners and education providers in the county, including links with the government departments on all education matters (ROK, 2013:250-251).

3.4.1.3 Boards of Management

The Basic Education Act (ROK, 2013:252) provides for the establishment of Boards of Management (BOMs) to manage the schools, including the parents and community members. Section 55(1) of the Act indicates that for every public school there should be a BOM who has to attend to matters concerning the management of the school. Section 59 of the Act (ROK, 2013:255-256) stipulates the functions of BOMs which include encouraging the learners, the teachers, the non-teaching staff, the parents, the community and other stakeholders to render voluntary services to the institution, to foster a culture of dialogue and participatory democratic governance at the institutions, and to allow the reasonable use of the facilities of the institution for community, social and other lawful purposes.

Other functions of BOM include, namely to promote the spirit of cohesion, integration, peace, tolerance, inclusion, the elimination of hate-speech and tribalism, to facilitate and ensure the provision of guidance and counseling to all the learners as well as to promote the best interests of the institution, and to ensure its development. According to MOE (2011b:17-18), the key roles of the BOM include working closely with other partners in advocacy and in creating an awareness of the delivery of primary and secondary school education. In particular, they should mobilize the community members to help to provide the essential facilities like toilets in the schools, to purchase instructional materials and to involve the parents and communities in making decisions on school expenditure. Section 61(1) of the Basic Education Act allows the BOM to establish committees as it may consider appropriate to perform such functions and to discharge the responsibilities as it may deem necessary (ROK, 2013:256).

As contained in Section 56(1) of the Act, the BOM should be composed of up to 17 members representing the parents, the teaching staff, sponsors, special interest groups, persons with special needs, as well as the learners’ council (ROK, 2013:253). Accordingly, there should be six persons to represent the parents of the pupils in the school or local
community in the case of county secondary schools; one person nominated by the CEB; one representative of the teaching staff in the school elected by the teachers; one person to represent special interest groups in the community and another person to represent persons with special needs. Accordingly, those representing the special interest groups should include local professionals to provide critical advice or services to the school. Gender and regional representation should also be taken into account while constituting the bodies to manage the schools at whatever level.

In addition, the BOM should have a representative of the learners’ council as an *ex officio* member as well as three representatives of the sponsors of the school. The Basic Education Act (ROK, 2013:224) defines a *sponsor* as a person or institution who makes a significant contribution and impact on the academic, financial, infrastructural and spiritual development of an institution of basic education. According to Section 27 of the Act (ROK, 2013:237-238), the role of the sponsor is to participate and to make recommendations on the review of the syllabus, the curriculum, books and other teaching aids; to provide supervisory and advisory services in matters regarding spiritual development in the schools including the appointment of chaplains at their own expense. Furthermore, Section 56(2) of the Basic Education Act gives the BOM powers to co-opt into its membership such persons it deems fit to assist in the discharge of its functions. Specifically, Section 56 (3) of the Act stipulates that the number of the members to be co-opted should not exceed three at any particular time and that such members do not have the right to vote at the meetings of the BOM (ROK, 2013:253).

### 3.4.1.4 Parent Associations

Section 55(2) and the Third Schedule of the Basic Education Act (ROK, 2013:252, 283) provide for the establishment of Parent Associations (PAs) in the schools, consisting of every parent with a pupil in the school, as well as a representative of the teachers in the school. There should also be an Executive Committee consisting of representatives of each class, and two teachers. Indeed, as recognition of the vital roles that the parents play in the school’s development and welfare issues, the Basic Education Act requires that three members of the PAs be co-opted to the BOM. The need to incorporate the parents into the management of the schools in Kenya first came into being as a result of a presidential decree in 1981 (ROK, 1988) when a cost-sharing policy was introduced in the schools. The policy emphasizes the
involvement of the parents in the financing of educational institutions. According to the Basic Education Act, the chairperson and two members of the PA should be co-opted to the BOM (ROK, 2013:283).

In the Third Schedule, Section 2 (6) of the Act (ROK, 2013:284), the functions of the PA are outlined, and include the maintaining of a good working relationship between the teachers and the parents, discussing, exploring and advising the parents on ways to raise funds for the physical development and maintenance of the school, and exploring ways to motivate the teachers and pupils to improve their performance in academic and co-curricular activities. Additionally, the PAs should promote quality care, and the nutritional and health status of the pupils, assist the school management in the monitoring, guiding, counseling and disciplining of pupils, discuss and recommend charges to be levied on the pupils or the parents, as well as measures for the welfare of the staff and the pupils. At the national and county levels, Section 2(6) of the Third Schedule of the Act provides for the establishment of National Parent Associations, County Parent Associations and Sub-County Parent Associations elected by the PAs from schools through a delegate system (ROK, 2013:284).

3.4.2 The role of the parents and the communities

According to MOE (2011b:27), the general roles of the parents include helping the school management committees to support the teachers to run the schools, paying the teachers where it is applicable, and participating in community initiatives to promote education, especially for children. On the other hand, the communities are expected to create a learning-friendly environment for the children through abolishing child labour, building a sense of ownership of the school in the society, participating in making decisions and implementing policies on physical facilities, and the procurement of teaching as well as learning materials. Other roles of the community include volunteering service where required in the schools, overseeing the overall management of the financial and other school resources, and auditing the utilization of the resources, sensitizing and motivating the parents to take girls, orphans, vulnerable and children with special needs to school (ROK, 2009d:19-20; ROK, 2008a:8; ROK, 2006a:31-32).
3.5 THE CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL INITIATIVE

The CFS initiative was first introduced in Kenya in 2002 on a pilot basis by the Ministry of Education, with the support of the United Nations Children’s Education Fund (UNICEF) in some primary schools in Nairobi, Rift Valley, the coastal and the northern regions of the country (ROK, 2010a:vi). In 2010 the Ministry of Education rolled out the initiative on a national scale in an effort to improve quality, relevance, efficiency and equity, and to expand access to education, according to the expectations of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Education For All (EFA) and the Kenya Vision 2030 development plan (Serem, 2012; ROK, 2010a:v).

According to ROK (2010a: vii), the CFS initiative is strongly supported by the Ministry of Education in partnership with the UNICEF-Kenya Office. The CFS Manual provides a framework for policymakers, educational practitioners and other stakeholders at all levels on how to promote CFSs in the country (ROK, 2010a:v-vi). It is worth noting that the Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs) in the Ministry of Education are charged with the responsibility of overseeing the implementation of the school curriculum and have been inducted on the CFS initiative, hence are required to among others, visit the schools and offer relevant advice.

At the school level the CFS team comprises of the technical team, the teachers, administrators, school support staff members, educators and healthcare providers, persons with special needs, older learners, parents and local organizations (ROK,2010a:12). The technical team consists of the head teacher, the deputy head teacher, a senior teacher, and the BOM and PTA chairpersons. The functions of the CFS team involve identifying the needs of the school, including exploring the knowledge of the learners, the staff, the parents, caregivers, and members of the community, and analyzing this information. Other functions of the CFS team at the school level include, namely creating an appropriate school vision, developing a schedule of activities and implementing them, promoting active parent involvement and strengthening parent-teacher communication (ROK, 2010a:14).

Furthermore, a CFS team at school level performs the functions of evaluating their plans and celebrating their success. Accordingly, there is a need to monitor progress and to modify the plans as deemed appropriate, to prepare a schedule of follow-up meetings and to decide on
how and who to carry out the monitoring. Celebrating success involves, for example, inviting the community to celebrate the changes in the school by holding a parents’ day, a festival or a school open-day (ROK, 2010a:14). On their part, the teachers can demonstrate their assessment and teaching skills while the children of all abilities can demonstrate what they have learnt during such occasions.

According to UNICEF (2011), although the mainstreaming of the CFS initiative has been achieved, wide-scale capacity building remains to be developed in order to ensure the accountability of the teachers and other stakeholders. Indeed, not all the stakeholders, including the teachers, parents and the community at large were inducted on the CFS initiative, yet they are key to its implementation. Similarly, Serem (2012) observes that there have been a number of challenges to face while taking on the spirit of a CFS in Kenya. For example, some schools have not been able to create strong linkages with the community, especially in areas where poverty is high, while others are struggling to enhance equity and equality, particularly in a bid to attain gender parity and to establish disability-friendly schools. As stipulated in ROK (2010a:v), the teachers, education managers and the rest of the stakeholders are required to commit themselves towards addressing the challenges that hinder the realization of quality education for every school going child.

According to ROK (2010a:2), a CFS provides an atmosphere conducive to learning, the staff are friendly, while the health as well as the safety needs of the children are adequately addressed. Creating a CFS requires teamwork. Accordingly, a CFS is community-based and welcomes, nurtures and educates all the children, regardless of their gender, religious or ethnic affiliation, physical or mental abilities or disabilities, as well as other differences. A CFS has five themes which are meant to sustain important changes in the classrooms and schools so that they may continue to be inclusive and learning-friendly. These themes are, namely inclusive learning classrooms; school safety and protection; equity and equality in the schools; health and nutrition in the schools, and school-linkages and partnerships. Theme 5 is of particular importance to this study as it deals with parent-community-school partnerships.

3.5.1 Theme 1: Inclusive-learning classrooms

According to ROK (2010a:5), inclusive learning refers to the enrolment and teaching of all the children in formal or non-formal learning environments without regard to gender,
physical, intellectual, social, emotional, ethnic, cultural, religious or other considerations. *Inclusion*, according to ROK (2009d:5), means a philosophy focusing on the process of adjusting the home, school and society so that all the individuals, regardless of their differences, may have the opportunity to interact, play, learn, work and experience the feeling of belonging and to develop in accordance with their potentials and difficulties. Research indicates that hereditary factors, experience, the environment and their personalities influence the way the children learn and the need to use a variety of teaching methods and activities to meet their learning needs (Florez, 2011:5; ROK, 2010a:32). Accordingly, children learn better when they actively participate in the activities that are linked to their practical experiences in everyday life. Thus, while planning their lessons, the teachers need to make use of visual aids such as posters, drawings and art forms to support the tasks (the rest?) involving discussion (ROK, 2010a:35).

In addition, the teachers need to possess adequate knowledge on managing the physical, emotional and interaction barriers to learning. Successful teachers always maintain an interesting learning environment for all the children, hence their classrooms become exciting and stimulating places in which to learn (ROK, 2010a:36). Accordingly, all children should be valued for who they are to make them feel safe physically and emotionally, and unique, and to be able to express their views freely. Similarly, an inclusive classroom is one where the children’s self-esteem is promoted through praise. Cooperative and friendly groupings are encouraged, as well as fun in learning new things. In order to help the children learn the best of their abilities, the teachers have to expand their roles to those of facilitators, managers, observers and learners (ROK, 2010a:42).

The physical place of learning need to be one where the children may move freely, with adequate light, heat and ventilation, learning corners and display areas (ROK, 2010a:63-64). Where animals and vandals can easily access and destroy the classroom materials, there is the need to work with the parents and the community members to protect it. And, since many schools lack library facilities, a class library can be created by using a decorated cardboard box which is then filled with locally made books (ROK, 2010a:67). Apart from taking pride in producing their own books, the learners also learn how books are made, classified and cared for. Accordingly, books made by the children can be effective teaching aids. The explanations or illustrations included in them will help the children to understand important
concepts. Book-making is especially useful to children who have difficulties with their eyesight.

The teachers have to ensure that there are portfolios for the children to enable them to participate in assessing their own work (ROK, 2010a:71). Other activities such as group work and team leadership and responsibilities in the classroom need to be recorded. The teachers are also required to be well-versed with the skills needed in assessing what children know and what they can do. Continuous assessment, for instance, helps a teacher to identify the learners who are falling behind in class as well as to give timely advice to the parents and the caregivers about the strengths and weaknesses of the children (ROK, 2010a:69). The parents can then participate in an integrated programme that links the classroom activities with those at home. This study made an effort to find out whether the parents got informed of the progress their children are making at school.

Essentially, assessment involves describing the learning outcomes, that is, how well a child has developed a set of skills, knowledge and behaviours over the course of a learning activity (ROK, 2010a:69). Accordingly, when planning a new learning activity, the teacher needs to begin by identifying the learning outcomes. To make the assessment authentic, the children are to be involved in evaluating their own achievements. After the assessment, the teachers have to give feedback to both the parents and the children. This needs to be done in order for a safe, secure and trusting relationship to exist between the teacher, the child and the parent. Positive feedback entails acknowledging strengths, identifying weaknesses and showing how improvement can be made by means of constructive comments. (Florez, 2011; ROK 2010a:73).

The teachers are required to be keen on creating gender-sensitive learning experiences as the social roles assigned to children often restrict how girls and boys behave and what they are allowed to learn (ROK, 2010a:139, 2007a:3). Indeed, it is imperative to note that the CFSs require that a problem-solving approach in managing behaviour involves a team consisting of the child, the parents or caregivers, the teachers and other professionals who ask questions about the classroom’s physical environment, the social interactions, the instructional environment and the non-school conditions.
3.5.2 Theme 2: School-safety and protection

*School-safety* refers to the measures undertaken by the learners, the staff, the parents and other stakeholders to either minimize or eliminate risky conditions or threats that may cause accidents, bodily injury or emotional and psychological distress (ROK, 2010a:82; ROK, 2008b:5). Generally, school-safety helps in maintaining a secure and caring environment that provides, facilitates and enhances quality teaching and learning in the schools. The specific reasons for safe and protective policies include increasing school attendance, the retention rate, and reducing truancy, avoiding wasting time and other resources, as well as enhancing the parents’ and communities’ confidence in having more children in the school (ROK, 2010a:83).

Hazardous or risky materials or substances can cause disaster, and affect human safety. At school accidents occur due to carelessness, inattentiveness, ignorance, irresponsibility or negligence on the part of the learners, the staff or other stakeholders (ROK, 2010a:95). Preventable factors that may contribute to hazardous situations are slippery surfaces, cluttered floors, weak railings, poor ventilation, sharp objects, wet greasy spots, insufficient lighting and poorly placed furniture like desks, benches and tables (ROK, 2008b:5-6). Accordingly, a hostile school environment is by itself a hazard as it neglects the needs of its learners, especially the girls, children with disabilities, orphans and others with special needs.

Children are also prone to discrimination and violence (ROK, 2010a:93; ROK, 2007a:4, 36). This includes sexual harassment, and also physical violence which can lead to death. The causes of violence include the children’s knowledge, attitudes, thoughts about violence and skill-deficits like poorly developed communication skills (ROK, 2010a:88). Others include drug and alcohol use, having witnessed or been victimized by interpersonal violence, and having access to firearms and other weapons. Accordingly, family-level factors that could cause violence include the lack of parental affection and support, exposure to violence in the home, physical punishment and child abuse, and having parents or siblings involved in criminal behaviour. The community and other environmental factors that could breed violence are socio-economic inequality, urbanization and overcrowding, high levels of unemployment, media influences, and social norms that support violent behaviour (ROK, 2010a:88-89).
According to ROK (2008a:91), the acquisition of life-skills can enable the learners to prevent violence through identifying and implementing peaceful solutions for resolving conflicts, as well as resisting pressure from their peers and other adults to make use of violent behaviour (ROK, 2008a:91). Thus, the children should be enabled to acquire the key life-skills, including critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, communication and interpersonal skills, coping with stress, and emotions. Life-skills may also help in reducing prejudice and increasing tolerance for diversity (ROK, 2008a:7). In addition, it is necessary to carry out school-mapping so as to determine where and when violence occurs within the schools, what type of violence is involved and who the most common victims and offenders are (ROK, 2010a:89). The mapping-process encourages the learners, teachers and administrators to talk about violence in the schools, to assist in evaluating violence intervention programmes created to support policies against violence in the school, and to increase the involvement of the school in violence-intervention programmes.

As stipulated in ROK (2010a:92), the teachers need to be alert to detect child-abuse among the children. Accordingly, emotionally- and physically-abused children are often fearful of interpersonal relationships or overly compliant, withdrawn, aggressive or abnormally active, constantly irritable or listless, detached, affectionless or overly affectionate. Bruises, delinquency, nightmares, bed-wetting, vaginal or anal soreness, bleeding or itching are other characteristics to take note of. It is imperative that the schools encourage supportive and safe relationships, develop personal and social skills, ensure regular and meaningful school attendance by improving the learners’ academic skills, encouraging positive values, teaching an understanding of how to access information, and preventing participation with addictive substances, or other risky behaviour (ROK, 2010a:90).

More importantly, developing school-safety policies should involve many parties, including the teachers, children, parents, community leaders and social service-providers. In particular, the schools will benefit from the feelings of the community about local safety and protective issues, in addition to how the school can help address them (ROK, 2010a:89; UNICEF, 2003). As stipulated in ROK (2008b:12), the safety of the school, to a large extent, depends on measures taken to organize and manage safety. Accordingly, members of the school management bodies, the teachers, learners, parents and other stakeholders have important roles to play in facilitating safety in the schools. To gain such support, advocacy has to be done to enable those involved, including decision-makers, to realize that the policies are
necessary. In this way, the schools will benefit from the convictions of the community about local safety and protective issues, in addition to how the school can help to address them (ROK, 2010a:89; UNICEF, 2003).

3.5.3 Theme 3: Equity and equality in the schools

*Equity* in the schools means providing equal opportunities for all the learners, while *equality* involves attending to the learners with all fairness, that is, without the slightest form of discrimination (ROK, 2010a:102; ROK, 2007a:iv). A school that practices both equity and equality effectively demonstrates and promotes the rights and wellbeing of all the learners irrespective of their gender, geographical background, socio-economic situation, religion, ability or disability. Such a school makes that both the teachers and the learners have a clear understanding of their roles, responsibilities, rights as well as the rights of others. As stipulated in ROK (2010a:101), the teachers need to be able to communicate with the learners, the family and community members on the interventions needed to achieve equal opportunities for all.

Promoting equity and equality also entails making deliberate attempts to seek out girls and boys who are not at school and ensuring that they come to school and enjoy learning (ROK, 2010a:102, 2007a:7). While inclusive learning generally means including learners with special needs, such as multiple disabilities, physical, hearing and visual impairments, gifted and slow learners, amongst others, in the classroom (ROK, 2009d: 5), in a CFS it means having all learners of school-going age who are left out or excluded from the school for whatever reason, joining the school and enjoying learning (ROK, 2010a:102). It is important to note that identifying learners who are not at school should involve the school authorities, the families, health-services providers, the children themselves, community leaders, and others.

Some useful suggestions to be used to identity children not at school are carrying out school-community-mapping showing each household in the community, the number of children, their ages and whether they are attending school (ROK, 2010a:109). Accordingly, it is crucial that the children participate in such mapping as the maps remain valuable tools in contributing towards enhancing inclusive learning. Equally important is to create child profiles as other tools that may promote inclusive learning, equity and equality in the
classroom. The child’s profile can also be used to identify those children who are not learning adequately. On their part, the community members can help to collect information on all the children in the community, in order to identify those who should be at school and to get them there.

Effective inclusive learning requires practical changes that will enable the learners to discover their potential, to succeed in classroom activities both at school and within the community (ROK, 2010a:102). Such changes will eventually benefit the learners, the teachers, the parents, the school administrators, and the entire community. Characteristics of a child-friendly classroom include classroom interactions, composition of the learners, the seating arrangements, relationships, evaluation, the language used, and the learning materials and resources (ROK, 2010a:104). On the other hand, barriers to an inclusive learner-friendly school include poverty, discrimination, poor classroom interactions, insecurity, special needs, pregnancy, a dysfunctional family environment, and HIV and AIDS. Others are community factors and the school environment which includes the location of the school, its facilities, costs incurred, the grade repetition of the learners, multi-shift timetables and calendars, class sizes, and teaching workload (ROK, 2010a:107).

According to ROK (2010a:139), the teachers and the schools may unintentionally reinforce gender stereotypes through rewarding boys for the correct answers, while withholding praise from girls, criticizing the girls for wrong answers, calling on boys to answer questions more often than girls, giving more responsibilities to the boys than the girls, assigning housekeeping tasks to the girls and tool-using tasks to the boys, and making use of textbooks and other learning materials that are not gender-sensitive. The teachers are, therefore, required to create opportunities for all the children, both boys and girls, to learn to the best of their abilities (ROK, 2007a:36). Pairing learners with different abilities is important as this helps in, say, assisting a child with a special need to get to the library or the toilet.

Once all the children are back at school, the task becomes that of dealing with diverse backgrounds and abilities. The teachers, parents and the community need to address the challenges to diversity which include bullying, prejudice and discrimination (ROK, 2010a:130). To prevent or reduce bullying, for example, the teachers can take a range of actions such as encouraging cooperative learning within the classroom, conducting exercises to help the learners to relax, reduce tension, as well as using games to get to know and respect
each other. Other actions at the disposal of the teacher are increasing responsibilities in the class by establishing committees, working more closely with the parents and the local community, developing child-to-child strategies to handle conflict in non-violent ways, improving the learners’ assertiveness by empowering them to make class rules and to take responsibility, and allowing the children to identify the disciplinary measures to be taken in respect of those bullying others (ROK, 2010a:133).

3.5.4 Theme 4: Health and nutrition in the schools

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease (ROK, 2010a:147). Nutrition, again, is the science that explains the role of food and nutrients in the body during growth, development and the maintenance of life (ROK, 2009c:27). Thus, the physical, mental and emotional development of the child is largely dependent on good nutrition. While good nutrition is essential to realize the learning potential of children and to maximize returns on educational investments, malnutrition affects a child’s attentiveness, control, aptitude and overall performance (ROK, 2009c:27). Accordingly, schools provide organized structures that are conducive for the provision of health and nutrition services, as well as key avenues for disease prevention and control. However, the schools can accelerate the spreading of ill-health.

Although various stakeholders have implemented both small and large-scale school health programmes, the implementation of such initiatives has been without the proper coordination needed to achieve the intended goals (ROK, 2009c:18). Accordingly, clear-cut policy guidelines are necessary so as promote partnership, cooperation and commitment among the government ministries and stakeholders in order to promote health and nutrition as well as education. Indeed, many schools have such health and nutrition programmes because they realize that a child’s ability to attain her or his full potential depends on good health and nutrition, as well as a safe learning environment. According to ROK (2010a:148), it is essential for the government and other education providers to supplement the learners’ meals through various strategies. This is important, as most of the parents can hardly always provide adequate and nutritional meals for their children.

According to ROK (2013:283), one of the functions of parents’ associations is to promote quality care, and the nutritional and health status of the pupils. On their part, the teachers
need to be sensitive to the nutritional and health status of all the children in the school in order to give appropriate advice to the parents and guardians. Some of the major policy issues that schools face while trying to ensure the health and nutrition of the learners have to do with sanitation and hygiene, HIV and Aids, and the delivery of simple health and nutrition packages (ROK, 2009c:26, 29). Thus, involving many partners, including the teachers, the parents, the community, the learners and the social-services providers is the best way to develop school health policies (ROK, 2010a:148).

3.5.5 Theme 5: School-Community linkages and partnerships

According to ROK (2010a:185), the involvement of families, communities and other stakeholders is important for seeing to it that all the children attend school, and in helping them to learn successfully. Notably, the communities offer a wealth of information and practical knowledge that can be used to improve teaching and promote the children’s learning. For instance, traditional stories or songs can be incorporated into language lessons. Similarly, local techniques for growing indigenous plants or raising animals can be applied or used in science lessons. Thus, communities are important in mobilizing the resources needed to improve learning for all children, the quality of schools and for achieving sustained and lasting change. Florez (2011:54) observes that an idea has evolved that the school belongs to the community. Accordingly, this fosters a sense of belonging, reflected in decisions being made jointly by the teachers, the learners, the community and other local entities. Such a democratic climate is believed to enable particularly the rural communities to cultivate new hope about their children’s education. Furthermore, involving communities in school activities improves the relationships among parents, teachers and pupils. For instance, through PTAs and the BOMs the parents often purchase learning resources like books and related materials as a way of supporting and contributing to their children’s academic achievement. Communities are equally useful while formulating and enforcing relevant school policies (ROK, 2009a:5; 2009c:18, 29).

According to the ROK (2010a:184,199), the teachers are required to take the responsibility to work with the community leaders to find out which children are not at school and why, and devise ways to bring them into school, communicate regularly with the home about the children’s progress in learning and achievement, invite the parents and community members to get involved in the classroom, prepare the pupils to interact with the community as
required by the curriculum through field trips and other events, and explain the value and purpose of CFSs to the parents.

But for the parents and the communities to be actively involved, they need to be regularly contacted, informed and encouraged to participate (ROK, 2010a:188-190). Communicating with families may include holding meetings with family and community groups, scheduling informal discussions with the parents to assess their children’s learning, sending learners’ work home to show the parents how well they are learning, and conducting community field visits. It can also involve asking the children to interview their parents or grandparents, and to write stories or compositions concerning the community (ROK, 2010a:193-195).

This study sought to determine the extent to which the family-school-community partnerships in Kakamega County are effective.

3.5.6 Implications of the CFS initiative to family-school-community partnerships

As stipulated in the ROK (2010a:2), a CFS needs to create a positive climate for other stakeholders to be involved in a wide range of school activities. For instance, in an inclusive-learning classroom, it is required that a problem-solving team in managing behaviour be formed consisting of the child, his or her parent or caregivers and external professionals who may ask questions about the classroom’s physical environment, social interactions, instructional environment and non-school conditions (ROK 2010a:55; ROK, 2009d). Furthermore, the schools are required to work closely with the relevant educators, parents and the community in such areas as identification and referral of learners with special needs or disabilities, life-skills and protection strategies against sexual harassment (ROK, 2009d:18; ROK, 2008a:2).

In a CFS, it is argued, that building strong bonds between the school, the parents and the community ensures the child’s safety inside and outside of the school (ROK, 2010a:82; ROK, 2008b:43). Accordingly, it is critical to appreciate that school-safety is not provided by fences and walls but by the community as a whole. Indeed, one of the objectives of the Safety Standards Manual for Schools in Kenya is to empower the school to liaise with the parents, the members of the community and other partners in order to increase awareness about issues
relating to school safety. The parents and the communities are also to ensure that the school environment is free from crime, drugs and alcohol (MOE, 2011b:21). Emerging from these policy documents is that family-school-community partnerships are crucial in enhancing the children’s learning, whether within or outside the school.

Similarly, a school that promotes equity and equality is expected to work closely with the parents and the community to ensure that both the boys and the girls have an equal share of, say, household chores (ROK, 2010a:139; ROK, 2007a:6). The parents need to particularly allow time for the children to study and play after school, without discriminating between the boys and the girls (MOE, 2011b:21; ROK, 2007a:8). On the other hand, the National School Health Policy (ROK, 2009c:16) expects the school, the parents and the community to ensure that the pupils have sufficient water and adequate sanitary facilities. Essentially, the school health programmes need to specifically seek to collaborate with the parents, the communities and the health agencies on issues relating to the learners’ health, as well as counselling and giving guidance to the learners and their parents on matters relating to health (ROK, 2009c:21; ROK, 2009a). The need for strong family-school-community partnerships is also reiterated in Kenya’s Education Sector Policy on HIV and AIDS, where it is stated that all the educators, the parents, the communities and the learners must be given the opportunity to work closely together in developing peer education skills to address the scourge (ROK, 2009a:16-17).

Parental and community support and partnership allow education about health to be shared and reinforced at home. Such a partnership can also help in the identification of those issues that need to be addressed through the school, and then design as well as manage activities to tackle them (ROK, 2009c:20). The children need always to be encouraged to be active participants in all aspects of the school health programmes as opposed to being beneficiaries only. The most effective way to help the children acquire the knowledge, attitudes, values and the skills needed to adopt healthy lifestyles involves the parents and the community to practice what they learn about health (ROK, 2009c:24-25). These pieces of work greatly informed this study.

According to the ROK (2009c:17), effective partnerships need to be developed at all stages in respect of the planning and implementation of the school health programme. In particular, community involvement as well as ownership of the schools’ feeding programmes greatly
increases the programmes’ success and sustainability. It is important to note that the broad support that is required in enacting policies to promote health and nutrition should start with advocacy, that is, developing meaningful and persuasive messages to help the decision-makers to appreciate the fact that policies are indeed needed (ROK, 2010a:148).

Accordingly, one way of carrying out such advocacy is to share ideas and examples about what a health and nutrition-promoting school environment is, what it does, what it offers to the learners, the families, the teachers and the community at large. In turn, the schools will benefit from learning what the community thinks about local health issues and how the school can help address them. Additionally, assessing the school’s nutrition and health services is important as it helps in drawing up action plans (ROK, 2010a:159). Accordingly, such a process entails encouraging the participation of community members, health-workers, the parents and the learners, giving priority to those services and facilities that are most urgently needed, and finally developing relevant action plans to improve the schools’ health and nutrition status.

It is crucial for all the stakeholders inside and out of the education sector to commit themselves to the provision of child-friendly learning and living environments. In addition to improving the quality, relevance, efficiency, equity, and access to education and management in schools, the CFS initiative, particularly, provides a framework for policy-makers and educational practitioners at various levels on how to promote family-school-community partnerships in the country, including in Kakamega County. Indeed, only by questioning our traditional way of thinking and doing things, can one see the need for change (ROK, 2010a: v). In a broader picture, family-school-community partnerships will go a long way in assisting people, even to develop and propagate a national ethos that will make Kenya a prosperous and cohesive nation as envisioned in both the Constitution and Vision 2030’s development blueprint.
3.6 BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE FAMILY-SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN KAKAMEGA COUNTY

3.6.1 Description of Kakamega County

3.6.1.1 Location

Kakamega County is one of the counties that lie in the western region of Kenya. It is bordered by Busia, Siaya and Bungoma counties to the west, Nandi and Uasin Gishu counties to the east, Trans-Nzoia and Vihiga counties to the north and south, respectively (Ngetich, 2013:2). The county lies between longitudes 34 and 35 degrees east and between latitudes 0 and 1 degree north of the equator. According to the County Government of Kakamega (CGOK) (2013:2), the county comprises an area of 3050.3 square kilometers and 12 sub-counties: Kwhisero, Kakamega Central, Navakholo, Kakamega East, Kakamega North, Kakamega South, Likuyani, Lugari, Matete, Matungu and Mumias. These administrative units are supposed to bring services, including education, closer to the people, as envisioned in the Constitution (Ngetich, 2013:2; CGOK, 2013; ROK, 2010b). The map below shows the location of Kakamega County in Kenya.
Figure 3.2: Location of Kakamega County

Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2013) and CGOK (2013:3)
3.6.1.2 Population

According to the 2009 National Population and Housing Census (ROK, 2010c), Kakamega County had a burgeoning population which stood at 1,660,651 with the males and females constituting 797,112 and 863,539 persons, respectively. The county was ranked second after Nairobi County in terms of population size. In addition, the county had a growth rate of 2.5 % and a fertility rate of 5.6 %. This fertility rate was higher than the national one of 4.6 %. According to Ngetich (2013:1), Kakamega County is seen to be experiencing more challenges than any other county in Kenya, and that this underscores the need to plan well in order to meet needs of the increasing population.

The number of children of primary school-going age in the country (6-13 years) was estimated at 416306 in 2012, which represented 23.3 % of the total population in the county (CGOK, 2013:9). In the same year, the number of children of secondary school-going age (14-18 years) was put at 157 226, consisting of 79047 males and 78179 females. The cost of secondary school education, particularly in boarding schools is relatively high, prompting increased dropout rates. In 2012, the youth population (15-29 years) was approximated to be 479,504 representing 26.8 % of the population in the county. This consisted of 252266 females and 227238 males. According to CGOK (2013:9), this has put pressure on social facilities, especially those of education, as well as health. According to Ngetich (2013), given that the bulk of the population in Kakamega County is young, the associated challenges include the creation of employment opportunities, the provision of essential services, including education, and ensuring food-security. This scenario therefore, calls for the implementation of projects and programmes aimed at creating employment and the reduction of HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, crime and early marriages, amongst others.

3.6.1.3 The urban-rural divide

According to ROK (2010c), the five major urban centres of Kakamega, namely Mumias, Butere, Lumakanda and Matunda had a population of 91,768; 36,398; 12,780; 10,580 and 10,031 respectively. These figures amount to a total of 161,557 inhabitants. Ngetich (2013:2) indicated that these centres are the focal points for industrial, commercial, educational and residential purposes as well as employment for the increasing population in the county. It is important to observe that the larger proportion of the population in Kakamega County lives in
the rural areas. The Luhya, the second largest ethnic community in Kenya predominantly occupies the county.

3.6.1.4 Employment levels

The labour force in Kakamega County was estimated to be 889,552 in 2012 of whom 417,773 were females and 471,779 males (CGOK, 2013:23). Those seeking employment largely constituted the youth with the necessary skills and qualifications. In the same year, a total of 793,371 people were in self-employment, especially in agriculture and rural development, environmental protection, water, housing, energy, infrastructure as well as the information and technology sectors. Accordingly, most of the self-employed in the agricultural sector were engaged in land ploughing, weeding, bush-clearing, planting, harvesting and post-harvest handling. According to CGOK (2013:22), most wage-earners in the county rely on temporary casual employment in making bricks, transport, house construction, water conservation and drilling, communal labour and sugarcane farming.

In 2009 there were 697,520 self-employed people of whom 338,187 were males and 359,333 females (ROK, 2010c). Those who were self-employed, yet were seeking other employment in which they had relevant skills, were 73,617, that is, 37,125 males and 36,492 females. A total of 196,938 people or 22.04% of the entire population in Kakamega County in 2009 was unemployed (ROK, 2010c). According to Ngetich (2013:6), the poverty rate in the county stands at 52%. In addition to unemployment, other challenges that Kakamega County faces include the weak revenue base, poor planning and poor road network as well as connectivity. This requires a sustainable plan to overcome these challenges in order to realize the Kenya Vision 2030 which, among others, aims at making the country prosperous and globally competitive (Ngetich, 2013:6; ROK, 2007b). Accordingly, the policy-makers and planners need to think seriously about how to provide the required services and the creation of employment for the increasing population.

3.6.1.5 Industries in the county

The physiographic and natural conditions of the environment in Kakamega County define the spatial patterns of development. Particularly, the climate dictates the use to which land is put including agriculture, animal husbandry and settlement activities which are important for the
development variables in the county (Ngetich, 2013:2). The county has two short and long rain seasons, with the rainfall varying from 1000 mm to 2400 mm per annum. The county experiences high temperatures throughout the year, averaging 18-29 degrees Celsius (CGOK, 2013:4). About 70% of the northern part of the county is being cultivated for maize, both for commercial and home consumption purposes. The main cash crop is sugarcane, found in the Mumias, Lurambi, Navakholo, Kabras and Butere areas. Tea, coffee and sunflower are produced on small scale in various parts in the county.

Mumias sugar factory is the main industrial establishment in the county. It employs up to 4 000 people (Ngetich, 2013:3). Other sugar factories are those of Butali and West Kenya. These facilities have had a multiplier effect on the socio-economic development of the county. In particular, the Butali sugar factory has raised a new wave of optimism among at least 25 000 farmers in the Kabras sugar belt. The land under forest cover is estimated to be 28,199.72 hectares. Industrial plants include pine, cypress and eucalyptus which mainly supply pulp wood material to the Pan Africa Paper Mills at Webuye town. There are also indigenous forests, especially in the Malava area, while there is a high potential for agro-forestry activities due to the high rainfall and fertile soil (Ngetich, 2013:3).

Being the only remaining Tropical Rain Forest in Kenya, Kakamega Forest plays an environmentally critical role, especially in regulating the rainfall regimes in one of the most important water catchment areas in the East African region (ROK, 2007b). Similarly, Kakamega Forest has fostered the development of Kakamega County in the form of employment opportunities in hotels, travel and guiding services as well as revenue collection. Indeed, Kakamega Forest is a major tourist attraction because of its biodiversity. Over 300 species of birds have been sighted; some of the endangered animals like derazza monkeys have been identified; while various primates like baboons are found in large numbers (Ngetich, 2013:3). Other fauna include the bush pigs and snakes, some of which are endemic to this forest. Forests in the county will also continue to contribute towards making Kenya attain the target of achieving a 10% tree cover. Besides, the forests will continue to play roles like acting as a carbon sink and mitigation of the effects of climate change (Ngetich, 2013:3; CGOK, 2013; ROK, 2007b).

Kakamega County has a mineral production potential that is yet to be exploited since it requires considerable investment in modern technology. Gold-bearing quartz veins exist
along the river beds and deep in abandoned gold mines at Rosterman (Ngetich, 2013:3). Other less valuable minerals include pyrites, graphite and molybdenites. There are also ballast and stones for construction in such areas as Ikolomani, Shinyalu, Kwhisero, Kabras and Lurambi. If these minerals and materials are exploited sustainably, the economic base of the county will be greatly improved.

3.6.1.6 Basic education

In 2012 83.1% of the total population could read and write (CGOK, 2013:26). This calls for more investment in programmes aimed at increasing the literacy level of the population. Most of the pre-school education centres in the county are privately-owned and mainly situated in the urban areas (CGOK, 2013:14). The teacher-to-pupil ratio was 1:46 in 2012. At the primary school level, there were 848 schools and 8,964 teachers of whom 4,707 were males and 4,257 females, respectively. Similarly, there were 459,013 pupils of whom 247,381 were females and 211,632 were males. In the same year, the gross enrolment was 72.9%, the net enrolment 67.6% and the dropout rate 15%. In terms of distance from home to school, 77.5% of the pupils travelled at least five kilometers to access a primary school in 2012. This requires the provision of infrastructure to avoid the pupils having to walk long distances. The average number of years attending primary school was 14 and 15 for males and females, respectively (CGOK, 2013:24). Thus, the females took longer to finish primary school than their male counterparts.

On the other hand, in 2012, there were 309 secondary schools and 2,696 teachers, that is, 1,690 males and 1,006 females. Enrolment at this cycle of learning was 89,944 learners, consisting of 43,513 males and 46,431 females (CGOK, 2013:14). The completion and retention rates at this level were estimated to be 75% and 62%, in that order. Similarly, the gross enrolment rate was approximated to be 34%, the net enrolment rate 25.8% and the dropout rate 25%. It was estimated that 41.1% of the learners in 2012 had to travel about five kilometers to get to a public secondary school. The learners in the county also tend to embark on their secondary education at an advanced age, for the completion age is 18 years (CGOK, 2013:26).
3.6.1.7 Tertiary and higher education institutions

A number of tertiary and higher institutions of learning are available within Kakamega County. Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) is a public university located in the precincts of Kakamega town, and offers the demand-driven certificate, diploma, undergraduate as well as post-graduate studies in such areas as education, computer science, engineering, sugar agronomy and technology. Other courses on offer include journalism and mass communication, social work, criminology, health sciences, disaster management, humanitarian assistance and conflict resolution and management (Ngetich, 2013:4; CGOK, 2013:14). Two campuses of MMUST are situated within the county. Ngetich (2013:4) notes that MMUST is a key asset and has the potential for driving development activities within the county and towards realizing the Kenya Vision 2030. Other public universities that have already established campuses in the county include the University of Nairobi, Maasai Mara University, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology as well as Kenyatta University. Mount Kenya University, a private university, has also opened its doors in the county.

Sigalagala Polytechnic, one of the oldest vocational and technical institutions in Kenya, is to be found in Kakamega County. Bukura Agricultural College, a state corporation established in 1999 through an Act of parliament offers various diplomas in agricultural disciplines (Ngetich, 2013). A public institution, Eregi Teachers’ Training College prepares teachers for primary schools, and also a number of private colleges. In addition, there are 32 youth polytechnics spread across the county. However, the county lacks adequate training institutions to meet the demand orchestrated by the growing population, thereby calling for more of them to be opened, particularly to cater for those who are not able to join universities (CGOK, 2013:9).

3.6.2 Barriers to effective family-school-community partnerships in Kakamega County

Hornby and Lafaele’s (2011) model of the factors acting as barriers to parental involvement in children’s education (see section 2.5.4), is applied to discuss the barriers to effective family-school-community partnerships in Kakamega County. The researchers argue that the gap between rhetoric and reality in parental involvement is due to the influence of factors at
the parent and family, child, parent-teacher as well as the societal levels which act as barriers to the development of effective parental involvement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:37). Accordingly, the parent and family factors have to do with the parents’ beliefs about parental involvement, the parents’ current life-contexts, the parents’ perceptions of invitations for involvement, as well as class, ethnicity and gender. The child factors include learning difficulties and disabilities, gifts and talents and behavioural problems. Similarly, the parent-teacher factors involve differing agendas, attitudes and the language used while the societal factors include historical, demographical, political and economic issues.

A sensitization workshop on re-engineering education for quality performance, targeting the Western Kenya region, including Kakamega County, revealed that failure among education stakeholders, including the parents, the communities and the schools to execute their rightful roles and responsibilities is a major impediment to the provision of quality education as well as implementation of government policies in Kakamega County (MOE, 2010). To improve this scenario, therefore, calls for closer collaboration among the various stakeholders.

A study on the stakeholders’ perceptions of the parents’ contributions to the management of secondary schools in Kericho District in the neighbourhood of Kakamega County (Koros, 2006) found that the parents were hardly ever involved in making decisions on a variety of school issues. Indeed, effective family-school-community partnerships need to include discussing and determining the roles, rights, responsibilities and resources of the families, the school personnel and the learners (NASP, 2005). Furthermore, the level of education among some members of the Boards of Management in schools in Kakamega County is reportedly low, which makes it difficult for them to perform their roles effectively (MOE, 2010).

According to Hornby and Lafaele (2011:41), the parents’ level of education will influence their views on whether they have sufficient skills and knowledge to engage in different aspects of parental involvement. Furthermore, some parents are often ignorant about the curriculum and the related processes. On the other hand, many teachers make assumptions that the parents are neither interested nor care about their children’s education (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:45). Perhaps as a consequence, the monitoring of the pupils’ progress in learning is claimed to be poor in Kakamega County, with some parents ignoring to provide their children with the basic needs to keep them at school (MOE, 2010).
Similarly, apart from the reports about the poor attendance of the parents and community leaders at meetings initiated by the schools in Kakamega County, more women tend to attend compared to men (MOE, 2010). Hornby and Lafaele (2011:42) note that despite policy and research supporting the importance of parental involvement in the schools, the reality is that it is predominantly the mothers who become involved. In addition, the researchers indicate that there have been significant changes over a couple of the last decades in the family structures, the political, economic as well as historical contexts in which the women’s involvement occurs. Particularly, mothers globally now face balancing issues of working with the schools, negotiating boundaries, participating in the labour market as well as the effects of class, marital status and ethnicity.

Communication and networking amongst the parents, the schools and the community leaders in Kakamega County is said to be poor (MOE, 2010). Education stakeholders seldom make joint decisions on matters affecting the development of the school and children’s learning (MOE, 2010). According to Nichols and Read (2002), a compelling barrier to meaningful communication is the traditional parent-teacher conference that lasts between five and fifteen minutes only. Such a short time, the researchers argue, does not offer any satisfactory communication with regard to the child’s academic progress. According to Erlendsdottir (2010:35), who conducted a study in a private school in Namibia, the parents do not always respond to communication from the school, hence teachers may feel that the parents are not interested in becoming involved. This provides a basis for investigating how communication among families, schools and communities is conducted in CFSs in Kakamega County.

3.7 CONCLUSION

Kenya has made great strides in the education sector since independence, including phenomenal student enrolment at all levels of schooling, the expansion of relevant infrastructure and the reviewing of the curricula to be in tandem with both national and international trends. However, there remain formidable challenges to be tackled like strengthening the family-school-community partnerships, disparities involving gender, regions, children with special needs and disabilities, the shortage of teaching staff which compromises on quality, and making the cost of education affordable and relevant to the envisaged goals. The national goals of education and training (ROK, 2012a:15-16) are meant to promote nationalism, patriotism and national unity, socio-economic, technological and
industrial skills for the country’s development, individual development and self-fulfillment, sound moral and religious values, and social equality and responsibility. Other national goals include those to foster respect for and the development of Kenya’s rich and varied cultures, international consciousness, positive attitudes towards other nations, and good health and the protection of the environment.

Indeed, the introduction of the CFS initiative was meant to address the challenges facing Kenya’s education and training sectors. The CFS has five themes which are meant to sustain the crucial changes in the classrooms and the schools so that they may continue to be inclusive as well as learning-friendly. These themes are inclusive-learning classrooms, school safety and protection, equity and equality in schools, health and nutrition in the schools, and school-community linkages and partnerships. It is imperative to note that formulating as well as implementing the policies regarding these themes requires strong family-school-community partnerships, which this study focuses on. To be effective in such collaboration, partners should understand and execute their roles accordingly.

However, various barriers were encountered with regard to family-school-community partnerships. In particular, the barriers to effective parental involvement, discussed in Hornby and Lafaele’s (2011) model, provide an explanation for the existence of the gap between rhetoric and reality with regard to parental involvement. The model particularly makes it clear that parental involvement is determined and limited by a divergent range of barriers related to the parents and the families, the children, parent-teacher differences and societal issues (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:50). Accordingly, the model is intended to be used in the pre-service and in-service training of teachers, educational psychologists, counselors, social workers and other professionals who work in the education system. More importantly, studying the model will enable these professionals to gain greater insight into the factors which serve as barriers to and facilitate the development of productive parental involvement. Against this background the model was used to discuss the barriers to effective family-school-community partnerships in Kakamega County.

Like other counties in Kenya, Kakamega County has registered notable progress in the field of education and socio-economic development in general. Indeed, the county has numerous opportunities as well as the potential for development, including educational institutions, arable land, minerals, forests and tourist attractions that could be instrumental towards
achieving the goals of the Kenya Vision 2030 and the sustainable development of the region. However, the county is reported to be grappling with challenges involving family-school-community partnerships, a poor transport network, the rapid population growth, poverty, drug abuse, insecurity, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, inadequate infrastructural facilities like schools and health centres, as well as unemployment, especially among the youth. Given this scenario the county needs to seriously focus on strengthening its social, political and economic institutions in order to surmount these challenges.

Chapter 4 describes the research design used in this study.
CHAPTER FOUR
THE RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 presents a detailed description of the methodology and research design. The chapter commences with a discussion of the theoretical basis for the choice of a mixed-method research design and the technical considerations which influenced this choice. The mixed-method inquiry comprises two phases: Phase One (survey) and Phase Two (interviews). This is followed by a detailed description of the procedures undertaken during the two phases, namely sampling, data-collection, data-analysis, strategies to address reliability, validity and the credibility of the data, and ethical considerations.

4.2 THE RESEARCH APPROACH

A mixed method design includes a quantitative phase as well as a qualitative phase. According to Mertens (2005:292), a mixed method design is one in which both quantitative and qualitative methods are used to answer research questions in a single study or a multiphase study. The quantitative approach includes designs, techniques and measures that produce discrete numerical or quantifiable data (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003:156). It involves the generation of data in a form that can be subjected to rigorous quantitative analysis in a formal and rigid fashion (Kothari, 2011:5).

The qualitative approach to research includes designs, techniques and measures that do not produce discrete numerical data. More often the data are in the form of words, usually grouped into categories, rather than numbers (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003:155). This approach is advantageous since it permits research to go beyond the statistical results normally reported in quantitative research. In particular, human phenomena that cannot be investigated by direct observation, such as attitudes and emotions are best studied using the qualitative approach. According to the researchers, the three methods usually used to collect qualitative data include direct observation, where the required behaviour is observed in a particular setting; participant observation, where the data are collected by an observer who is a regular, full-time participant in the activities being observed, as well as the interview method (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).
Kothari (2011:5) holds that the qualitative approach to research is concerned with the subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behaviour. Thus research in such a situation is a function of the researcher’s insights and impressions. Furthermore, the researcher asserts that such an approach to research generates results either in non-quantitative form or in forms which are not subjected to rigorous quantitative analysis. Accordingly, the techniques of focus group interviews, projective techniques and in-depth interviews are used.

A research design is crucial, since it facilitates the smooth sailing of the various research operations, thereby making research as efficient as possible, yielding the maximal information with the minimal expenditure of effort, time and money (Kothari, 2011:14, 32). Among others, a research design has to focus on formulating the objective of the study with precision to ensure that the data collected are relevant; on designing the methods of data-collection; on selecting the sample; on collecting the data; on processing and analyzing the data as well as on reporting the findings (Kothari, 2011:37; Panneerselvam, 2011:12-16). It is also worthwhile to note that the research design has a great bearing on the reliability of the results arrived at, and as such constitutes the firm foundation of the entire edifice of the research work. Thus the research design has to make provision for protection against bias and to maximize reliability, with due concern for the economical completion of the research study. Furthermore, a flexible research design provides the opportunity for considering many different aspects of a problem and is therefore appropriate, especially if the purpose of the study is that of exploration (Kothari, 2011:14). In this study, the problem is investigated by means of a literature study and an empirical investigation, using a mixed method design.

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), using a mixed methods approach has the following advantages:

- A mixed methods approach presents the strengths that counterbalance the weaknesses of the qualitative and quantitative research on its own.
- Mixed methods research presents more thorough evidence for studying a research problem than either approach can do alone.
- A mixed methods approach helps to answer the research question(s) that cannot be answered by using either a qualitative or quantitative approach on its own.
Mixed methods tend to encourage researchers to work in partnership across the often-opposing relationship between qualitative and quantitative researchers. By making use of a mixed methods approach, the researcher is encouraged to make use of multiple paradigms, rather than typically associating specific worldviews for either qualitative or quantitative approaches. The researcher is able to make use of all the methods possible to focus on a research problem, and this makes mixed methods research more practical.

4.2.1 Application

In this investigation, a sequential mixed methods approach was used. The qualitative and quantitative approaches were employed according to two sequential phases. The quantitative data were collected by means of questionnaires (Phase 1). The analysis was conducted by statistically analysing the scores as collected on the instruments used to answer the research question posed, or to test the various hypotheses (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:6). In contrast, the qualitative data were gathered by means of interviews (Phase 2). Phase 1 was first conducted to uncover areas that required to be probed further during Phase 2. Both phases aimed at collecting data to assess the effectiveness of family-school-community partnership practices in CFS primary schools in Kakamega County, Kenya.

The information collected was categorized according to Epstein’s six type model, discussed above in chapter two (section 2.3.1), namely parenting, communication, student-learning, volunteering, decision-making and advocacy as well as collaborating with the community. The model also formed the basis of the formulation of both the questionnaire as well as the interview schedules. Additionally, the data were gathered with reference to the CFS thematic areas discussed in chapter three (section 3.5). These themes are inclusive learning classrooms, school safety and protection, equity and equality in schools, health and nutrition in schools, and school-community linkages and partnerships.
4.3 THE EMPIRICAL INQUIRY

4.3.1 Phase 1: The sampling of the questionnaire respondents

Stratified random sampling, which is a common variation of simple random sampling, was used to arrive at the number of teachers who participated in the study. While simple random sampling presents equal and independent chances to every member of a population to be selected (Mertens, 2005:314), stratified random sampling is appropriate when the researcher wishes to ensure the inclusion of small sub-group percentages (Strydom & Venter, 2002:205). In this case I wanted to ensure that the teachers employed in schools in all twelve the districts (sub-counties) in Kakamega County (see Table 4.1) acquired sufficient representation in the sample. This meant that the desired number of respondents was selected proportionately within each of the districts, that is, a larger number of respondents from the larger districts with more schools, and smaller numbers of respondents from the smaller districts with fewer schools. This is known as proportionate stratification. According to Kothari (2011:63), proportional allocation is considered most efficient and an optimal design. When the cost of selecting an item is equal for each stratum, there is no difference within the stratum variances, and the purpose of sampling happens to be to estimate the population value of some characteristic.

The sampling strategy used is described in the ensuing sections.

4.3.1.1 Decisions in respect of the size of the sample

The sample used in this phase of the study was selected from a population of 8,964 teachers in 848 primary schools, distributed across the 12 districts in Kakamega County at the time of the study (May 2014). A sample size of 368 teachers (N=368) was decided upon. Krejcie and Morgan (in Johnson, 2009; International Program for Development Evaluation Training Handbook [IPDET], 2007:455) recommend a sample size of 368 in social science research "for a sample chosen from a population of 9000 cases. Given that the total number of teachers in Kakamega County was 8,964, this principle was applied in this study. Thus 368 teachers (N=368) were used as the sample size. The researchers assert that larger sample sizes are necessary when the groups are broken into sub-groups. The number of teachers to be involved in the study per district was arrived at as follows, namely the number of teachers in
the given district was divided by the number of teachers in the county, multiplied by 368 (N=368).

Similarly, to sample the schools, the following strategy was followed: the total number of teachers (8,964) divided by the total number of schools (848) showed that each school in the county had an average of 11 teachers. By dividing the sample size of teachers (N=368) by the average number of teachers per school (11) gives 34. Hence 34 schools (N=34) formed the sample size. The number of schools per district to participate in the study was arrived at as follows: the number of the schools in the particular district divided by the number of schools in the county, then multiplied by 34 (N=34). Table 4.1 presents the proportional allocation of respondents according to each district in the county.

Table 4.1: The sampling of the teachers and the schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School no</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Target population</th>
<th>Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Districts</td>
<td>Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kakamega Central</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lugari</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Butere</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kakamega North</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>1095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kakamega South</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Kakamega East</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mumias</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Matete</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Khwisero</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Matungu</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Likuyani</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Navakholo</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>848</strong></td>
<td><strong>8964</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.1.2 The procedures for the sampling of the schools and the teachers

Once the number of schools per district to be involved in the study had been determined, the next task was to identify the specific schools and the respondents to participate. To achieve this, the simple random sampling strategy was applied. For example, all the names of the 96 primary schools in Kakamega Central district were put in a hat and four of them drawn randomly. This procedure was done for all the rest of the districts.

On the other hand, the head teachers, deputy head teachers and senior teachers from the schools that participated in the study were purposively selected since they were members of the CFS technical team at the school level (see chapter 3, section 3.5). The simple random sampling strategy was used to select the rest of the teachers. The number of the teachers selected was proportional to both their population in the specific schools as well as the total number to be drawn from the individual districts.

4.3.2 Phase 2: The selection of the participants for the interviews

The parents, PTA chairpersons and DQASOs were purposively sampled for the interviews. In purposive or theoretical sampling, the researcher’s judgment is used to select those respondents who best meet the purposes of the study (Panneerselvam, 2011:201; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003; Kathuri & Pals, 1993:52). According to Mertens (2005:317), purposeful sampling involves selecting samples with the goal of identifying information-rich cases that will allow an in-depth study.

The parent participants: With the help of the head teachers, the extreme or deviant case sampling strategy (a form of purposeful sampling) was used to select those parents who are not very knowledgeable on or engaged in their children’s learning (Mertens, 2005:317). I asserted that studying the unusual would illuminate the ordinary. In particular, the head teachers suggested the names of the parents who had not attended a parents’ meeting or contacted the school in the past twelve months. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:326), the study of extreme cases might yield information that would be relevant to improving more typical cases. Thus, a total of 17 parents, that is, one each from half of the 34 selected schools in the 12 districts (see Table 4.1) were initially selected to participate in this phase of the study. However, four of the parents voluntarily withdrew from the study, hence
13 parents were interviewed. It is worth noting that the parents and PTA chairpersons were sampled in such a way that each of the 34 selected schools was represented either by a parent or a PTA chairperson. To achieve this, I listed the schools and then alternately selected those to be represented by the parents and PTA chairpersons.

The PTA chairpersons: The intensity sampling strategy, another form of purposeful sampling, was used to select the PTA chairpersons to be included in this study. In this strategy, the researcher identifies individuals or sites in which the phenomenon of interest is strongly represented (Mertens, 2005:318). Given that most of the PTA chairpersons possess good education levels (generally taken to be at least secondary school education in the Kenyan context, and hence are generally knowledgeable on matters involving the children’s learning), it was important to obtain their views, especially with regard to the six areas of family-school-community partnerships. Furthermore, it was assumed that the chairpersons of the PTAs would be familiar with the CFS initiative and the areas of CFS concern. Although a total of 17 such chairpersons, one each from half of the 34 schools in the 12 districts (see Table 4.1) were selected to participate in this phase of the research, five declined the interview. The final number of the Chairperson participants was twelve.

The DQASOs: As noted earlier (cf. Section 3.4.1), each district in Kenya has a DQASO who plays an advisory role insofar as basic education curriculum implementation as well as delivery is concerned. Using the intensity sampling strategy, the 12 DQASOs in Kakamega County (see Table 4.1) were identified to participate in the study. But two of them withdrew voluntarily hence 10 interviews were conducted in the actual study. The DQASOs were considered to be informed regarding legislative and policy frameworks, including CFSs, basic education and family-school-community partnerships.

4.3.3 Phase 1: Data-collection

Data were collected in Phase 1 by means of a self-designed questionnaire, after referring to existing questionnaires (Shearer, 2006:87-88; Lemmer, 2002:2) for relevant ideas, in order to obtain objective data about the respondents’ perceptions of school-home-community practices, with special reference to Epstein’s model and CFSs (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003:71,83). The questionnaire was scrutinised by the researcher’s supervisor and an external expert.
After a first draft of the questionnaire was compiled, the questionnaires were piloted among eight teachers in two primary schools in the neighbouring Vihiga County (cf. Section 3.6.1.1) which had similar characteristics to those of the schools involved in the actual study. According to Kothari (2011:38), it is always desirable to pretest the data-collection instruments before they are finally used for the study purposes. After seeking prior permission from the respondents to complete the questionnaires, I visited each of the selected schools to distribute them and to give the relevant instructions. In particular, the pilot respondents were requested and given the opportunity to highlight any perceived lack of clarity and problematic questions or shortcomings in the questionnaire (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2006:168-169). The feedback was analysed and the adjusted questionnaire was scrutinised by the promoter of the study and an external consultant, who also made suggestions regarding the content and the structure. Changes were made to the final survey questionnaire where it was deemed necessary.

The finalised paper and pen questionnaire comprising of seven (7) parts, was used to collect data from the respondents (cf. Appendix 1). The questionnaire was accompanied by a covering letter (cf. Appendix 1). The covering letter indicated that it was not necessary to indicate a name and that the anonymity of the respondent was assured. An explanation of the purpose of the research, a request for participation, an indication of the right of refusal or withdrawal, an assurance of confidentiality and thanks were included. The questionnaire comprised seven parts: Part A dealt with biographical data (7 items); Part B dealt with parenting skills (11 items); Part C dealt with home-school communication (14 items); Part D dealt with volunteering (11 items); Part E dealt with learning at home (12 items); Part F dealt with decision-making at school (10 items) while Part G dealt with collaboration with the community (12 items). With the exception of items 14 (g) and 11 in parts C and D, respectively, which were open-ended, the rest were closed items, where subjects were to choose between predetermined responses (Johnson & Christensen, 2008:94-95; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:197). Most of the questions comprised statements to which the respondents were invited to respond according to a four-point frequency scale where 1 = Always, 2 = Often, 3 = Sometimes and 4 = Seldom. Other questions required the choice of a single option or a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response.

I made phone calls to inform the head teachers concerned and the rest of the teachers of the dates of my visit to have the questionnaires completed, preferably during break, to avoid
interfering with the school routine. I distributed the questionnaires to the teachers in their respective schools at the same time in a bid to achieve a high response rate. Before administering the questionnaires, I explained the purpose of the study to the respondents and informed them that permission had been granted by Kenya’s National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation, Unisa, as well as the Director of Education, Kakamega County. Also, I waited for the teachers to complete the questionnaires and then collected them. As a result of this procedure, I obtained a 98.1% return-rate on the questionnaires.

4.3.4 Phase 2: Data-collection

Individual semi-structured interviews with the parents and the PTA chairpersons (cf. appendix 2) and the DQASOs (cf. appendix 3) were conducted after Phase 1 had been completed and the data analyzed. Semi-structured interviews combine the features of both structured as well as unstructured interviews. For example, in structured interviews, specific lists of questions are asked. Thus, structured questions allow the interviewer to simply check the interviewee’s responses (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003:86). On the other hand, unstructured interviews make it possible to ask questions, probe answers or make comments intended to yield data to meet the study objectives. While the answers in structured interviews are not followed up to obtain greater depth of information, unstructured interviews are more subjective, since greater freedom is given to the interviewer. A semi-structured interview, therefore, attempts to minimize the shortcomings of the other two.

In addition to collecting information that was not captured in the questionnaire, conducting interviews was an attempt to seek more data from the interviewees, arising from issues addressed in the questionnaires. Apart from the issues uncovered in the literature study (chapters 2 and 3) and the need for additional information prompted by the questionnaire findings (Phase 1), two interview guides, one for both the parents and the PTA chairpersons (cf. appendix 9), and another for the DQASOs (cf. appendix 10) were designed to gather data that were unique, according to the roles of these key stakeholders in CFSs as well as family-school-community partnerships.

The draft interview guides were first piloted by conducting preliminary interviews with two parents, two PTA chairpersons and two DQASOs, after which the relevant revision of the guides was made. The participants in the pilot-testing, whose interviews were recorded on
digital recorder and transcribed, were given a chance to identify the gaps in the interview schedules. I carefully considered the feedback provided and made relevant changes to the interview guides. The interview guides were also scrutinized by the supervisor of the study and recommendations made which were incorporated.

On request, initial contact with the 17 parents as well as the 17 PTA chairpersons was made by the head teachers, mainly through phone calls. I then met these participants within the respective school compounds on agreed dates where the purpose of the study was explained and the invitation to participate in the study was made. Convenient dates and venues (the respective school compounds) for the interviews were also agreed upon. However, as noted earlier on, 13 parents and 12 PTA chairpersons took part in the final study as the rest willingly decided not to be interviewed. Despite the withdrawal of some of the participants from the final stage of the study, the number of those interviewed was considered to be representative enough. This is due to the big number of those selected to be interviewed in this study. I contacted the DQASOs either by phone call or visited them at their offices to inform them of the study and to invite them to participate. Interviews were scheduled with the 12 DQASOs; however, two DQASOs were unable to participate, and eventually ten interviews were conducted. I ensured that all the participants gave their written consent (cf. appendices 9 and 10). I first conducted the interviews with the parents and the PTA chairpersons before interviewing the DQASOs. The official language in Kenya (English) was used to interview both the DQASOs and the PTA chairpersons while the national language (Kiswahili) was used to interview the parents since they could not communicate effectively in English. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. I made translations of the transcripts of the interviews with the parents as I am fluent in Kiswahili. I also made short notes and comments on related incidents or issues to accompany the entire analytical process.

4.3.5 Data-analysis

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003:115) argue that since data obtained from the field in raw form are difficult to interpret, it must therefore be cleaned, coded, key-punched into a computer and analyzed. Accordingly, in empirical or quantitative analysis, the responses have to be assigned numerical values. This is easily accomplished if the items or questions in the questionnaire are closed-ended. Similarly, Kothari (2011:38) asserts that the data collected during a study must be processed and analyzed. This includes such steps as coding the
interview replies, observations, tabulating the data and performing several statistical computations. According to the researcher, data-analysis requires a number of closely related operations, such as the establishment of categories, the application of these categories to the raw data through coding and tabulation, and then drawing statistical inferences.

In qualitative studies the researcher is interested in analyzing information in a systematic way in order to come to some useful conclusions and recommendations. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2011:117), researchers obtain detailed information in qualitative studies about the phenomenon being studied, and then try to establish patterns, themes or trends and relationships from the information gathered. In this study, the data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively as outlined below.

4.3.5.1 Phase 1: The questionnaires

After receiving the data, it were appropriately coded, scored then keyed in the computer to be analyzed by means of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Joyce Epstein’s typology, discussed earlier on, formed the basis for the areas of analysis. In particular, the responses involving the four-point frequency scale in the questionnaire were assigned numerical values to make quantitative analysis possible. The data were presented in tabular form according to means, mode, frequencies and percentages.

4.3.5.2 Phase 2: The interviews

After the recordings were transcribed, the data were analysed by means of content analysis. Neuman (2000:34-35) asserts that content analysis is a technique that can be used to examine information, or content, in written or symbolic material (e.g. pictures, movies and song lyrics). Content analysis entails the identification of a body of material for analysis and the creation of a system for the recording of specific aspects thereof. Such a system might include recording the occurrence of certain words or themes, as well as the material itself. Mouton (2001:166) states that a particular strength of content analysis is that the analysis of texts and documents is non-reactive, which means that errors associated with the interaction between the researchers and the subjects are avoided. In analyzing the data from the interviews, a coding method was used, as follows: firstly transcribing the interviews, then conducting a textual analysis to identify numerous codes, clustering these into code
families’, identifying several emergent themes from the code families, linking the identified themes to the literature study while locating them within the theoretical framework of the study, presenting the findings, and finally, offering recommendations. In this phase of the study, the data were analysed using qualitative strategies, including developing themes or categories, sub-categories and trends from the raw data.

4.4 THE PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

This involves the task of communicating the findings to others, and the researcher has to do it in an efficient manner (Kothari, 2011:39). Accordingly, the layout of the report needs to be well-planned so that all the aspects relating to the research study may be well-presented in a simple and effective style. The findings involving quantitative data are normally presented using descriptive statistics (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003:118). The main types of descriptive statistics include measures of central tendency like the mean, median and mode; measures of variability such as the range, standard deviation and variance. Another type of descriptive statistics includes frequency distribution like distribution tables, grouped frequencies and graphic representations of frequency distributions such as histograms, frequency polygons, bar graphs, pie charts and percentages.

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003:205) assert that the nature of qualitative research is such that as analysis is being done, one is also putting the report together in order to give a vivid descriptive account of the situation under study. Such a report also gives an analytical view, citing the significance and implications of the findings, and shows how different or similar the findings are as compared to the researcher’s expectations. In addition, a report shows the relationships between concepts, and attempts to advance alternative explanations generated from the data. One main difference in report writing between qualitative and quantitative research is the use of the ‘voices ’of the respondents in the text, that is, messages given by the interviewees which are reported verbatim (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2011:206). Accordingly, such quotations make the report rich and very informative, and they express various feelings and attitudes from the interviewees. In this study, the presentation of the qualitative data was in a narrative form, backed by verbatim quotations.
4.5  ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Compliance with the ethical requirements is essential before embarking on research in order to protect the rights of the participants and the integrity of the researcher, and to ensure that honest results are realized (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003:190).

Thus, I obtained the following:

i) a research permit from Kenya’s National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (appendix 4);

ii) an ethical clearance certificate from the College of Education, University of South Africa (appendix 5);

iii) the written permission from the Kakamega County Director of Education’s office (appendix 6);

iv) permission from the head teachers of the selected schools (appendix 7);

v) the written consent of the participating teachers (appendix 8), the parents, the PTA chairpersons (appendix 9) and the DQASOs (appendix 10).

The participants were duly informed of the purpose of the study to avoid suspicion. Thus the principle of voluntary consent was upheld to allow them to willingly participate in the research. In addition, they were assured of confidentiality, privacy and anonymity regarding the information to be provided. I also thanked all those involved in the study for their cooperation and made provision for the communication of the findings. Upon the successful completion of the thesis, a summary report would be made available to all the schools represented and to the participating DQASOs.

4.6  THE VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE DATA

In designing both the instruments as well as the data-collection procedure, adequate safeguards against bias and unreliability must be ensured (Kothari, 2011:38). The instruments to be used in this study were validated, bearing in mind both the aim and the specific objectives of the study.
4.6.1 Phase 1: The questionnaires

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003:96,100), an instrument that yields valid data will necessarily yield reliable data and that there should be many items in the questionnaire on a particular construct so that a conclusion is objectively made. To ensure reliability and validity I followed the following procedures:

i) An appropriate time scale: The respondents were given 30 minutes to complete the paper and pencil questionnaire. I personally delivered and collected the questionnaires.

ii) Appropriate methodology and sampling: The sampling procedures were fully described (see section 4.3.1.2).

iii) Measures to ensure reliability (see the ensuing discussion).

iv) Foci for the research questions: Six clear foci reflected in Sections 2 to 7 were based on Epstein’s six type typology of home-school-community partnerships.

v) A properly designed questionnaire and pilot study: The content of the questionnaire was informed by the literature. The layout of the questionnaire was informed by existing examples. Furthermore, a pilot study was conducted in a neighbouring county to avoid the contamination of results. Finally, the questionnaire was scrutinized by the supervisor and an external expert. The gaps identified during this process and the recommendations that were made were accounted for in the final questionnaire.

Reliability in quantitative research refers to its consistency and applicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents. For research to be reliable it must be able to demonstrate that if it were carried out on a similar group of respondents in a similar context, then similar results would be found. In summary, reliability is the degree to which that instrument produces equivalent results for repeated trials (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, and 2013:222). Thus, when administrating a survey consideration needs to be given to honesty and accuracy in their answering by those who complete the questionnaires, and to whether the answers of those who elected not to complete the questionnaire would have been as those who did.
To ensure reliability, participation in this study was voluntary and the respondents’ identities were protected to ensure honest responses. In particular, the reliability of those items of which the responses were on the four-point Likert scale was established using the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. According to and Magenta (2003), Cronbach’s alpha can be computed only once and it assesses multiple items. The reliability coefficients for parts B to G of the questionnaire were as follows: Part B (0.84), Part C (0.82), Part D (0.85), Part E (0.83), Part F (0.78) and Part G (0.80). All these coefficients were acceptable for this study. An audit trail of the research process was provided in this chapter for any researcher who may wish to replicate or modify the study with a similar group of respondents in a similar context.

4.6.2 Phase 2: The interviews

According to Kothari (2011:38), the questions have to be examined well and be unambiguous, while the interviewers have to be instructed not to express their own opinions to avoid bias. On the other hand, the observers must be trained so that they can uniformly record a given item of behaviour. Accordingly, to obtain data free from errors introduced by those responsible for collecting them, it is necessary to closely supervise the fieldworkers as they collect and record the information. Thus, checks may be set up to ensure that the data-collecting staff members perform their duty honestly and without prejudice. The data should be examined for completeness, comprehensibility, consistency and reliability.

In this study, I carefully collected and recorded the information provided by the participants using an audio-recorder to enhance consistency as well as reliability. I made the transcripts and translations of the interviews, and any outstanding issues were clarified with the participants before the end of the interviews. The anonymity of the participants was protected and this increased the chances of honest and authentic responses. To further ensure the validity and reliability of the data, I piloted the interview schedules by interviewing two parents, PTA chairpersons and DQASOs prior to the actual study. In addition, the interview schedules were scrutinized by the supervisor and recommendations were made. The issues raised by the pilot participants were duly dealt with.
4.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I described the reasons for my choice of a mixed-method approach for this study and I described how this methodology was applied during two phases of data-collection. The sampling strategy, data collection through the questionnaire and data analysis was described for Phase One of the study. Thereafter, the selection of participants for the interviews, the data collection process and the data analysis was described for Phase Two of the study. A section covered the issues of reliability and validity for Phase One and credibility of data for Phase Two. Ethical considerations and steps taken to assure these were also described in detail.

In the next chapter the findings of Phase One and Two of the study are presented and discussed.
CHAPTER 5
PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS: PHASE 1 AND PHASE 2

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 deals with the presentation of the data, and the interpretation and discussion of the research findings. The study followed a mixed method inquiry. Phase 1 comprised of the data-gathering process by means of a researcher-designed questionnaire; Phase 2 comprised of the gathering of the data by means of interviews. Accordingly, the findings are presented in two phases. Phase 1 focuses on the quantitative data, where descriptive statistics involving the mean, median, mode, standard deviation, variance, frequency distribution tables and percentage are used. Phase 2 presents the qualitative data which is in a narrative format, backed by verbatim quotations to substantiate the findings.

5.2 PHASE 1: FINDINGS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRES

In this section the results of the questionnaire (cf. Appendix 1) are presented and discussed. In Tables 5.2-5.9 the following abbreviations have been used in order to fit the tables to the page: F = Frequency; P = percent and V = Valid percent.

5.2.1 Part A: Biographical characteristics

Part A, items 1-7, indicates the biographical characteristics of the respondents. The findings are tabulated in Table 5.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
<th>Valid percent</th>
<th>Cumulative percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job designation</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Valid percent</td>
<td>Cumulative percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Teacher</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Head teacher</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Teacher</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>73.4</td>
<td>73.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid percent</th>
<th>Cumulative percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>55.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>85.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>97.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching experience</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid percent</th>
<th>Cumulative percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 3 years</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 years</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-10 years</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 10 years</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional training for parental involvement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid percent</th>
<th>Cumulative percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ Training College</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-service Education and Training</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>63.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>69.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Table 5.1, 51.0% of the respondents were male and 49.0% were female. Thus, there was a fair representation as far as the variable of gender was concerned. Furthermore, regarding job designation, most of the respondents (73.4%) were ordinary teachers. Less than
a third (26.6%) of the respondents were head teachers (8.6%), 9.1% were deputy head teachers and 9.9% were senior teachers. Table 5.1 also indicates that more than half of the respondents (55.4%) held a two-year teachers’ training certificate as their highest academic qualification. Less than a third (30.2%) held a three-year teachers’ training diploma. Only 14.4% held a university degree: (11.9%) held a B-degree and 2.5% held a Master’s degree. Thus, most of the respondents (85.6%) did not possess a university degree. This suggests that the teachers are not well-qualified and this may limit their grasp of their professional role, particularly when it extends beyond their instructional responsibilities (Kafu, 2011). As regards teaching experience, Table 5.1 shows that most of the respondents (79%) had more than seven years’ teaching experience. Considering the date of the national launching of the CFS initiative in 2010 (Serem, 2012), this indicates that most of the teachers had some experience of CFS, its goals and its requirements. However, only 58.1% of the respondents had undergone formal induction into the CFS initiative (cf. Table 1, appendix 11). This implies that a considerable number of the respondents (41.9%) had not received any formal induction in the CFS initiative and were likely to lack the important knowledge and skills necessary for the implementation of the CFS (cf. UNICEF, 2011). According to Table 5.1, most of the respondents (69.3%) had undertaken a course on family-school-community partnerships: in-service training (39.9%); teachers’ training college (23.5%) or at university level (5.8%). However, 30.7% of respondents had not received any training in this regard. Furthermore, while 50.6% of the respondents were members of the CFS technical team at school level, 49.4% of the respondents disagreed (cf. Table 2, appendix 11). Considering that all the teachers are supposed to be part of the CFS team at school (ROK, 2010a:12), this result implies that half of the respondents were poorly informed of the role of the CFS team in their respective schools.

5.2.2 Part B: Parenting skills

Part B, items 1-11, dealt with the participants’ parenting skills as a component of a school-family-community partnership programme. Table 5.2 indicates the frequency of the responses per item according to the four-point Likert scale.
Table 5.2: Parenting skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Total Valid</th>
<th>Missing</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Std. Dev</th>
<th>Vary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>My school provides information to the parents regarding the home conditions to support learning at each age and grade level.</td>
<td>133 36.8</td>
<td>108 29.9</td>
<td>72 19.9</td>
<td>47 13.0</td>
<td>360 99.7</td>
<td>1 .3</td>
<td>361 100.0</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1 1.042</td>
<td>1.086</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>My school organizes workshops or talks with the parents on the pupil’s health and nutrition.</td>
<td>60 16.6</td>
<td>70 19.4</td>
<td>167 46.3</td>
<td>63 17.5</td>
<td>360 99.7</td>
<td>1 .3</td>
<td>361 100.0</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3 0.956</td>
<td>0.914</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>My school provides workshops or talks to the parents on the pupils’ protection and safety.</td>
<td>72 19.9</td>
<td>108 29.9</td>
<td>107 29.6</td>
<td>72 19.9</td>
<td>359 99.4</td>
<td>2 .6</td>
<td>361 100.0</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2 1.027</td>
<td>1.055</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>My school holds special activities to encourage the fathers to participate in their children’s education.</td>
<td>44 12.2</td>
<td>50 13.9</td>
<td>94 26.0</td>
<td>165 45.7</td>
<td>353 97.8</td>
<td>8 2.2</td>
<td>361 100.0</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4 1.051</td>
<td>1.105</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>At my school the teachers make home visits to provide the families with guidance on homework and other issues.</td>
<td>23 6.4</td>
<td>17 4.7</td>
<td>112 31.0</td>
<td>200 55.4</td>
<td>352 97.5</td>
<td>9 2.5</td>
<td>361 100.0</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4 0.853</td>
<td>0.728</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>My school</td>
<td>48 13.3</td>
<td>93 25.8</td>
<td>124 34.3</td>
<td>94 26.0</td>
<td>359 99.4</td>
<td>2 .6</td>
<td>361 100.0</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3 0.994</td>
<td>0.988</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>provides workshops or talks to the parents on ways the families can improve their children’s reading and literacy skills.</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----</td>
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<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>My school sensitizes the parents on equity issues, especially regarding the equitable treatment of boys and girls.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>The families have sufficient opportunities to share information on their children’s talents and needs with the teachers.</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>The pupils share their needs concerning education with me.</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>The parents share their expectations of their children’s education with the school.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>51.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.2 (item 1) indicates that a combined score of 66.9% (36.9% + 30.0%) of the respondents felt that the school regularly provided information to the parents concerning home conditions that enhance learning at each age and grade level (mean value of 2.09). However, 33.1% (20.0% and 13.1%) of the respondents felt that this was an infrequent practice. Parenting should be a collective undertaking, including providing relevant information to support learning at each age and grade (NCUSD, 2013; Epstein & Sheldon, 2006:119). The need to encourage this practice among the parents is particularly important in Kakamega County where the poverty rate, partly brought about by illiteracy, stands at 52% (Ngetich, 2013:6).

Table 5.2 (item 2) indicates that 63.9% (46.4 % and 17.5%) of the respondents felt that workshops or talks to the parents on the pupils’ health and nutrition were infrequently conducted (mean value of 2.65). Only 36.1% (16.7% and 19.4%) of the respondents indicated that such workshops were organized regularly. The parents need to be regularly informed about conditions to ensure good health and nutrition among pupils to boost their learning potential (ROK, 2010a:148) as malnutrition reduces attentiveness, self-control, aptitude and overall achievement (ROK, 2009c:27).

Table 5.2 (item 3) indicates that half of the respondents (50.1%, combined score) agreed that workshops or talks to the parents on the pupils’ protection and safety were held regularly. On the other hand, 49.9% (29.8% and 20.1%) of the respondents felt that such workshops were conducted infrequently (mean value of 2.50). The need for child safety and protection constitutes a CFS theme (Cf. Section 3.5.2). Both the schools and the families should ensure the safety and protection of the children (ROK, 2010a:83; ROK, 2008b: 12; Petronic, n.d.). This result indicates a need among primary schools and families in Kakamega County to be sensitized on the safety and protection of the children.

Table 5.2 (item 4) indicates that 73.3% (26.6% and 46.7%) of the respondents were of the opinion that activities for the fathers’ involvement were uncommon (mean value of 3.08). Only 26.7% (12.5% and 14.2%) of the respondents considered the practice to be common. Hornby and Laa ete (2011:42) and MOE (2010) confirm that engagement in parent activities is dominated by the mothers or female caregivers.
Table 5.2 (item 5) indicates that 88.6% (31.8% and 56.8%) of the respondents felt that the schools’ home visits to offer guidance on homework and other issues were infrequent. Only 11.4% (6.5% and 4.8%) of the respondents agreed that this was a regular practice. MOE (2011b: 19), Sanders and Sheldon (2009) and NASP (2005) hold that schools should create time for the teachers to meet with the families in the community over such issues as homework and conduct. Thus, the value of this practice should be investigated in the respondents’ schools in Kakamega County. Similarly, Table 5.2 (item 6) indicates that 60.7% of the respondents (34.5% and 26.2%) considered that workshops and talks on family literacy were uncommon (mean value of 2.74). Only 39.3% (13.4% and 25.9%) of the respondents reported that the schools regularly organized family literacy workshops and talks. Workshops on the involvement of the parents in improving their children’s reading and literacy skills influences literacy achievement, and achievements in mathematics and science (Florez, 2011; Obeidat & Al-Hassan, 2009:124-125; Sheldon, 2002; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). Thus, organizing relevant workshops or talks stand to enhance the pupils’ achievement in Kakamega County if they were more widely implemented.

Table 5.2 (item 7) indicates that 57.0% (43.9% and 13.1%) of the respondents felt that the schools did not regularly sensitize the parents on gender equity issues (mean value of 2.49). However, 43.0% (20.7% and 22.3%) of the respondents indicated that the sensitization of parents on gender equity by schools was quite common, which suggests that some progress has been made in this regard. Gender equity strategies constitute an important CFS theme (Cf. Section 3.5.3) aimed at benefitting the teachers, the parents and society in general (ROK, 2010a:102; ROK, 2007a:36).

Table 5.2 (item 8) indicates that most of the respondents, that is 72.0% (43.5% and 28.5%), felt that opportunities for the parents to share information on their children’s talents and needs with the teachers did not comprise regular practice (mean value of 2.90). Only 28.0% of the respondents (10.5% and 17.5%) indicated that such opportunities were sufficient. Thus the result indicates a need for improved communication between the home and the school in primary schools in Kakamega County. Table 5.2 (item 9) indicates that 58.2% of the respondents (26.4% and 31.8%) felt that the pupils regularly shared their educational needs with the teachers. On the other hand, 41.8% of the respondents (37.2% and 4.6%) regarded this practice as uncommon (mean value of 2.20). It is crucial that the children interact with the teachers so as to enhance learning achievement (Florez, 2011:4; ROK, 2010a:185,
UNICEF, 2003, 2003:9). Similarly, Table 5.2 (item 10) indicated that 58.6% of the respondents (44.8% and 13.8%) found that the parents did not regularly share their expectations of their children’s education with the school (mean value of 2.53). Less than half of the respondents (41.4%) (19.2% and 22.3%) regarded this as a common practice. Thus, overall the results of items 8-10 suggest that communication in the primary schools in Kakamega County is an area that should be improved.

Finally, Table 5.2 (item 11) indicates that most of the respondents (84.9%, combined score) indicated that support to single parents was not a regular practice (mean value of 3.3). Only 15.1% (6.1% and 8.9%) indicated that the schools offered support to single parents. Since parenting involves providing school support to all types of families (CESDP, 2012; Epstein et al., 2002; 2001; 1995; 1987), this is an important lack in primary schools in Kakamega County.

5.2.3 Part C: Home-school communication

Part C (14 items) dealt with home-school communication as a component of a school-family-community partnership programme. Items 1-12 required from the respondents to select options according to the four-point Likert scale. The results are displayed in Table 5.3. Items 13 and 14 required the respondents to identify practices applicable only to their respective schools. The results are presented in Tables 5.4 and 5.5.
Table 5.3: Home-school communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Total Valid</th>
<th>Missing</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Std. Dev</th>
<th>Var</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>My school holds parent-teacher conferences/meetings to discuss the pupil’s work and/or conduct.</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.986</td>
<td>0.973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The teachers follow up parent-teacher conferences/meetings to ensure that progress is made with the pupil’s work and/or conduct.</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.958</td>
<td>0.917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>As a teacher I am involved in compiling newsletters for the pupils’ families.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.865</td>
<td>0.747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I do send folders of pupils’ work home for the parents’ review and comments.</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.076</td>
<td>1.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>My school encourages the parents to contact the school whenever necessary.</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.840</td>
<td>0.705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>My school gives attention to the parents who contact the school to discuss their concerns regarding their children’s abilities and progress.</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.737</td>
<td>0.543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>The parents are given clear information regarding school policies, programmes and other activities within the</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.791</td>
<td>0.629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>school.</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
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<td>----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>The teachers contact the parents regarding their children’s poor progress or behaviour.</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>The teachers contact the parents to communicate good news about the pupil’s achievements.</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>My school informs non-custodial parents about the child’s progress.</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>My school organizes meetings with the whole parent body.</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>My school communicates good news about the pupil’s achievements</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.3 (item 1) indicates that 61.4% (32.5% and 28.9%) of the respondents felt that parent-teacher conferences or meetings to discuss the pupil’s work or conduct were held regularly; however, slightly over one-third of the respondents (38.6%, combined score of 29.2% and 9.4%) felt that this practice was infrequent (mean value of 2.16). This indicates a gap in practice in the sampled primary schools in Kakamega County. Parental involvement specialists (Florez, 2011:52; Erlendsdottir, 2010; Epstein & Sanders, 2006:86) strongly recommend the necessity of regular parent-teacher conferences to discuss the school programmes, the students’ learning progress and conduct. Table 5.3 (item 2) investigated follow-ups of parent-teacher conferences: 50.7% of the respondents (18.8% and 31.9%) regularly followed up parent-teacher conferences. However, an almost equal percentage (49.3%, combined score of 34.7% and 14.6%) did not frequently follow up parent-teacher conferences (mean value of 2.45).

Table 5.3 (item 3) indicates that 85.5% of the respondents (33.2% and 52.3%) did not regularly compile newsletters for the families (mean value of 3.32). Only 14.5% of the respondents (6.0% and 8.5%) regularly engaged in this practice. Table 5.3 (item 4) indicates that 58.3% of the respondents (36.7% and 21.6%) did not regularly send folders of the pupils’ work home for the parents’ review (mean value of 2.56). However, 41.7% of the respondents (23.8% and 17.9%) did this regularly.

Table 5.3 (item 5) indicates that 83.5% of the respondents (67.5% and 16.0%) reported that the school regularly encouraged the parents to contact the school whenever necessary. Only 16.5% of the respondents (13.4% and 3.1%) felt that this was done infrequently (mean value of 1.52). In this area the results indicate that the primary schools in the sample regularly encouraged the parents to contact them in accordance with the recommendations of the CESDP (2012), MOE (2011b:19) and NASP (2005) in this regard.

Table 5.3 (item 6) indicated that 89.3% of the respondents (60.1% and 29.2%) reported that the schools regularly attend to the parents who contacted the school to discuss concerns about their children’s abilities and progress. Only 10.7% of the respondents (8.7% and 2.0%) noted that this was uncommon (mean value of 1.53). According to MOE (2011b:19) and Madison (2000), schools should pay due attention to the parents who contact them on matters concerning their children’s education.
Table 5.3 (item 7) indicates that the majority, or 87.3% of the respondents (63.4% and 23.9%), noted that the parents were given clear information about school policies and programmes on a regular basis. Only 12.7% (9.6% and 3.1%) thought otherwise (mean value of 1.52). This finding suggests that the schools in the sample comply with MOE (2011b:18) which holds that the parents need to receive relevant information with respect to school policies, programmes and activities within the school, as they are key stakeholders in the field of education.

Table 5.3 (item 8) indicates that the majority (or 88.8%) of the respondents (65.7% and 23.1%) reported that the parents were regularly informed of their children’s poor progress or conduct (mean value of 1.47). Only 11.2% of the respondents (9.4% and 1.8%) indicated that this was not done frequently. According to Epstein (2009, 2001), the parents should regularly be contacted on their children’s progress in education and conduct. Table 5.3 (item 9) indicates that 80.4% of the respondents (44.7% and 35.8%) indicated that the teachers frequently contacted the parents to communicate good news about the pupil’s achievements. Only 19.6% (16.8% and 2.8%) indicated that they did not do this on a regular basis (mean value of 1.78). Florez (2011:54) and Madison (2000) advise that the schools need to regularly communicate good news, including the pupil’s achievements to the parents.

Table 5.3 (item 10) indicates that 59.1% of the respondents (39.5% and 19.6%) felt that non-custodial parents were not regularly informed of the child’s progress; 40.9% of the respondents (18.2% and 22.8%) indicated otherwise (mean value of 2.61). Florez (2011:57) and Epstein et al. (2002) hold that all those involved in the children’s education, including non-custodial parents, should keenly monitor their progress to ensure meaningful learning.

Table 5.3 (item 11) indicated that 72.9% of the respondents (42.9% and 29.9%) felt that general parent meetings was common practice; 27.1% of the respondents (22.9% and 4.2%) considered it to be uncommon (mean value of 1.88). Table 5.3 (item 12) indicated that 79.7% of the respondents (53.1% and 26.6%) felt the communication of good news was common; 20.4% of respondents (18.4% and 2.0%) did not regard this as a common happening (mean value of 1.69). Epstein and Sanders (2006:87) and Epstein and Sheldon (2006:119) also advocate for the regular communication of good news to the relevant stakeholders concerning the pupils’ achievements.
5.2.3.1  The means of communicating with the pupils’ families

Item 13 required from the respondents to identify the means that the schools used for home-school communication.

Table 5.4 shows the results.

Table 5.4: Means of home-school communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Means of communication</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Letter, notice or memo</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Home visit</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) e-mail</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Parent-teacher conference</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Meeting parents informally in the community</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Telephone calls</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) Meetings during co-curricular activities e.g. sports, performance etc</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) When the parents drop off the children</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) When picking the student's progress record or card</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j) Per SMS</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k) A notice-board outside the school gate</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l) A message book sent home daily</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>0.138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m) Regular newsletters</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n) Glad notes of congratulation for achievement</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.4 indicates that the most common ways that schools in the sample communicated with the pupils’ families were during co-curricular events such as sports and various performances (67.9%); per letter, notice or memo (66.8%); telephone calls (65.9%); parent-teacher conferences (65.4%); meeting the parents informally in the community (49.0%); when picking up the student’s progress records or card (48.1%). Less frequent choices of communication were when the parents dropped off their children (36.0%); per SMS (33.2%); glad notes of congratulation for achievement (31.3%); a notice-board outside the school gate (27.4%); and home visits (21.1%). It is interesting that the means of communication common to schools in the literature (Lemmer, 2013a) were not regularly used, namely regular newsletters (7.8%); e-mails (2.2%); and a message book sent home daily (1.9%). The fact that only 2.2% of the respondents identified e-mails as ways of communication between the schools and the homes could be due to poverty, illiteracy, and inadequate infrastructure like electricity in many households in Kakamega County.

5.2.3.2 The reasons for the appointments with the teachers

Item 14 required the respondents to identify reasons why the parents made appointments with the teachers. The findings are presented in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5: Appointments with the teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Yes Freq</th>
<th>Yes %</th>
<th>No Freq</th>
<th>No %</th>
<th>Total Freq</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) The pupils’ learning progress/achievement</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>90.9%</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) The pupils’ health and nutrition</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) The pupils’ safety and protection</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>66.2%</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) The equitable treatment of boys and girls</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>59.0%</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) The pupils’ conduct or behavior</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>93.1%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Meeting as PTA committee members</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>90.1%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.5 indicates that the most common reasons why the parents made appointments to see the teachers was because of the pupils’ conduct or behavior (93.1%), their learning progress and/or achievement (90.9%), and in their role as PTA committee members (90.1%). Less frequent were the pupils’ health and nutrition (68.7%), and safety and protection (66.2%). Equitable treatment of both boys and girls (41.0%) was the least common reason for a parent initiating an appointment.

The open-ended option was used by 11 respondents to comment on the fact that the parents came to make payments for school fees. Five (5) respondents cited participation in co-curricular activities. Three (3) respondents noted that the parents also made appointments to consult the teachers in connection with children with special needs, especially where the assessment of such cases was required. Indeed, access to the teachers by the parents is crucial in sustaining important changes at both classroom and school levels (ROK, 2010a:2).

5.2.4 Part D: Volunteering

Part D (11 items) dealt with volunteering as a component of the school-family-community partnership programmes. Items 1-8 required from the respondents to select options according to the four-point Likert scale.

The results are displayed in Table 5.6.

Items 9 and 10 required a “yes” or “no” response and are discussed as such. Item 11 was open-ended and is discussed accordingly.
## Table 5.6: Information on volunteering

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Total Valid</th>
<th>Missing</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Std. Dev</th>
<th>Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>My school recruits parent volunteers and makes them know that their time and talents are welcome.</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>3.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The teachers plan lessons to include help from the families and the community.</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>2.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>My school provides training to parent volunteers to match the time and talent with the work to be done.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>My school communicates with the parents and other stakeholders at the beginning of every year to identify talents, available times and the locations of the volunteers.</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>My school recognizes family and community members for the support they</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. My school creates flexible schedules to have more parents participate in school activities.</td>
<td>7. My school gives the parent volunteers opportunities to address the problems the classes’ experience.</td>
<td>8. My school involves the parents/community members to obtain materials and resources to be used either inside or outside the classroom.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>83.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>91.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>87.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.6 (item 1) indicates that 73.0% of the respondents (25.4% and 47.6%) felt that the recruitment of parent volunteers did not take place frequently (mean value of 3.06); 27.0% of the respondents (15.0% and 12.1%) considered it practice common. This indicated an area for improvement since the schools with strong parent involvement programmes always recruit the parents as volunteers and inform them of their invaluable support (NCUSD, 2013; Epstein, 2001; 1995).

Table 5.6 (item 2) indicates that 71.5% of the respondents (35.1% and 36.4%) felt that the schools infrequently planned lessons which require parent participation (mean value of 2.92); only 28.5% of the respondents (16.1% and 12.3%) felt the practice was common. Florez (2011:56), NASP (2005) and Epstein et al. (2002) advise that where appropriate, the parents need to be included in the planning of the lessons.

Table 5.6 (item 3) indicates that 74.9% of the respondents (15.8% and 59.1%) felt that the school hardly provided appropriate training in respect of the parent volunteers’ talents; only 25.1% of the respondents (7.9% and 17.2%) regarded this as regular practice. Furthermore, Table 5.6 (item 4) indicates that 53.5% of the respondents (17.3% and 36.2%) reported that the annual identification of parent talents did not take place regularly; 46.6% of the respondents (24.8% and 21.8%) felt that it was regular practice. To achieve the desired goals, CESDP (2012) and NASP (2005) recommend that relevant volunteers need to be involved from the initial stages in school activities. Table 5.6 (item 5) indicates that appreciation for the parent volunteers was a regular practice, as signified by 54.2% of the respondents (31.8% and 22.4%); 45.7% of the respondents (30.9% and 14.8%) indicated otherwise (mean value of 2.29). Epstein (2009) emphasizes the need to openly appreciate the family and community members who provide support to the schools to motivate them.

Table 5.6 (item 6) indicates that 55.1% of the respondents (23.8% and 31.4%) felt that the schools provided flexible schedules for parent volunteers; 44.9% of the respondents (24.8% and 20.1%) reported the converse (mean value of 2.41). Erlendsdottir (2011:35) and Christenson and Sheridan (2001) advise that the schedules should be flexible for the parents to volunteer.

Table 5.6 (item 7) indicates that 63.0% of the respondents (35.2% and 27.9%) reported that the parents had regular opportunities to engage in addressing problem areas in the school;
37.0% of the respondents (17.9% and 19.1%) reported the contrary (mean value of 2.21). TNI (2013:1) and Epstein and Sanders (2006:86) consider the invitation of parent volunteers to solve classroom problems to be crucial.

Table 5.6 (item 8) indicated that 54.7% of the respondents (24.8% and 29.9%) reported the use of parents to procure resources for the school was infrequent; 45.2% of the respondents (25.8% and 19.4%) reported otherwise (mean value of 2.59). In this regard the MOE (200b:27) recommends that the parents and the community members be involved in procuring learning and teaching resources.

Item 9 investigated the availability of a parent room or family centre for volunteer work requiring a yes or no response. Most respondents (88.1%) reported that schools did not have a room or family center allocated to parent volunteers to use to do their work, including activities such as meetings and making relevant learning resources. Only 11.9% of the respondents agreed that such a facility was available in their schools. According to NASP (2005), the schools should provide a designated parent room to facilitate the work of parent volunteers.

5.2.4.1 The match between the interests and talents of the parent/community volunteers and school-related needs

Item 10 investigated if respondents felt that interests and talents of parent/community volunteers matched the needs of schools. Just over half of the respondents (54.3%) felt that the interests and talents of the volunteers did not match the school-related needs; 45.7% of the respondents agreed.

In the open-ended item (Item 11) the respondents were invited to give reasons for their response to item 10. The following reasons were noted for those who felt that the interests and talents of the volunteers did not match the school-related needs, namely ignorance, poverty, poor attitudes, discouragement from the teachers and/or the schools towards volunteering, language barriers and the lack of policy regarding volunteering, unavailability of a room/family centre, discouragement by the greater parent/community, poor organization of volunteering activities, a lack of parental confidence and the school’s failure to tap into the
interests and talents of the volunteers. A number of these reasons are similar to those advanced by Getswicki (2010).

Conversely, the respondents who answered in the affirmative to item 10 listed the following areas where the parent volunteers’ interests and talents made a contribution to the school: making financial donations, providing guidance and counseling services, giving talks on issues such as life-skills, donating trophies to both the teachers and the pupils, offering free medical care, handling discipline matters, donating furniture, assisting in construction work, preparing meals, donating food, donating sports and games equipment, caring for food crops and livestock, training the pupils in various games and sports, donating sanitary towels, assisting in classwork, cleaning the compound, and preparing teaching and learning resources.

Several of these areas in which the parent volunteers can make a valuable contribution were also identified by Florez (2011:52), who suggests that the parents’ and the community’s involvement includes practical support, such as, painting, cleaning, repairing, building, food preparation, and fundraising support.

5.2.5 Part E: Learning at home

Part E (12 items) investigated learning at home as a component of the school-family-community partnership programmes. Table 5.7 indicates the frequency of the responses per item according to the four-point Likert scale. Items 11 and 12 required either a “yes” or a “no” response, and are discussed accordingly.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th></th>
<th>Often</th>
<th></th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th></th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total Valid</th>
<th></th>
<th>Missing</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Std. Dev</th>
<th>Var</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>My school provides information for families and the community about the essential learning standards as per pupil’s grade and age.</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td></td>
<td>336</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P</td>
<td></td>
<td>V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>361</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>My pupils’ families have a good understanding of the curriculum to help their children learn at home.</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>334</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>P</td>
<td></td>
<td>V</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>361</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>My school makes families and the community aware of the homework policy and how to implement it.</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>335</td>
<td></td>
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<td>P</td>
<td></td>
<td>V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>361</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>The teachers give homework</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>334</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P</td>
<td></td>
<td>V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>361</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
that requires the pupils to discuss and interact with their families about what they are learning in class.

5. My school engages the parents in setting learning goals for the pupils each year and in planning for related activities.

6. The teachers send activities home for the pupils to do during school vacations or over long weekends.

7. My school provides a calendar for the parents which indicates the important dates for tests and projects.

8. My school informs the parents about the school library and the opportunities

<p>| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|   | 104 | 28.8 | 31.5 | 99 | 27.4 | 30.0 | 64 | 17.7 | 19.4 | 63 | 17.5 | 19.1 | 330 | 91.4 | 100.0 | 31 | 8.6 | 361 | 100.0 | 2.26 | 2.00 | 1 | 1.099 | 1.208 |
| 6. | 106 | 29.4 | 32.1 | 76 | 21.1 | 23.0 | 100 | 27.7 | 30.3 | 48 | 13.3 | 14.5 | 330 | 91.4 | 100.0 | 31 | 8.6 | 361 | 100.0 | 2.27 | 2.00 | 1 | 1.065 | 1.135 |
| 7. | 118 | 32.7 | 35.8 | 41 | 11.4 | 12.4 | 95 | 26.3 | 28.8 | 76 | 21.1 | 23.0 | 330 | 91.4 | 100.0 | 31 | 8.6 | 361 | 100.0 | 2.39 | 3.00 | 1 | 1.191 | 1.418 |
| 8. | 85  | 23.5 | 25.8 | 52 | 14.4 | 15.8 | 107 | 29.6 | 32.5 | 85 | 23.5 | 25.8 | 329 | 91.1 | 100.0 | 32 | 8.9 | 361 | 100.0 | 2.58 | 3.00 | 3 | 1.132 | 1.280 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>for loaning books.</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>My school gives the parents guidelines to regulate the children’s television viewing at home.</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>My school gives the parents guidelines to regulate the children’s use of the internet.</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.7 (item 1) indicates that 51.5% of the respondents (38.7% and 12.8%) reported that information about learning standards were not frequently communicated to the parents; 48.5% of the respondents (29.8% and 18.8%) reported this was regular practice (mean value of 2.35). Chrispeels and Gonzalez (2006:34) and Rygus (2012) agree that the schools need to regularly inform the parents and the community members about the crucial standards of learning according to the age and level of the pupils.

Table 5.7 (item 2) indicates that 66.7% of the respondents (27.5% and 39.2%) reported that the parents did not often understand the curriculum; 33.2% of the respondents (13.5% and 19.8%) felt that this was common (mean value of 2.93). This is possibly due to the low standard of education and illiteracy among the parents in Kakamega County (Cf. Section 3.6.1.6). Florez (2011:55) holds that families need to have a grasp of the curriculum that their children are learning in order to be in a position to assist appropriately.

In similar vein, Table 5.7 (item 3) indicates that 57.6% of the respondents (38.2% and 19.4%) felt that the families were regularly familiarized with the homework policy; 42.4% of the respondents (32.5% and 9.9%) did not feel this was the case (mean value of 2.14). Table 5.7 (item 4) indicates that 62.9% of the respondents (34.1% and 28.7%) reported that interactive homework was regular; 37.1% of the respondents (31.7% and 5.4%) reported that this practice was not common (mean value of 2.08). NASP (2005) and Madison (2000) advise that in an effort to enable the children to learn meaningfully, the homework given to the children needs to provide for discussion and/or interaction with members of the family.

Table 5.7 (item 5) indicates that 61.5% of the respondents (31.5% and 30.0%) reported that the parents were regularly engaged in setting learning goals; 38.5% of the respondents (19.4% and 19.1%) felt otherwise (mean value of 2.26). Florez (2011), Epstein (2009) and Epstein et al. (2002) advocate for the inclusion of parents when setting learning goals and activities to be done at any given period.

Table 5.7 (item 6) indicates that 55.2% of the respondents (32.1% and 23.0%) reported the regular sending home of learning activities for vacations; 44.8% of the respondents (30.3% and 14.5%) felt that this was uncommon (mean value of 2.27). To ensure that the children continue to learn while at home during vacations or weekends, Florez (2011:59) and E-Lead (2008) recommend that learning activities should be sent home during vacations.
Table 5.7 (item 7) indicates that 51.8% of the respondents (28.8% and 23.0%) reported that the provision of a test calendar for parents was uncommon; 48.2% of the respondents (35.8% and 12.4%) reported to the contrary (mean value of 2.39). Table 5.7 (item 8) also indicated that 58.3% of the respondents (32.5% and 25.8%) acknowledged that library information was provided regularly to the parents; 41.6% of the respondents (25.8% and 15.8%) had a different view (mean value of 2.58). Madison (2000) recommends that the schools need to regularly make the parents aware of its library and loaning conditions.

Table 5.7 (item 9) indicates that 59.7% of the respondents (32.0% and 27.7%) reported that the provision of television viewing guidelines was uncommon practice; 40.2% of the respondents (22.6% and 17.7%) disagreed (mean value of 2.65). Similarly, Table 5.7 (item 10) indicates that 61.6% of the respondents (15.5% and 46.1%) felt that the provision of guidelines to parents to regulate their children’s use of the internet was uncommon; 38.4% of the respondents (19.2% +19.2%) had a contrary view (mean value of 2.89). A possible explanation for these results is the fact that many families in Kakamega County do not own television sets or computers, and thus guidelines for the children’s use of these media is not applicable.

The responses to Item 11 indicate that 91.0% of the respondents agreed with the other teachers on the co-ordination of homework assignments. This was considered good practice. Furthermore, item 12 indicated that 65.2% of the respondents had an active parent-teacher association, parental group or committees to promote learning at home at their respective schools. This suggests compliance with MOE (2011b:21) policy, namely that the parents should form school committees to assist their children with homework and with education in general.

5.2.6 Part F: Decision-making at school

Part F (10 items) investigated decision-making at school as a component of the school-family-community partnership programmes. Table 5.8 indicates the frequency of the responses per item according to the four-point Likert scale. Items 9 and 10 required either “yes” or “no” responses, and are discussed accordingly.
Table 5.8: Decision-making at school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>Total Valid</th>
<th>Missing</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Std. Dev</th>
<th>Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>My school includes family and community representatives on the management board and related committees.</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>98.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The parents and the community are involved when making school decisions which directly concern them.</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>98.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>My school nominates family and community members for regional and district committees, councils, seminars, workshops, etc.</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>97.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>My school encourages the parents from all segments of the population to become leaders and to get leadership training.</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>97.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>My school informs all the parents about the procedures</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>97.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
whereby pupil representatives are elected.

6. Where necessary, my school involves the pupils in decision-making.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>115</th>
<th>31.9</th>
<th>32.9</th>
<th>56</th>
<th>15.5</th>
<th>16.0</th>
<th>144</th>
<th>39.9</th>
<th>41.1</th>
<th>35</th>
<th>9.7</th>
<th>10.0</th>
<th>350</th>
<th>97.0</th>
<th>100.0</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>3.0</th>
<th>361</th>
<th>100.0</th>
<th>2.28</th>
<th>3.00</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>1.031</th>
<th>1.063</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

7. My school informs all the parents about the procedures whereby parent representatives are elected to school bodies so that all the parents have an equal chance to vote or to stand for election.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>245</th>
<th>67.9</th>
<th>69.0</th>
<th>34</th>
<th>9.4</th>
<th>9.6</th>
<th>66</th>
<th>18.3</th>
<th>18.6</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>2.8</th>
<th>2.8</th>
<th>355</th>
<th>98.3</th>
<th>100.0</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>1.7</th>
<th>361</th>
<th>100.0</th>
<th>1.55</th>
<th>1.00</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0.889</th>
<th>0.790</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

8. My school allows independent advocacy groups to lobby and work for school reform and improvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>87</th>
<th>24.1</th>
<th>24.9</th>
<th>70</th>
<th>19.4</th>
<th>20.0</th>
<th>115</th>
<th>31.9</th>
<th>32.9</th>
<th>78</th>
<th>21.6</th>
<th>22.3</th>
<th>350</th>
<th>97.0</th>
<th>100.0</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>3.0</th>
<th>361</th>
<th>100.0</th>
<th>2.53</th>
<th>3.00</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>1.093</th>
<th>1.196</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

171
Table 5.8 (item 1) indicates that 81.6% of the respondents (73.2% and 8.5%) indicated that their school regularly involved parents on the management board; only 18.4% of the respondents (14.7% and 3.7%) felt otherwise (mean value of 1.49). Table 5.8 (item 2) also indicates that 78.0% of the respondents (61.0% and 16.9%) felt that the parents and the community were regularly involved in decision-making; 22.1% (19.8% and 2.3%) considered this practice uncommon (mean value of 1.63). Table 5.8 (item 3) indicates that 55.7% of the respondents (41.4% and 14.3%) did not agree that the schools regularly nominated family and community members for regional and district committees and other bodies; 44.3% of the respondents (26.3% and 18.0%) viewed this practice to be common (mean value of 2.44). Table 5.8 (item 4) indicates that 54.0% of the respondents (30.6% and 23.4%) reported that their schools frequently encouraged the parents to acquire leadership training; 46.0% of the respondents (20.3% and 25.7%) held a contrary opinion (mean value of 2.57). According to Petronic (n.d.), leaders in various school activities need to be drawn from across the relevant population and that capacity-building among such leaders is crucial for the purposes of both efficiency and effectiveness.

Table 5.8 (item 5) indicates that 51.3% of the respondents (34.3% and 17.0%) noted that the parents were regularly informed of the procedures for pupil-leader elections; 48.4% of the respondents (28.3% and 20.1%) indicated otherwise (mean value of 2.43). Table 5.8 (item 6) indicates that 51.1% of the respondents (41.1% and 10.0%) held the view that the schools regularly involved the pupils in decision-making; 48.9% of the respondents (32.9% and 16.0%) disagreed (mean value of 2.28). Table 5.8 (item 7) indicates that 78.6% of the respondents (69.0% and 9.6%) agreed that the parents were informed of the procedures for electing parent representatives to various school bodies; 21.4% of the respondents (18.6% and 2.8%) were of the view that it was uncommon (mean value of 1.55). Studies show that the children whose parents are involved, especially in decision-making at school (Henderson & Mapp, 2002), are more likely to learn better compared to those whose parents are not involved. Table 5.8 (item 8) indicates that 55.2% of the respondents (32.9% and 22.3%) did not agree that the school allowed independent advocacy groups to work for school improvement; 44.9% of the respondents (24.9% and 20.0%) considered it regular practice (mean value of 2.53). According to MOE (2011b:17) policy, school management bodies need to work closely with all the relevant partners in advocacy, including creating awareness on the delivery of basic education.
The responses to Item 9 indicated that 71.5% of the respondents agreed that their schools informed all the parents about the names and contact details of the parent representatives serving in various school bodies; 28.5% others disagreed. The responses to item 10 indicated that 83.7% of the respondents agreed that the pupils took part in the election of the leaders; 16.3% disagreed. According to government policy in Kenya, the pupils should choose peer leaders (ROK, 2012a). Thus, every primary school in Kakamega County can be expected to adhere to this directive. Florez (2011) and NASP (2005) also encourage the election of pupil leaders and pupil participation in decision-making generally.

5.2.6 Part G: Collaboration with the community

Part G (12 items) investigated the collaboration with the community as a component of the school-family-community partnership programmes.

Table 5.9 indicates the frequency of the responses per item according to the four-point Likert scale. Items 11 and 12 required either “yes” or “no” responses and are discussed accordingly.
| No. | Question                                                                 | F     | P     | V     | F     | P     | V     | F     | P     | V     | F     | P     | V     | F     | P     | V     | F     | P     | V     | F     | P     | V     | F     | P     | V     | F     | P     | V     | F     | P     | V     | F     | P     | V     |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1   | My school provides the families with information about community activities that relate to learning skills, talents, mentoring and tutoring. | 115   | 31.9  | 32.1  | 108   | 29.9  | 30.2  | 93    | 25.8  | 26.0  | 42    | 11.6  | 11.7  | 358   | 99.2  | 100.0 | 3     | .8    | 361   | 100.0 | 2.17  | 2.00  | 1     | 1.012 | 1.023 |
| 2   | My school makes information about such social support services as community health, nutrition, safety, culture, recreation, guidance and counseling available to the pupils and the parents. | 94    | 26.0  | 26.3  | 109   | 30.2  | 30.5  | 121   | 33.5  | 33.9  | 33    | 9.1   | 9.2   | 357   | 98.9  | 100.0 | 4     | 1.1   | 361   | 100.0 | 2.26  | 2.00  | 3     | 0.952 | 0.907 |
| 3   | My school works with family and community representatives to find and apply for grants to further pupil learning. | 72    | 19.9  | 20.7  | 88    | 24.4  | 25.3  | 117   | 32.4  | 33.6  | 71    | 19.7  | 20.4  | 348   | 96.4  | 100.0 | 13    | 3.6   | 361   | 100.0 | 2.54  | 3.00  | 3     | 1.036 | 1.074 |
| 4   | My school organizes sessions to encourage the parents and community members to expose pupils to future job opportunities. | 54    | 15.0  | 15.2  | 82    | 22.7  | 23.1  | 126   | 34.9  | 35.5  | 93    | 25.8  | 26.2  | 355   | 98.3  | 100.0 | 6     | 1.7   | 361   | 100.0 | 2.73  | 3.00  | 3     | 1.015 | 1.030 |
| 5   | My school fosters service integration through partnerships involving businesses, civil organizations and other agencies. | 41    | 11.4  | 11.7  | 36    | 10.0  | 10.3  | 80    | 22.2  | 22.9  | 193   | 53.5  | 55.1  | 350   | 97.0  | 100.0 | 11    | 3.0   | 361   | 100.0 | 3.21  | 4.00  | 4     | 1.039 | 1.080 |
| 6   | My school thanks the local professionals including merchants, civil organizations and other. | 128   | 35.5  | 36.2  | 35    | 9.7   | 9.9   | 144   | 39.9  | 40.7  | 47    | 13.0  | 13.3  | 354   | 98.1  | 100.0 | 7     | 1.9   | 361   | 100.0 | 2.31  | 3.00  | 3     | 1.098 | 1.206 |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 7. | My school organizes joint co-curricular and cultural activities with the local community. | 83 | 23.0 | 23.3 | 43 | 11.9 | 12.1 | 89 | 24.7 | 25.0 | 141 | 39.1 | 39.6 | 356 | 98.6 | 100.0 | 5 | 1.4 | 361 | 100.0 | 2.81 | 3.00 | 4 | 1.190 | 1.417 |
| 8. | My school invites professionals from various fields to the classroom or school to discuss issues like the curriculum, HIV/AIDS, pregnancy, substance abuse, and sex, etc. | 117 | 32.4 | 32.8 | 80 | 22.2 | 22.4 | 123 | 34.1 | 34.5 | 37 | 10.2 | 10.4 | 357 | 98.9 | 100.0 | 4 | 1.1 | 361 | 100.0 | 2.22 | 2.00 | 3 | 1.020 | 1.040 |
| 9. | The parents are supplied with a list of the names of community organizations, such as welfare organizations and clinics, and their phone numbers so that they can easily be contacted for help. | 55 | 15.2 | 15.5 | 62 | 17.2 | 17.5 | 98 | 27.1 | 27.7 | 139 | 38.5 | 39.3 | 354 | 98.1 | 100.0 | 7 | 1.9 | 361 | 100.0 | 2.91 | 3.00 | 4 | 1.088 | 1.184 |
| 10. | My school helps to match the community’s contributions to the school’s goals. | 88 | 24.4 | 26.0 | 104 | 28.8 | 30.7 | 94 | 26.0 | 27.7 | 53 | 14.7 | 15.6 | 339 | 93.9 | 100.0 | 22 | 6.1 | 361 | 100.0 | 2.33 | 2.00 | 2 | 1.028 | 1.056 |
Table 5.9 (item 1) indicates that 62.3% of the respondents (32.1% and 30.2%) reported that the schools regularly provided the families with information of community activities; 37.7% of the respondents (26.0% and 11.7%) indicated that this was not a frequent practice (mean value of 2.17). Providing families with vital information to do with community activities can be a rich source of additional expertise, financial support and services. Table 5.9 (item 2) indicates that 56.9% of the respondents (26.3% and 30.5%) reported that the schools regularly made information available about community-based social support services to parents; 43.1% of the respondents (33.9% and 9.2%) felt that this was seldom the case (mean value of 2.26). According to Erlendsdottir (2010) and Petronic (n.d.), the schools should help the families to gain access to support services, such as health-care, cultural events, tutoring services and after-school child-care programmes. Table 5.9 (item 3) indicates that 54.0% of the respondents (33.6% and 20.4%) felt that the schools did not regularly work with the community representatives to seek grants to further the pupils’ learning; 46.0% of the respondents (20.7% and 25.3%) felt it was regular practice (mean value of 2.54). Assistance with grant-seeking is important among impoverished communities, such as the schools in the study.

Table 5.9 (item 4) indicates that 61.7% of the respondents (35.5% and 26.2%) felt that community-based sessions to expose the pupils to future job opportunities were infrequently organized; 38.3% of the respondents (15.2% and 23.1%) judged this regular practice (mean value of 2.73). Table 5.9 (item 5) indicates that 78.0% of the respondents (22.9% and 55.1%) felt that the schools did not regularly foster service-integration through partnerships involving businesses or civil organizations. Only 22.0% of the respondents (11.7% and 10.3%) were of a different opinion (mean value of 3.21). Sanders and Harvey (2002) and Sanders (2001) hold that the schools always need to involve the businesses, agencies, and cultural and civic organizations in coordinating the relevant resources and services to foster children’s education.

Table 5.9 (item 6) indicates that 54.0% of the respondents (40.7% and 13.3%) felt that appreciation was not regularly shown to the local professionals who offered their support for school activities; 46.0% of the respondents (36.2% and 9.9%) considered this common practice (mean value of 2.31). Furthermore, Table 5.9 (item 7) indicates that 64.6% of the respondents (25.0% and 39.6%) felt that joint co-curricular and cultural activities with the local community
was not a common practice; 35.4% of the respondents (23.3% and 12.1%) disagreed (mean value of 2.81). TNI (2013:1) proposed involving the local community in sporting events. Epstein and Sheldon (2006:119) argue that through interactions involving the parents, the teachers and the community, social ties are established, while the information exchanged accumulates as social capital (Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004; Coleman, 1994). Accordingly, this increases the students’ academic achievement.

Table 5.9 (item 8) indicates that 55.2% of the respondents (32.8% and 22.4%) considered the invitation of professionals to address the school on social issues as being regular practice; 44.9% of the respondents (34.5% and 10.4%) disagreed (mean value of 2.22). MOE (2011b:21) encourages invitations to relevant professionals and advises that committees should be formed to ensure that the school environment is free from drugs and alcohol. According to ROK (2009c:27), involving the social service providers as partners is the best way to develop policies to do with sanitation, hygiene and HIV/AIDS.

Table 5.9 (item 9) indicates that 67.0% of the respondents (27.7% and 39.3%) viewed the distribution of the names of community services to the parents as an infrequent practice; 33.1% (15.5% and 17.5%) indicated it happened regularly (mean value of 2.91). Table 5.9 (item 10) indicates that 56.6% of the respondents (26.0% and 30.7%) felt that the schools regularly matched the school goals with the community’s contributions; 43.3% of the respondents (27.7% and 15.6%) considered it an infrequent practice (mean value of 2.33).

Finally, the responses to item 11 indicate that 74.5% of the respondents agreed that pupils supported the community through various efforts; 25.5% of the respondents disagreed. Sanders and Harvey (2002) and Sanders (2001) confirm that the schools should participate in community-service activities. The responses to item 12 indicated that 50.7% of the respondents agreed that alumni were invited to participate in the school programmes; 49.3% disagreed.
5.3 PHASE 2: FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEWS

This section presents the findings gathered through the interviews (cf. 4.3.4). Firstly, a profile of the participants is given with reference to gender, age, occupation and educational level. This is followed by a thematic discussion of the participants’ responses based on Epstein’s six types of family-school-community partnerships.

5.3.1 Profile of the participants

As noted earlier in Section 4.3.2, thirteen (13) parents and twelve (12) PTA chairpersons were interviewed. In addition, ten DQASOs participated in the interviews.

5.3.1.1 Characteristics of the parents and the PTA chairpersons

Tables 5.10 and 5.11 present the personal characteristics of the parents and the PTA chairpersons respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Formal education level</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Induction into CFS initiative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Business woman</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Businessman</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Businessman</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to Table 5.10, eight of the parent participants were mothers and five were fathers. The predominance of mothers is typical of parental involvement worldwide (Lemmer, 2013b). Their ages ranged between 32 and 64 years. Nine were peasant farmers; four were business people. The predominance of farmers concurs with information from the County Government of Kakamega (CGOK, 2013:23), which indicates that a large proportion of the self-employed in the County are found in the agricultural sector. In particular, such people practise subsistence farming, including ploughing the lands, weeding, bush clearing, planting and harvesting.

Ten parents had a primary school level of education; three had no formal schooling. Parental levels of education influence the children’s academic achievement (Erlendsdottir, 2010:25; Sheldon, 2002; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). Low levels of education among the parents in the County suggest the reasons for the weak family-school-community partnerships. Furthermore, Table 5.10 indicates that only five of the parent participants had been inducted on the CFS initiative. According to MOE (2010), failure among the education stakeholders like the parents, communities and the schools to carry out their respective responsibilities and to implement policies is a major drawback regarding education reform in Kenya.

Furthermore, not included in the table is the following information, namely the parent participants lived a distance ranging from 100 metres to 3.5 kilometres from their children’s schools (mean distance of 1.7 kilometres). The participants who lived close to the schools could walk the distance within roughly five minutes; in the case of those living further away, the journey would take about 45 minutes on foot. With the exception of two parents, all the participants had cell phones and were within easy contact with the schools.
According to Table 5.11, nine of the PTA chairpersons interviewed were men and three women. This finding corroborates the fact that the leadership of the school management bodies indicates inequalities in gender representation in favour of men (ROK, 2007a:28). Ten chairpersons were aged between 35 and 54 years; two were 70 and 75 years old respectively.

Seven PTA chairpersons were peasant farmers, three business people and two pastors. In respect of the highest level of formal education attained, one held a bachelor’s degree, whereas nine held secondary school certificates and two held primary school certificates. This finding is in agreement with MOE (2010) which states that the level of education among members in leadership positions in schools in Kakamega County is low; thereby making it hard for them to carry out their responsibilities effectively. However, compared to the parent participants, the PTA chairpersons had higher levels of education. Hornby and Lafaele (2011:41) argue that the parents’ education levels influence their self-efficacy beliefs regarding their leadership abilities in parent bodies. Furthermore, Table 5.11 indicates that nine PTA chairpersons had been
inducted in the CFS initiative, including the five key areas, namely inclusive-learning, school safety and protection, equity and equality, health and nutrition, and school-linkages and partnerships (ROK, 2010a:2).

Furthermore, not included in the table is the following information, namely the fact that the PTA chairpersons lived a distance of between 100 metres and 3.5 kilometres from the schools (mean distance of 1.7 kilometres). This implied a journey on foot of approximately five minutes to 45 minutes to the school. Only two PTA chairpersons had a landline and access to e-mail at their places of employment.

5.3.1.2 The DQASO participants

The personal characteristics of the DQASOs who participated in this study are captured in Table 5.12.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Highest education level</th>
<th>Induction on CFS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.12 indicates that eight DQASOs were male, aged between 44 and 52 years, and two were female aged between 44 and 46 years. As was the case with the PTA chairpersons, this finding echoes the fact that leadership positions in educational management structures exhibit gender imbalances in favour of men (ROK, 2007a:28). Six participants held Bachelor’s degrees and four held Master’s degrees. Thus, these officers were adequately qualified to execute their professional mandate.

Furthermore, all but one of the DQASOs had undergone induction in the CFS programme. The induction took place at the national level, and the DQASOs were required to cascade the same training to the Zonal Quality Assurance and Standards Officers. Similarly, the latter were expected to share their information with the teachers, the parents and other stakeholders in their respective zones in the district. In particular, the DQASOs identified their major role in the CFS initiative as carrying out assessments on curriculum delivery, including the implementation of the ideals of the CFS initiative. According to Section 3.4.1, the DQASOs are required to play an advisory role, and monitor and sensitize stakeholders to enhance their compliance with the expectations of the programme, including the theme of parental involvement in the CFS initiative.

5.3.2 Theme one: Parenting skills

The parents’ role description and their sense of efficacy are influenced by their own family and academic experiences during their childhood, their current family systems and their recent experiences in the school systems that their children attend (TPI, 2012:2; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Green et al. 2007; Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004; Yukti, n.d.). In this study, most of the PTA chairpersons (9) agreed that the schools gave the parents the support and information to strengthen their parenting practices and skills.

A PTA chairperson said, “Through school, I’ve gained knowledge to handle children’s discipline, protection, health and nutrition.”
Another PTA chairperson added, “Most of the workshops or seminars organized by my school include aspects to do with parenting. As both a leader and parent, such information is quite useful.”

Although not all the workshops or seminars for the parents stipulated parenting as the key topic or theme, they nevertheless addressed several matters relevant to parenting.

“Often, the people my school invites to talk to us on the various issues affecting children’s education are well informed on the area of parenting,” a PTA chairperson concluded.

According to Epstein and Sanders (2006:86), Epstein and Sheldon (2006:119) and Epstein (2001), family-school-community partnerships should provide family services and support, increase the parents’ skills and leadership, connect families with others in the school and the community, and help the teachers with their work (cf. Section 2.3.1).

However, the findings suggest that while PTA chairpersons, as those in leadership positions, benefited from school guidance regarding parenting, other parents were less successful in accessing this knowledge.

According to one parent, “It is only the PTA officials who benefit from information on parenting provided by schools.”

Another parent noted that the school never provided any information on parenting, “So far, I’ve not received any information from school concerning parenting.”

A mother confirmed that the school had helped her to “…have an elaborate understanding of what personality and traits entail.”

As a result, she was now better placed to handle children insofar as both education and conduct were concerned. However, the same parent did not feel that the dissemination of information on parenting was the expected function of the school.
She commented further, “In any case, the school’s major role is to provide education to children, not to equip parents with information on parenting.”

The latter remark suggests that the schools need to raise the awareness among the parent bodies that the parents’ education should be part of a sound and effective parent involvement programme. Other parents were openly displeased with the school’s efforts to provide parent education.

As one noted, “Those guests who are invited to share with us on parenting require to be paid for the services offered. Such costs add to the burden we already shoulder in as far as children’s schooling is concerned.”

Another parent had an issue with the fact that some teachers and guests invited to talk on parenting were not yet parents themselves, that is, they did not have children of their own.

“What experience do those who are not yet parents have to share with us on parenting? Are we not better informed regarding parenting, compared to them?” a parent wondered.

Indeed, such attitudes could account for the low level of information concerning parenting among the parents in the county.

“So far, there is hardly anything new to be learnt concerning information on parenting that school offers,” lamented another parent.

This could imply that the schools either do not carefully choose the aspects or topics of parenting to be discussed, or the presentation of the same is wanting. Overall, these findings confirm the assertion that, although parental involvement is reflected in current educational policies and practices, what this means to the schools and the parents is not always clear.
The DQASOs revealed that as per the assessment reports, only two out of the 12 districts had organized a training session for parents on parenting skills, in the form of a workshop or seminar at the zonal level.

Regarding this training, a DQASO observed, “The training, organized and facilitated by both Zonal Quality Assurance and Standards Officers and teachers, involved a cluster of schools. During such sessions, information on positive discipline and related parenting skills like career guidance and counseling were shared.”

The DQASOs concurred that much of the information involving children’s discipline and other parenting skills were supposed to be offered by the relevant officers in charge of the various zones in the districts and at school level.

One DQASO explained, “Issues to do with parenting in general are largely handled by the Zonal Quality Assurance and Standards Officers and the individual schools.”

Such matters were deliberated on during the AGMs, class conferences and related meetings.

The DQASO participants agreed that most families in the schools for which they were responsible were not well-informed about parenting skills. As a remedy, DQASOs generally agreed that there was a need to organize workshops on parenting.

A female DQASP elaborated, “The need for families to be well equipped with skills and knowledge about bringing up children is imperative. Some of the challenges that affect learners, for example, low levels of confidence and academic achievement in their pursuit of education are associated with poor parenting.”

Annual general meetings (AGMs), invitations to schools, informal meetings in the community, notice-boards at school gates, SMSs, and the learners themselves were the means of conveying information on parenting to the PTA chairpersons and the parents. Where workshops on parenting were held, albeit infrequently, the learners were sometimes asked to relay information
regarding the dates and venues, and the persons to talk on parenting in particular seminars or workshops. Furthermore, the findings showed that the PTA chairpersons, the parents and the DQASOs agreed that discipline, life-skills, drug abuse and sex, career guidance, counseling, HIV/AIDS and nutrition were urgent topics that needed to be tackled during sessions on parenting. In particular, the DQASOs identified issues such as personality development, children’s rights (i.e., the rights related to education, health, nutrition, safety, protection, equity and equality), positive attitudes towards the children’s education, family-school-community partnerships and family-life education should be covered during parenting workshops.

On the whole, the participants’ views about the provision of information on parenting as a component of family-school-community partnerships largely concurs with the findings of the questionnaire (cf. Section 5.2.2). Accordingly, the parents are insufficiently equipped with knowledge and skills on parenting to assist their children to realize meaningful learning.

5.3.3 Theme two: Home-school communication

According to Green et al. (2007) as well as Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005), the teachers’ invitations to the parents to become involved in education are particularly influential to the students’ educational success (cf. Section 2.3.1). The findings indicated that the PTA chairpersons agreed that they had met their children’s teachers.

“Since I come to school often, I interact with the teachers a great deal,” said one PTA chairperson.

Another PTA chairperson concurred, “The nature of my work dictates that I make frequent appearances at school. This creates opportunities to meet the teachers.”

A PTA chairperson added: “Regular visits to school enable me to monitor children’s progress in both class and behavior. There are things a parent may fail to notice early enough in a child as opposed to the teachers. Therefore, frequent visits help in such circumstances.”
Regular visits to the school by the PTA chairpersons had led to improved achievements in the children’s education.

“Due to my regular visits to school in the last two years, pupils’ mean score in the end of term tests has steadily improved,” revealed a PTA chairperson.

“Teachers need to be motivated or encouraged to do their best. Thus, I spare time to do the same,” observed another PTA chairperson.

However, the regularity with which PTA chairpersons met with the teachers could be attributed to the leadership roles they play in their respective schools which then requires frequent visits to the school.

It is important to note that comprehensive parental involvement should include all the parents in regular, two-way and meaningful communication regarding the pupils’ academic progress, conduct and other school activities (E-Lead, 2008). In this study, the parent participants who were not in leadership positions did not evidence the same frequency of contact that the PTA members had with the school. A common barrier was the workload of the parents. A father, a casual labourer and peasant farmer, explained that he had not yet met his children’s teachers.

He said, “Not that I don’t wish to meet teachers, but I virtually fail to get time due to the tight schedule.”

This finding reinforces the assertion by Erlendsdottir (2010:35) that the parents’ work schedules may conflict with school events, thereby making the parents unable to attend them.

According to another parent, “Teachers hardly have time for parents due to their tight schedule. So I rarely plan to meet them.”
Another barrier to communication was language, as a parent explained, “I find it hard to go to meet teachers, especially those of them who don’t understand my local language which is the only one that I’m able to effectively use.”

Thus for some parents, the language spoken by the teachers determines whether they are involved or not, particularly with respect to paying visits to the school.

Transport and distance from the school was also a barrier according to another parent, “Walking for about an hour to get to school is really taxing. Sometimes I can’t just make it.”

Learners were primarily instructed by the schools to inform their parents verbally to meet the teachers or to deliver notes on the same. Other ways used to achieve such communication included face-to-face encounters. SMSs and phone calls were hardly used to communicate, especially where many parents were involved, due to the costs incurred. Illiterate parents were not able to read SMS messages.

A PTA chairperson confirmed: “Some parents can’t be reached whenever SMSs and phone calls are used. This is partly due to the failure to charge their cell phones for lack of a source of power, particularly electricity.”

One PTA chairperson and one parent reported that the teachers had made a formal visit to their homes to discuss serious problems, including absenteeism and domestic labour. Accordingly, where one child was a chronic absentee from school due to illness, the other’s academic achievement had deteriorated due to excessive involvement in domestic chores. In both cases the teachers provided the relevant pieces of advice which reportedly bore fruit. The concerned PTA chairperson invited the teacher to his home; a village elder accompanied the teacher in the case of the home visit dealing with domestic labour. No home visits were made to commend children or to express appreciation. Obeidat and Al-Hassan (2009:124) advise that the teachers need to contact the homes to notify the parents of a job done well, or in respect of their child’s progress, not only when they are lacking in their performance, or their behavior is causing problems.
Furthermore, all except one PTA chairperson and five parents had requested a meeting with the head teachers and parents to deliberate on a variety of issues affecting the children’s education in the previous four months. Only four participants observed that the teachers made phone calls to communicate good news about the children. Otherwise, good news was communicated during parent-teacher conferences, and by means of report cards prepared at the end of every school term (i.e., at three month intervals). All the participants except one reported to be comfortable during meetings with the teachers.

“Meetings between teachers and parents are quite informative. I do enjoy the proceedings,” reported a parent.

However, the parent who was the exception mentioned, “Every time we have a meeting, the teachers want things to go their way. They’ve little regard for our views.”

Both general and individual meetings between the parents and the teachers took place at school, the church or in the community. The low turnout of the parents at the school meetings remained a key challenge as well.

A PTA chairperson noted thus, “Out of a population of 400, only between 150 to 180 parents could attend meetings convened by my school.”

The findings also indicated that occasionally the pupils, especially in day schools, were sent to call their parents to attend the school functions. This was particularly after the parents had failed to form a quorum to conduct the business of the day. The parent participants were not happy with this practice, which involved the child missing school. The participants concurred that the learners should not leave school in order to be sent home to bring their parents to school meetings.

According to one parent, “Not only do pupils waste time meant for learning, but are prone to security risks, leave alone engagement in vices once pupils are sent home in this manner.”
They were in agreement therefore, that this practice should be terminated insofar as home-school communication was concerned.

The DQASOs revealed that they sometimes addressed the parents of the children in their respective districts during education days, with the release of the examination results and of the findings of the assessment of quality and standards at the schools. Other avenues through which DQASOs met the parents were reported as at school, sports events, clubs, the church and other social functions. According to the officers, letters, learners as messengers, SMSs and radio broadcasts were common forms of communication involving both the schools and the parents. The use of the radio was particularly common when bringing to the attention of the public functions such as raising funds for the school and visits by important guests, including alumni. While there was regular communication between DQASOs and head teachers, this practice seldom applied to parents.

“As an office, we more often communicate directly to schools, especially the head teachers in comparison with individual parents, guardians and others,” commented a DQASO.

In the company of relevant officers like the police and social workers, the DQASOs would sometimes visit the learners’ homes in cases involving sexual abuse between the teachers and the pupils, child labour, and when assessing the family’s socio-economic status, especially that of orphans and the vulnerable, that required different forms of assistance. The DQASOs communicated good news about the schools to both the parents and the community, using means such as summarized reports or circulars, at AGMs, and during education days and sports days. Like the PTA chairpersons and parents, the DQASOs condemned the practice of sending pupils home during class hours to ask their parents to attend school meetings. They strongly advised that other options be employed.

One DQASO argued that officers at the district education office mostly made use of a top-down approach with respect to communication with the schools. This is appropriate in an administrative context. However, it is less effective when the schools used this approach with the parents.
A DQASO observed, “Most school managers, including BOMs and PTAs more often than not stage manage AGMs and parent-teacher conferences, with minimal participation from the parents, in a bid to run away from transparency and accountability, especially where there is fraud and related issues.”

As revealed in school assessment reports compiled by the DQASOs in their respective areas of jurisdiction, a number of managers of schools do engage, particularly in financial mismanagement as well as fraud. In such instances, the law takes its course.

The findings in this study reveal that in comparison with PTA chairpersons, the parents in general have a much lower level of interaction with the schools. Both the participants in the interviews as well as the responses in the questionnaires (cf. Section 5.2.3) condemned the practice of sending pupils home, for various reasons, during school hours. As revealed in Phase 1 of the study (cf. Section 5.2.3.1), other means of communication common to the schools, such as newsletters, e-mails and a message book sent home daily, were the least used in the sampled schools as opposed to the literature on home-school communication.

5.3.4 Theme three: Volunteering

Research shows that the development of strong bonds between the school, the family and the community ensures benefits for the children, their parents and the teachers (Florez, 2011:4; Erlendsdottir, 2010:82; Koros, 2006; Epstein & Salinas, 2004). Particularly, the parents can work closely with the school through volunteers, thus assisting the school in solving the problems that the classroom faces every day (Florez, 2011:57; Epstein et al., 2002; Madison, 2000). However, the parents as volunteers should be appropriately recruited, trained and thanked for their efforts. In poor communities the parent volunteers can make a real difference to the school’s infrastructure, resources and the teachers’ support systems (cf. Section 2.3.1).

According to Madison (2000), parent volunteers should undergo an orientation session designed to outline their role in the classroom. Most of the PTA chairpersons (8) and several parents (6) in this study received adequate explanation from the teachers regarding how and/or what to do
during volunteer work at the school. Furthermore, most of the PTA chairpersons and the parents indicated that they had been involved in school activities as volunteers.

One of the parents who had just offered his services as a volunteer on a school farm had this to say, “I spent good time attending to maize and beans grown in the school farm, just for free. This is quite fulfilling as I put what I know best to practice. More importantly, I contribute towards having a healthy nation. I came to learn that the food crops grown in this school farm were consumed by the teachers and pupils as well.”

A PTA chairperson agreed, “Apart from playing my leadership role, I do assist in construction work since I have some little knowledge regarding masonry.”

Other parent volunteers either prepared or purchased teaching and learning resources to be used at school. Most of the participants were aware of the parents who volunteered at school, assisting with activities such as making tea and doing repair-work. Furthermore, most of the parent participants agreed that they would like to volunteer more often at the school.

One parent had this to say, “I’ll continue to volunteer whether I’ve a child in this school or not. Little will be achieved if support of children’s education is not there.”

However, a parent who reported to have not been inducted or invited by the teachers to participate in voluntary work said, “There are particular parents who are given opportunities to assist the school. I’ve never been invited to do so.”

Similar sentiments were echoed by another parent who retorted thus, “It’s not clear to me as to how one may voluntarily provide service at school in order to boost the education of our children. Only a few parents appear to be privy to such information.”

These findings imply that some parents felt left out insofar as offering their voluntary services in the schools were concerned. It is imperative therefore, that all the parents are invited to assist the school in various ways so as to better the children’s education.
Another issue which emerged during the discussion on volunteering was the matter of remuneration for services rendered. A parent who had not offered her voluntary services in her children’s school wondered why the parents should work for free.

“For any work that parents do for the school, they should be paid since the government caters for that,” she argued.

Payment for services is unlikely in spite of the government’s Free Primary Education programme launched in all the public primary schools in 2003. The funds provided are reported to be inadequate to ensure the provision of quality education to the huge pupil enrolment (ROK, 2009b). The schools should clearly explain to the parents the expectations in respect of volunteer-work, and distinguish between hiring parents in a professional capacity and volunteering. Notwithstanding, according to the participants, the schools usually provided the necessary equipment or resources for the volunteers to use.

“Occasionally, the school provides me with gloves, otherwise I don’t often use them,” a parent who volunteered to collect litter in a school compound revealed.

According to a PTA chairperson, “Volunteers who are engaged in the school farm are provided with aprons, pesticides, pumps and boots.”

The DQASOs advised that the parents and the community should be encouraged to volunteer in different activities at school.

One observed, “Volunteering may involve coming as guest speakers on a variety of issues, supporting the most vulnerable learners, providing guidance and counselling services as well as preparing relevant teaching and learning resources.”

Asked what kind of special skills were represented by the parents of the children in their respective districts, the DQASOs named professionals in fields such as health, psychology, education, agriculture, construction, guidance and counseling. The DQASOs revealed that they
seldom trained or guided the parents or community volunteers who wished to assist in the schools as this was mainly done by their assistants, that is, the Zonal Quality Assurance and Standards Officers and the individual schools. The participants reported that the volunteers were mainly thanked verbally or by means of written notes of appreciation.

The sensitization of the stakeholders in the field of education was being done in a bid to build strong partnerships. In this study there was general agreement by both the PTA chairpersons and the parents that efforts were being made to enhance volunteering among the various stakeholders in the schools to achieve meaningful learning among the pupils.

“Deliberate efforts are being made to make people, especially parents participate voluntarily in as far as collaboration with the school is concerned,” observed a PTA chairperson.

However, most of the participants indicated ignorance regarding volunteering and its benefits as the main barrier to effective partnerships at school.

As one PTA chairperson observed, “Some parents have poor attitudes towards family-school-community partnerships, including volunteering as a result of ignorance, and, I can assure you that this is a big, big issue that needs to be addressed.”

A case in point is a parent who lamented thus: “The issue of having parents and teachers to meet regularly in the name of enhancing collaboration is a costly affair, in terms of both time and even money.”

The findings indicated that the participants, especially the parents, were not adequately informed, recruited or inducted to volunteer their services at their respective schools. Similar findings were established in Phase 1 (cf. Section 5.2.4). The questionnaires confirmed that the interests of those who volunteered seldom matched the school-related needs due to ignorance, poverty as well as poor attitudes among the parents towards family-school-community partnerships. Furthermore, a room or family centre for volunteers was lacking in most schools in the county.
5.3.5 Theme four: Learning at home

Florez (2011:56) and NASP (2005) identified some of the potential avenues for family participation in learning at home such as the following, namely monitoring homework and education in general, leisure-time reading with the children, and participation in problem-solving teams (cf. Section 2.3.1). According to this study, both the PTA chairpersons and the parents reported that they regularly received reports of their children’s progress in respect of their learning and conduct.

As one parent remarked, “Reports regarding a child’s progress in learning and behavior is guaranteed, at least twice a term.”

Accordingly, this was done through such means as report cards, particularly at the end of the school term of three months, SMSs, phone calls, and academic days involving specific classes.

Most of the participants noted that they occasionally had a discussion with the teachers concerning the learning progress and conduct of their children. The parents noted that they understood the assessment system as given on the report cards. However, report cards excluded illiterate parents.

“I can’t read nor write. So I don’t comprehend the system of assessment used on pupils’ report forms,” testified an illiterate parent.

Epstein (2009) advises that school-home and home-school communications need to be done in a language and reading level that all the family members can understand.

Chrispeels and Gonzalez (2006:34) assert that home-learning activities can be helpful to all the families, hence building social networks and relationships between the schools and the diverse families are important. The findings confirmed that most of the parent participants and all the PTA participants, except one, discussed the homework assignments with their children. The parents assisted and/or checked their children’s homework by way of confirming whether the
right homework was done, the difficulties encountered and the attention given to the teachers’
comments and/or expectations, where appropriate.

“It is routine. I’ve to check my daughter’s homework. I do assist her where necessary,” observed
a mother of a class three girl.

As one PTA chairperson remarked, “In the recent past, I’ve helped my son to write good
compositions in both English and Kiswahili languages. He now writes creatively.” Another
parent noted, “I’ve to do everything possible to be at home early enough to assist my daughter
complete homework, especially in Mathematics.”

In the case of a parent who could neither read nor write, other family members were called in to
assist with the homework.

She said, “Older siblings of my child check her homework, they know how to go about this, and
correct her accordingly.”

However, according to another illiterate parent, “It is the responsibility of the individual child to
do his/her homework. Why should the child be assisted to do it?” he queried.

Clearly, there was a need to provide information to such parents concerning why as well as how
to help their children do their homework.

The parents also identified many other favourite activities that they shared with their children at
home or while the children were out of school, such as chatting during mealtimes, reading and/or
telling stories, reading religious books and texts, taking walks, visiting farms, kicking a soccer
ball and discussing local, national and even international affairs.

“Beginning Friday evening, preparations to attend church the next day, that is, Saturday
commence [and this involves the children.] This includes reading the Bible and singing
appropriate hymns.” noted a PTA chairperson, a member of the Seventh Day Adventist denomination.

Another parent noted the value of shared excursions with the children.

She said, “Visiting the tea farm, about four kilometers away from home refreshed children enough while not at school. The same applies to me. We all enjoy it.”

With the exception of one parent, all the participants considered themselves and the teachers as a focused team who worked together to provide the best as far as the children’s education is concerned.

A PTA chairperson commented, “Both parents and teachers have to work as a unit if meaningful learning among children is to be achieved.”

The participants agreed that they were tasked with a huge role to play in formally educating their children. Three parents identified CFS goals in particular in terms of their responsibility towards children, namely ensuring equity and equality, good health and nutrition, and safety and protection (ROK, 2010a:5; 2009d:5; 2009c:27; 2007a:7).

A PTA chairperson who had been inducted in the CFS programme said, “Issues concerning children like health, safety and equality are best addressed when efforts are combined among teachers and parents.”

The parent who was an exception in this regard raised a common objection to parental involvement, that is, the perceived distinction between the professional education provided by the teacher and the informal education provided by the parent as primary educator.

She said, “Teachers are the professionals insofar as the teaching of the pupils is concerned. Why should I interfere with their work?”
Other than regular assessment reports in the form of report cards, the DQASOs reported to parents and the community about their children’s learning through officers at the zonal level, at AGMs, on education days, and at seminars and workshops involving the various stakeholders in the field of education. A gap in practice regarding learning at home which was identified by the DQASO participants was the absence of a homework policy at the district level, although each individual school was expected to have a homework policy. This allowed the schools to develop homework policies in tandem with their unique circumstances, including the availability of such infrastructure as electricity. However, the schools would benefit by the guidance provided by a district policy. Furthermore, it emerged that most schools did not involve the parents and the community in the designing of homework policies. Similarly, the findings indicated that home programmes to involve the parents in their children’s reading, mathematics and other subjects were seldom organized by the schools. As Epstein et al. (2002) indicated, home-school-community partnerships make the school subjects more meaningful for the learners, including reading, writing, mathematics and science. As this study indicated, during their visits to the individual schools, particular education forums, seminars and workshops, the DQASOs rarely shared their ideas with the schools, the parents and the community on how to handle their children during the holidays or long-weekends.

Generally, most of the participants in this study discussed homework issues with their children. However, the schools needed to avail information about the learning standards required according to both the age as well as the grade of the children (cf. Section 5.2.5). Furthermore, the findings indicated that the schools rarely involved the parents and the community members in developing policies to guide the parents in respect of their children’s homework, a trend that needs to be reversed if meaningful education is to be realized.

5.3.6 Theme five: Decision-making at school

According to Florez (2011:54) and Getswicki (2010), the idea that the school belongs to the community should be cherished, as this fosters a sense of belonging. Particularly, decisions have to be made jointly by the teachers, the students, the community and other local entities (cf. Section 2.3.1). The findings indicated that the PTA chairpersons, in particular, acknowledged
their key role and responsibility in providing leadership in fostering family-school-community partnerships to achieve quality education as part of the CFS initiative.

A PTA participant said, “As a leader in the school, I play a part in as far as bringing together various stakeholders, including fellow parents, to enhance children’s education is concerned.”

Another PTA chairperson shared this commitment by noting, “Building collaboration among parents, the school and the community as a whole remains the responsibility of teachers and those of us in leadership positions.”

The PTA chairpersons and certain parents indicated that they were often involved in meetings at the school intended to discuss key issues, such as, the budget, the increase in school fees, alterations to the school’s opening and closing times, the school uniform, infrastructural development and in the designing of appropriate school policies.

“I’ve even led executive and general meetings to deliberate on crucial matters affecting the school,” revealed one PTA chairperson.

Another PTA chairperson remarked: “Through my initiative, we resolved to write a proposal which enabled us to secure money from the local Constituency Development Fund kitty. Using these funds, we’ve been able to put up two classrooms for pre-school children, thereby helping ease the congestion witnessed before.”

A parent who was often involved in making decisions at school observed, “Be it in drawing up the budget or formulating such a policy as the lunch programme for pupils, I’m invited to participate.”

According to another parent, “Before any levies are charged, parents are consulted. This is important to avoid uncalled for wrangles pitting the parent body against the leadership of the school.”
These findings reinforce the CFS goal which calls for a positive climate for all the stakeholders to be involved in a wide range of school activities (ROK, 2010a:2).

However, a parent who claimed to be rarely involved in such meetings noted, “Key decisions are frequently arrived at without the participation of some of us. One such recent incident in my school was the move to make all class eight pupils to be boarders. Among others, this move obviously has huge financial implications on me, yet I was not party to the whole issue.”

Epstein (2009) notes that the schools should ensure adequate representation of the entire community of parents on issues that affect the families. Accordingly, the schools that strive to engage the families in making decisions will gain the support of the parents, thereby improving the pupils’ achievement.

In this study, most of the participants cited involvement in decision-making to arrive at mutually agreed-upon issues and/or policies as the most effective practice or way to involve the parents at school.

“Once parents are involved in deciding on what needs to be done here in school, very little resistance or disagreement, if any, is experienced in the course of executing the same,” revealed a PTA chairperson.

According to one DQASO, “Full participation of the key stakeholders ensures ownership, I mean, feeling part and parcel of the school.”

Florez (2011:53) asserts that the involvement of the parents should be expanded to include making decisions about the children’s education, administration, evaluation, supervision and monitoring. The active participation of the parents in the school tends to reduce the traditional blaming of the teacher for the pupils’ failures.

However, not all the school meetings were scheduled at the convenience of the parents.
“Given the labour demands in the farm, particularly during planting and harvesting crops, attending school meetings becomes difficult,” disclosed a parent.

Nevertheless, the parents strived to attend the meetings whenever this was required.

“Whether convenient or not, I make every effort to attend them. In any case, it is hard to live to everyone’s convenience,” one PTA chairperson said.

Generally, the parents were aware of the school’s homework, language, religion, health and nutrition policies, but did not have the same information on policies to do with gender, the inclusion of special needs education, safety and protection. According to ROK (2010a), these policies require the input of the key stakeholders, the parents and the teachers to be effective and inclusive.

However, in spite of this gap, the participants indicated that there existed PTA, development, security, guidance and counseling committees involving the parents at the schools. According to MOE (2011b:21), the parents should form school committees to support the teachers in running the schools; to monitor their children’s progress; to ensure the school environment is clean and free of crime, drugs and alcohol; to ensure the proper use of school funds and other resources; to ensure that the pupils have a sufficient water supply and adequate sanitary facilities.

According to a parent who is a member of his school’s security committee: “I liaise with fellow parents and local leaders like chiefs to curb cases of insecurity, particularly where pupils are targeted. In the recent past, cases have been reported of pupils being raped and/or kidnapped while going to school for morning preps and/or tuition, a vice that has really been put to control nowadays.”

The parents who sit on the guidance and counseling committee offered their advice to those pupils and parents who have health, academic and related social issues that need to be addressed.
“My committee offers guidance and counseling services to cases involving HIV/AIDS, drug abuse and teenage pregnancies, among others,” observed one of the parents.

All the participants reported that their schools had functional management boards. Similarly, all except five parents revealed that they knew the persons on the boards. An issue of concern, however, was that most of the parent participants (7) never considered themselves to be school leaders. They understood leadership entirely from a formal perspective, that is, membership of formal committees.

A parent argued, “School leaders constituted the executive committee members of both the PTA and BOM.”

Another parent observed that “I never visit school often since I’m not a leader.”

This calls for deliberate attempts by the schools to be made to educate the general parent body and to give all parents the opportunities to exercise a decision-making role on such important matters as administration, leadership and the management of the schools.

A lack of information regarding the procedures involved in selecting parents to the various leadership positions in schools also came to the fore in this study.

As a parent remarked, “The head teacher identifies those to take up leadership positions in school.”

Another parent objected to the current practices of the selection of parent leaders.

He said, “We are all parents and should therefore be considered for the various posts of leadership at school. In fact, this needs to be conducted on a rotational basis.”

It is worth noting that although the parents and other stakeholders in the field of education should be given equal opportunities to play leadership roles in the schools, there are certain
minimum requirements which should be met for each of them. A number of the parents aspiring for such positions do not possess such qualifications and need to be advised accordingly.

The DQASOs mentioned that they attended the general parent-teacher conferences held at the schools when practically possible. In these forums, discipline, the roles of the school stakeholders, the payment of levies, the appointment and/or election of parent representatives, the learners’ progress in learning, career guidance, health, nutrition, safety and protection were deliberated on. There was general agreement among the DQASOs that a PTA policy that applied to the whole country, existed.

Although the policy was sound, one DQASO remarked, “There was need to bring on board all the relevant stakeholders during its formulation for purposes of ownership.”

Both the parents and the schools sometimes required guidance and information from the DQASOs about crucial issues and decisions affecting their schools and the children’s learning. These issues included those to do with financing various educational activities and the composition of the members of the school management board and committees, especially with respect to gender and special interest parties like sponsors.

“I once went to inquire from the DQASO about the authenticity of money charged, purportedly meant for examinations, involving a cluster of schools,” explained a parent after such levies had been abolished by the government in public schools.

Similarly, another parent reported to have gone to seek guidance from a DQASO regarding the roles of the PTA and BOM “…but was referred to the respective Zonal Quality Assurance and Standards Officer.”

Generally, most parents and schools made inquiries at the zonal offices and not district offices.

As this study revealed, the PTA chairpersons, by virtue of their role, regularly participated in making decisions in their respective schools. However, this was not the case with a number of
parents who decried exclusion in such crucial sessions. The findings in both Phase 1 (cf. Section 5.2.4) and Phase 2 indicated that the schedules calling for parents to meet at school were often at inconvenient times. Generally, the study established that engaging all the stakeholders in decision-making was an area for improvement and necessary for the fulfillment of the CFS goals of collaboration and partnership.

5.3.7 Theme six: Collaboration with the community

The idea that the school belongs to the community fosters a sense of belonging as decisions are made jointly by the pupils, the teachers, the parents and other local entities. According to MOE (2011b:27), the roles of the communities include participating on school management bodies, committees and parent associations; building a sense of ownership of the schools in the society; involving children in the decisions made regarding the school; mobilizing additional resources for use in the schools, such as accommodation for the teachers and sensitizing and motivating the parents to take girls, orphans, and vulnerable children, including those with special needs, to school (cf. Section 2.3.1). With the exception of three participants, the PTA chairpersons and parents appreciated the fact that the community played a key role in the school.

According to a PTA chairperson, “The community provides security, land, children, teaching and learning resources, professionals to handle different issues and sponsoring a variety of educational activities. Community leaders like chiefs are particularly useful when it comes to mobilizing people to provide various school needs.”

However, this sentiment was not shared by all the parents.

One parent who felt that the community hardly played any role in the school, said, “Some community members don’t have children in the school. What business do they have with it?”

A similar sentiment was echoed by another parent, “Those [community members] who are financially able have their children in high cost schools, often located far away from here. So they direct all their efforts there.”
This finding implies that some members of the community seldom devote time to assisting the schools in the respective localities when their own children are not at school there. Clearly, this is a wrong notion that requires to be discarded.

Overall, there was consensus among the parents that the schools made them aware of the materials in the community that could be used in both the teaching and learning processes.

“School urges parents to allow pupils and teachers have access to both teaching and learning resources in the community. We are even advised to improvise others where appropriate,” revealed a parent.

Erlendsdottir (2010:24) holds that communities can provide abundant information and practical knowledge that can be used to improve both teaching and the children’s learning. Furthermore, the participants agreed that sometimes the schools and/or particular grades took part in activities meant to assist the community, such as, cleaning the environment and performing during different functions.

One PTA chairperson observed, “Pupils of my school often perform during county or national holidays as way of collaboration with the community. They also occasionally volunteer in collecting garbage in particular spots in the community and donating blood.”

This finding is in agreement with Sanders and Harvey (2002) and Sanders (2001) who indicate that it is important that community collaboration with the schools should be a two-way activity. Where a medical centre may volunteer to provide health information, medical testing, presentations on careers and hobbies, the pupils should also conduct community services for the patients and the hospital staff, present art displays, or perform at hospital celebrations, by way of example.

According to the DQASO participants, the local community plays a crucial role in the life of the schools. Such roles include providing security and medical services, assisting the most vulnerable pupils, and sponsoring different co-curricular events.
“Community members need to keep vigil on those who might have intentions to steal or even vandalize school property, among others,” advised a DQASO.

In this regard, the medical personnel occasionally provided free services to the schools such as screening for and treating various ailments, and handing out information on pertinent health and nutritional matters.

“There are a number of community-based organizations focusing on the welfare of the most challenged children, including orphans,” noted another DQASO.

The findings indicated that, although at times not updated, name lists of important community contacts were prepared for the schools. The DQASOs reported that at the district level, they co-ordinated community outreach activities involving the Ministry of Education and/or sponsored by both public and private organizations.

“In a number of instances, both public and privately sponsored community based organizations involved teachers and/or schools in ventures meant to help the community,” observed a DQASO.

The role of community organisations was also noted by the parents and PTA chairpersons.

A parent mentioned the role also being played by the teachers in this regard, “Indeed, teachers being professionals and the fact that teachers are themselves part of the community, they come in handy in many organizations’ efforts geared towards tackling various issues affecting children.”

According to ROK (2010d:10), the guidelines for quality assurance and standards assessment of the schools in Kenya take into account parental and community involvement in the children’s progress in learning, school management and financial issues. In this study the DQASOs concurred that as far as their assessment of schools went, family-school-community partnerships in their respective districts could best be described as fairly effective. They were also in agreement that family-school-community partnerships appeared to be stronger, particularly since
the Basic Education Act of 2013 came into force. Accordingly, there was now little conflict between the PTAs and the BOMs compared to in the past.

“Role conflict between the PTA and school management body featured prominently before the Act became operational. Such conflict affected schools, including children’s education achievement adversely,” a DQASO elaborated.

According to the DQASOs, both the parents and the community members need to play their respective roles well so as to achieve the ideals of the five CFS themes.

A number of socio-economic challenges hindered the implementation of the CFS initiative in respect of family-school-community collaboration in the County. The problems identified were poverty, ignorance among the key stakeholders, hostile or unco-operative communities, and the low-funding of educational activities. This finding echoes the assertion by Getswicki (2010) that while the teachers are expected to play a pivotal role in creating a positive partnership with the families and the communities, increased tension between the school and the family and the community results from the stressful impact of external social, cultural and economic factors that affect the families and the parents adversely. This study revealed that the members of impoverished communities surrounding the schools stole and vandalized property.

Generally, “They hardly provided any substantial assistance to the schools,” a parent observed.

As per ROK (2010a:89), urbanization and overcrowding, socio-economic inequality, and high unemployment levels could breed insecurity.

The participants also mentioned problems caused by community members who left their livestock unattended, straying to the school compound, and thereby creating conflict.

A parent explained, “Herds of cattle do invade the school compound, destroying flowers, young trees and of course making the school appear untidy. Often, such culprits go scot free due to the laxity among those supposed to take appropriate deterrent action.”
Other community members entered the school premises to fetch water and other resources, to the disadvantage of the affected schools.

Some parents frequently defaulted in respect of the payment of levies intended to boost the quality of the children’s education.

“Parents need to appreciate the fact that education is not free per se as they are made to believe. If quality education is to be attained, they can’t run away from meeting their children’s education needs,” a DQASO advised.

In addition the DQASOs cited corruption, including the embezzlement of funds meant to foster the children’s education.

As one DQASO revealed, “Collusion among the school managers and head teachers to embezzle funds is a major concern.”

Child labour is another social problem in the county.

Another DQASO noted thus: “Involvement of pupils in child labour, for example, cutting sugarcane to be ferried to factories and harvesting sand for construction was behind the high degree of absenteeism amongst some of them. Put simply, this is detrimental to their education.”

The pupils’ engagement in excessive domestic labour was blamed on poverty and negligent parents who could not meet their children’s basic needs.

“An empty stomach will never concentrate in class. What should come first, food or school? So, let those parents concerned first avail food to their children so as to remain in school,” a parent argued.

Furthermore, inadequate staffing in the schools and district education offices had a negative effect on quality schooling.
A DQASO observed, “Since the launch of FPE in 2003 and subsidized secondary education in 2008, “the number of teachers hired annually never matches the pupil population, thereby raising pertinent education quality queries.”

The situation is not any better regarding the various education officers.

“Since 2008 no substantial employment of education officers, including the quality assurance and standards ones, has been conducted, hence worsening the situation,” observed another DQASO.

The participants proposed possible intervention measures to tackle the above challenges. Particularly, capacity building, including the proper sensitization of the relevant stakeholders, was seen as one of the best options to address challenges revolving around ignorance and poor attitudes towards family-school-community partnerships.

“Capacity building involving the main stakeholders is imperative if collaboration meant to boost children’s education is to be achieved,” a DQASO observed.

Finally, the findings indicated that collaboration between the schools and the community at large is crucial. The community, if appropriately involved in schools, can enhance the pupils’ security, their progress in both learning and conduct, school management, as well as the development of infrastructure (cf. Section 5.2.7).

5.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the results of the mixed method inquiry into family-school-community partnerships in primary schools which form part of the CFS initiative in Kakamega county were presented, according to Phase 1 and Phase 2.
Chapter six presents a summary of the inquiry, the conclusions drawn and recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of family-school-community partnerships in primary schools in Kakamega County, with specific reference to CFS goals.
CHAPTER 6
SUMMARY OF THE STUDY, FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains a summary of the reviewed literature and the empirical inquiry as per the statement of the problem, as well as the objectives. I highlight the major research findings and formulate policy recommendations on how to make family-school-community partnerships more effective, with special reference to CFS schools in Kakamega County, Kenya, so as to improve the quality of the education that the children receive. In addition, I suggest areas that require further research, outline the limitations of the study and draw final conclusions.

In chapter 1, I formulated the main research question as: How effective are family-school-community partnership practices in Child Friendly Schools in Kakamega County, Kenya? The research question was divided into specific sub-questions. The purpose of the study was to assess the effectiveness of family-school-community partnership practices in Kakamega County with a view to providing relevant policy recommendations to enhance the implementation and the achievement of the goals of the CFS initiative. I explored the practices concerning family-school-community partnerships through an extensive literature review and an empirical inquiry in Kakamega County, Kenya through a mixed method design involving a questionnaire for the teachers and interviews with the chairpersons of PTAs, the parents and education officials.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE REVIEWED LITERATURE

In chapter 2, I reviewed the theoretical frameworks that underpin family-school-community partnerships. I first discussed the benefits that family-school-community partnerships present, the roles that the various partners play, and the barriers that stand in the way of such collaboration. In section 2.1.1, as NCUSD (2013), Epstein and Sanders (2006:86) as well as Epstein and Sheldon (2006:119) argue, once the key stakeholders such as the parents and the teachers consider one another as partners in education, a caring community emerges, to the advantage of the learners. Among others, the children whose parents support their education and
foster good communication stand better chances of pursuing secondary school studies and beyond. Epstein (2009) concludes that parental involvement is the strongest influence in a child’s education, particularly in respect of both academic achievement and behaviour. As discussed in section 2.1.2, each school staff member has a responsibility to initiate and sustain parental involvement and participation. This will, in turn, enhance the wellbeing and academic growth of the children. This responsibility applies in particular to the members of the school management bodies (MOE, 2011b:17-18). In family-school-community partnerships, the teachers are particularly expected to play such roles as urging the parents to take their children to school, irrespective of their gender or special needs, and to make the school a gender responsive and child-friendly learning environment. It was also indicated that since the community is a key source of expertise, financial support and volunteer services, the schools need to develop strong partnerships with the relevant community organizations, families and the corporate entities (CESDP, 2012).

As indicated in section 2.1.2.2, the roles of the families insofar as the education of children is concerned, include monitoring homework, regular communication with the school on the children’s academic progress and behavior, sharing resources, and developing collaborations with the relevant educators. The families are also expected to be involved in the school’s decision-making, as well as governance, to offer voluntary services and to participate in learning at home (MOE, 2011b:21). Other roles include participation in problem-solving teams, adult educational opportunities offered by the schools and school-events like achievement and career days, athletics, and music and drama presentations. However, as asserted by Florez (2011:52) and NASP (2005), information on the involvement of the families in the children’s education should be provided, bearing in mind that their choices are varied. Amongst others, this is due to the fact that individual families grapple with unique challenges and have different sets of resources, skills and preferences. Thus the families’ roles need to be viewed broadly, as well as their kind of involvement in the schools (Florez, 2011:73). Section 2.1.2.3 explained that the roles of the communities in family-school-community partnerships, including their involvement as members of both parent committees and parent associations. Such committees build a sense of ownership of the schools, involve the children in the decisions made regarding the school and mobilize resources for use in schools, such as accommodation for teachers. Furthermore, these
committees may motivate the parents to take girls, orphans, vulnerable children, including those with special needs, to school (MOE, 2011b:27). It was emphasized that the community needs to be involved in coordinating resources and services for the families, the learners and the school, and in this regard businesses, service agencies, civic organizations, sports clubs and universities can play a role. The importance of two-way communication between the school and the community was reiterated. Furthermore, it was indicated that the community can work with the school through volunteers, including giving non-school personnel a chance in the classroom to interact with the children and tackle common problems and issues in society (Florez, 2011:56-57; Epstein et al., 2002; Madison, 2000). In section 2.1.2.3 it was pointed out that not all the families have adequate resources to help enrich learning among the learners. Thus, the community partners may provide, among others, transport and entrance fees required to visit museums and to attend cultural events (Sanders & Harvey, 2002; Sanders, 2001). Epstein et al. (2002) argued that deliberate efforts should be made to enable the school to offer reciprocal services to the community to further strengthen the family-school-community partnerships. Accordingly, such two-way support service could include a clinic to provide the learners with health information, medical tests, presentations on medical careers, and hobbies. On their part, the learners could conduct community service activities for the clinic staff, the residents of old age homes and children’s wards at the hospitals by creating art displays and performing items at special events.

Barriers to effective family-school-community partnerships were discussed in detail in section 2.1.2.4. Particularly, it was noted that the teachers’ roles in the promotion of family-school-community partnerships is hampered by external social, cultural and economic factors. Hornby and Lafaele (2011:37) as well as Getswicki (2010) attributed this scenario to the pressures of modern life. It was revealed that generally family-school-community partnerships in rural schools were weak. In particular, it was noted that some teachers do not welcome the involvement of uneducated or migrant parents in the education of the children. It was also claimed that parent-teacher conferences are often cursory (Lemmer, 2013a; Nichols & Read, 2002). Cultural differences, and the educational jargon that the schools often used with the parents, and financial as well as time constraints also hindered effective communication between the teachers and the parents (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). The parents’ work schedules,
resources and the frequent turnover of teachers were other barriers to effective family-school-community partnerships discussed in this section.

Some possible intervention measures to the above barriers to effective family-school-community partnerships were discussed in section 2.1.2.4. Epstein (2009) proposed the use of language that all the families can comprehend, ensuring the adequate representation of the entire community of parents on school advisory councils or school governing bodies, and disseminating information provided during workshops to the families who could not attend. The inclusion of the topic of parental involvement in both pre- and in-service teacher training was suggested (Epstein, 2013; The Net Industries, 2013:5). Getswicketi (2010) concluded that as a professional obligation, the teachers should develop constructive attitudes, philosophies, and communication and practical skills to build productive relationships with the families. A sincere understanding of parenting was indicated to be essential in an attempt to develop positive home-school-community partnerships (Epsteinet al., 2002). Overall, it was emphasized that the educators need to have a strong belief in the importance of family-school-community partnerships.

In section 2.2, the Ecological Systems Theory, as a useful theoretical framework underpinning family-school-community partnerships was explained. In particular were discussed the theory’s five environmental systems advanced by Urie Bronfenbrenner and other researchers. The importance of this theory with regard to understanding the factors that determine the growth and development of individuals was discussed (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; 1979). It was noted that if the theory is carefully applied, academic achievement, behaviour and the good health of the children would be enhanced. Thus, the theory was used to inform the formulation of government policies and programmes that can benefit the society, including the children’s education (Yukti, n.d.: 8). The Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence as well as Epstein’s framework for school-family-community partnerships (Epstein, 2001; 1995; 1987) were discussed in sections 2.3 and 2.3.1, respectively. Epstein and Sheldon (2006:120) illustrated how the Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence has influenced both the educators’ and the researchers’ views concerning family and community partnerships in the education of children. It was noted that the theory has helped to broaden the concept of parental involvement. It was observed that Epstein’s typology of six types of school-family-community partnerships (which informed the empirical inquiry
presented in this study) is considered a benchmark in the parental involvement literature worldwide. These types comprise, namely parenting, home-school communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making at school, as well as collaboration with the community.

In section 2.4, the Social Capital Theory, which emphasizes the need to promote social relationships, including communication among learners, teachers, families and communities was elucidated. It was therefore concluded that the researchers should devise appropriate strategies geared towards improving social capital, such as developing homework, as well as educational programmes for the children, especially after school hours. Section 2.5 presented additional theoretical contributions to parental involvement. In section 2.5.1 it was shown how the Ecologies of Parent Engagement model (Barton et al. 2004) can be used to include the parents’ experiences and actions inside and outside of the school to the benefit of the learners. Discussed in section 2.5.2 were three dimensions of parental involvement, based on how the parent-child interactions affect the students’ schooling and motivation, according to Grodnick et al. (1997). The three dimensions are behavioural involvement, personal involvement, and cognitive or intellectual involvement. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) model to guide the parental involvement process was examined in section 2.5.3. In section 2.5.4, Hornby and Lafaële’s (2011) model of factors acting as barriers to family-school-community partnerships were discussed. Indeed, the model provided an explanation for the existence of the gap between rhetoric and reality in respect of parental involvement. It was explained that the model could be used in the pre-service and in-service training of teachers, educational psychologists, counselors, social workers and other professionals who work in the broad education system. Such a move could enable these professionals to gain a greater insight into the factors which serve as barriers to, and facilitate the development of productive parental involvement.

Chapter 3 dwelt on the contextual background of the study in which the education system of Kenya was explored before I moved the discussion to Kakamega County. I observed that although Kenya has since independence made notable progress in the education sector, there were key challenges to be addressed, like developing family-school-community partnerships, as well as gender and regional disparities in the provision of education. It was indicated that the national launching of the CFS initiative in 2010 (Serem, 2012) was meant to address some of
these challenges. The five themes of the CFS initiative were identified and discussed in detail in section 3.5. These themes are, namely inclusive-learning classrooms, school safety and protection, equity and equality in the schools, health and nutrition in the schools as well as school-community linkages and partnerships (ROK, 2010a:2). It was emphasized that both the formulation and implementation of policies concerning these themes called for strong family-school-community partnerships.

Since the empirical inquiry was located in Kakamega, one of Kenya’s 47 counties (Section 3.6.1.1), an overview of its geographical, social and economic features was presented. I noted that although the county had reported impressive progress in the field of education and socio-economic development in general, it faced challenges such as weak family-school-community partnerships, poverty, drug abuse, insecurity, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and inadequate infrastructural facilities like schools and health centres. Thus there was a need for the relevant stakeholders to combine their efforts to combat these challenges. Particular barriers to effective family-school-community partnerships in the county were isolated as the failure among key stakeholders like the parents, schools and communities to execute their respective duties; poor communication; inadequate involvement in decision-making on school issues; the low level of education among some BOM members; and the low male attendance of meetings initiated by the schools.

6.3 SUMMARY OF THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

In chapter 5 I presented the research findings of the study conducted according to two phases of a mixed method design outlined in chapter 4. In Phase 1 I made use of a self-designed questionnaire distributed to a stratified random sample of persons. Phase 2 comprised a qualitative inquiry using interviews as data-gathering technique to explore the experiences of a purposefully selected sample of PTA chairpersons, parents and education officials. In Phase 1, descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages and mean were used to present the quantitative data. Phase 2 contains qualitative data which took a narrative format, substantiated by verbatim quotations. This was meant to provide both in-depth information as well as richness to the research findings.
6.3.1  Phase 1

I presented the research findings according to the seven (7) parts of the self-designed questionnaire, namely biographical data, parenting skills, home-school communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making at home and collaboration with the community.

6.3.1.1  Biographical data

As indicated in Table 5.1 (Section 5.2.1), of the 361 teachers who took part in the study the males and females were almost equally represented. The majority of the respondents, namely 73.4% were teachers; the rest were serving as head teachers, deputy head teachers or senior teachers. Only 14.4% (a combined score) of the respondents held a university degree; 85.6% of the respondents had either a certificate or a diploma as their highest academic qualifications which indicated an overall low level of professional qualifications. Their years of teaching experience ranged from at least a decade (67.9%) to less than three years (8.9%). This suggested that most of the teachers were informed regarding what the CFS initiative entailed. Regarding the levels of professional training where the teachers studied the family-school-community partnership, 39.9% indicated in-service education and training, training at the Teachers’ Training College (23.5%), and at university level (5.8%). A third indicated that they had never received such training. Only 58.1% of the teachers had undergone induction on the CFS initiative. Similarly, only 50.6% claimed to be members of the CFS team at school level. It therefore may be concluded that half of the respondents were inadequately informed of what their role was in the CFS initiative.

6.3.1.2  Parenting skills

Table 5.2 indicates that of the 11 items or practices investigated, only four (4) featured regularly in the primary schools in the county. They included opportunities for the parents to share in their children’s talents and needs with the teachers (72.0%, a combined score), the provision of information to parents regarding conditions at home that improved learning at each age and grade (66.9%), the pupils sharing their educational needs with the teachers (58.2%), and
organizing workshops or talks for the parents on pupil protection and safety (50.1%). Thus, the fact that most of the ideal practices with respect to parenting were uncommon calls for concerted efforts to rectify this situation.

### 6.3.1.3 Home-school communication

Table 5.3 shows that with the exception of only three of the 12 items, ideal practices existed in respect of home-school communication. Notably, a total of 85.5% of the respondents felt that hardly ever were newsletters for the families compiled. Similarly, 59.1% of the respondents reported that non-custodial parents were infrequently informed of the child’s progress. Furthermore, the teachers did not frequently send home folders of the pupils’ work for the parents’ review (58.3%). According to Table 5.4, the respondents identified ways that the schools used to communicate information to the pupils’ families. The findings indicated that the more common means of communication between the schools and the families (Lemmer, 2013a) such as newsletters, e-mails and a message book being sent home daily, were seldom used. Table 5.5 presents data on those issues that required from the parents to make appointments to see the teachers during the school term. The responses were as follows, namely the most common reasons were the pupils’ conduct (93.1%), learning progress (90.9%), and meetings held with PTA committee members.

### 6.3.1.4 Volunteering

Table 5.6 indicates that of the eight items under study, four (4) were common features in the schools as opposed to four (4) others. The common ones were, namely the provision of appropriate training for the parent volunteers (74.9%), opportunities for the parents to engage in addressing specific problems at school (63.0%), providing flexible schedules for the parent volunteers (55.1%), and appreciation for the work done by the parent volunteers (54.2%). Infrequent practices included the recruitment of parent volunteers (73.0%), the planning of lessons requiring parental participation (71.5%), making use of the parents to procure various resources for the school (54.7%), and the yearly identification of the parents’ talents (53.5%). Most (88.1%) of the teachers reported that the schools did not have a room or family centre
allocated to the parent volunteers to use to do their work. Half of the respondents (54.3%) noted that the interests and talents of the parents and/or community volunteers did not match the needs of those meant to benefit from them in the respective schools. The teachers who felt that the interests and talents of the parent/community volunteers seldom matched the needs of the intended beneficiaries indicated that it was due to the following: ignorance, the high poverty level, uncooperative parents/community, discouragement by the teachers and/or the schools, the language barrier, and the lack of confidence of some of the volunteers.

6.3.1.5 Learning at home

According to Table 5.7, five (5) of the 10 items investigated were frequently practised in the schools in the sample. The regular practices were, namely the teachers giving the pupils interactive homework (62.9%), engaging the parents in setting learning goals (61.5%), providing library information to the parents (58.3%), the families’ knowledge of the homework policy (57.6%), and sending home learning activities to be done during the vacations (55.2%). Less common practices included, namely a poor understanding of the curriculum (66.7%), the absence of the provision of guidelines to regulate the children’s use of the internet (61.6%) and of television viewing clues (59.7%), not providing the parents with a test calendar (51.8%), and with information on learning standards (51.5%).

6.3.1.6 Decision-making at school

As captured in Table 5.8, six (6) of the eight items under investigation were commonly practiced. Infrequent practices included the nomination of family and community members on regional and district committees and other bodies (55.7%), and allowing independent advocacy groups to work for school improvement (55.2%). The most (71.5%) of the respondents indicated that the schools provided all the parents with the names and contact details of those serving on various school bodies.
6.3.1.7 Collaboration with the community

Table 5.9 shows that only four (4) of the 10 items investigated were practiced regularly. The four common practices included, providing the families with information about community activities related to learning skills, talents, mentoring and tutoring (62.3%), availing them of information about community social support services (56.9%), matching the school goals with the community’s contributions (56.6%), and inviting professionals to tackle specific social issues (55.2%). Most of the respondents (74.5%) reported that the pupils in their respective schools supported the community by means of services such as cleaning the public areas, recycling waste materials, performing plays, or singing to the seniors in the community.

6.3.2 Phase 2

The interview participants included thirteen parents, twelve PTA chairpersons and ten DQASOs. I presented the interview findings thematically, that is, based on Epstein’s typology of family-school-community partnerships as follows, parenting skills, home-school communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making at home and collaboration with the community. A profile of the participants was also presented including gender, age, occupation and the highest level of formal education (Sections 5.3.1.1 and 5.3.1.2).

6.3.2.1 Profile of the participants

Tables 5.10, 5.11 and 5.12 indicate the characteristics of the parents, the PTA chairpersons and the DQASOs. As shown in Table 5.10, there were eight mothers and five fathers, whose ages varied from 32 to 64 years. This reflected the global predominance of mothers in parental involvement in the education of the children. Ten parents had attained primary school education; three had never undergone any formal schooling. The low levels of education among the parents could partially explain the weak family-school-community partnerships in the sample. Only five parents had been sensitized on the CFS initiative. This could be associated with the low level of the implementation of the initiative. Furthermore, the parent participants lived at a distance average of 1.7 kilometers from the schools. Walking to school took between five and 45 minutes,
depending on the distance covered. All the parents, except two, had cell phones hence could easily contact the school.

Table 5.11 indicates that of the twelve PTA chairpersons, nine were men and three women. This finding demonstrated the worldwide inequalities in gender representation regarding leadership in the school management bodies that often favour men. Seven of the participants were peasant farmers, three business people and two pastors. Only one held a bachelor’s degree, nine a secondary school certificate and two primary school certificate. Thus the level of education among most of the school managers in the sample was low. All the PTA chairpersons had cell phones, and could thus easily communicate with the schools. However, only two PTA chairpersons had landlines and e-mail facilities at their places of work.

As can be observed from Table 5.12, eight of the DQASO participants were males, aged between 44 and 52 years, while two were female, aged between 44 and 46 years. This confirmed the international trend of most key leadership positions in educational institutions being occupied by men. Four and six DQASOs held master’s and bachelor’s degrees, respectively. Furthermore, all except one of the DQASOs had undergone induction on the CFS programme. Hence the DQASOs had the relevant qualifications and skills to enable them to competently perform their professional duties.

### 6.3.2.2 Parenting skills

There was general agreement among the interview participants that most of the families were not well-informed by the schools about effective parenting-skills. The parents observed that the schools only occasionally presented information on parenting, especially on positive discipline. As per the DQASOs, training concerning parenting or the provision of information for the parents on homework was hardly ever organized. Both the DQASOs and the parents felt that such topics as discipline, drug abuse and information on sex, career guidance, counseling, HIV/AIDS, health, nutrition, safety, protection, equality, equity, life-skills and family-school-community partnerships needed to be covered in workshops involving parenting. It is worth
noting that most of these topics are emphasized in the various themes of the CFS initiative (ROK, 2010a) as discussed in section 3.5.

### 6.3.2.3 Home-school communication

According to the participants, some parents were yet to meet the teachers of their children. A matter of great concern was the practice whereby the schools often sent pupils home to convey information, even during class hours. This practice was condemned by the DQASOs and the parents. The schools communicated with the parents by means of SMSs, phone calls, letters and face-to-face meetings. The participants indicated that the teachers communicated good news about the children’s education during parent-teacher conferences, through SMSs, phone calls and in the report cards. Beside son education days, at the release of the joint examination results and reports of school assessments, at sports clubs, during worship and related social functions, the DQASOs hardly met the parents. This duty was delegated to the Zonal Quality Assurance and Standards Officers.

### 6.3.2.4 Volunteering

The participants noted that the recruitment of parent volunteers was never done on a regular basis. Some parents assisted on school farms, in construction work, and preparing teaching and learning materials. However, the teachers seldom gave an explanation for what the volunteers were to do during such voluntary work. Furthermore, the participants confirmed that most schools did not have a parent room or family centre for volunteer work. Particularly, the DQASOs advised that the parents and the community at large needed to be encouraged to volunteer as guest speakers, to support the needy and offer guidance and counseling services to the schools. Accordingly, such volunteers also needed always to be thanked, either verbally or through written notes.
6.3.2.5  Learning at home

The parents interviewed revealed that they seldom received information on the crucial learning standards based on both the pupils’ ages and grades. The parents were informed of the children’s progress in learning and conduct, particularly through report cards, SMSs, phone calls and during academic days. Overall, the parents understood the system of assessment as given on the report cards, and discussed their homework with the children. When the children were not at school, the parents communicated with them by reading to them and telling them stories, including religious ones, went for walks with them, visited farms, played soccer and discussed current affairs.

There was general agreement that the parents needed to work as a team with the teachers to promote their children’s education, including equity and equality, health as well as safety issues. The Zonal Quality Assurance and Standards Officers discussed the children’s learning with their parents at AGMs, on education days, at the release of the school assessment reports, and during various seminars and workshops. None of the districts in the county had a homework policy, and they rarely organized activities involving the parents in the children’s reading and mathematics. Every school was supposed to have a homework policy. However, most of the schools never involved the parents in developing such a policy.

6.3.2.6  Decision-making at school

In general the schools engaged the parents who were interviewed in discussing issues like the budget and various policies. Involving key stakeholders in making decisions affecting the schools was reportedly to be the most effective way of strengthening family-school-community partnerships in CFSs in the county. However, not all the scheduled meetings at the schools were at times convenient for the parents. While the parents were aware of homework, language, religion, health and nutrition policies, they had little information on gender, special needs education, safety and protection. The schools had BOMs, though some parents did not know all its members. Reportedly, there existed a PTA policy applicable to the entire country. Furthermore, there existed various committees in the schools involving the parents. Interestingly,
most of the parents did not consider themselves to be school leaders. They understood leadership only from a formal point of view, particularly as membership of formal committees. Comparatively, more parents and schools consulted the Zonal Education Offices than the district ones. Whenever possible, the DQASOs discussed with the parents such issues as discipline, the payment of levies, the election of pupils and parents to represent them on various bodies, the learners’ progress, career guidance, health, nutrition, equity, equality, safety and protection.

### 6.3.2.7 Collaboration with the community

The participants were in agreement that the community played a crucial role in the schools, such as in the provision of security, medical care, expertise on various issues and the sponsorship of needy learners. Generally, the schools made the parents aware of the teaching and learning resources in the community. The participants reported that the schools or particular classes sometimes participated in activities meant to assist the community, like cleaning, and performing at various functions. On its part, the community assisted the schools in the form of the provision of medical services, sponsoring vulnerable pupils, as well as a variety of co-curricular activities. The DQASOs, it was established, were engaged in community outreach activities sponsored by different organizations. Similarly, such organizations involved the schools and the teachers in ventures geared towards helping the community. However, the participants revealed that effective collaboration with the community was hindered by such challenges as hostile or uncooperative community members, poverty and ignorance. Reportedly, the school property was often stolen and/or vandalized by slum dwellers residing in the neighbourhood of the school. As indicated earlier, poorly-planned urbanization, overcrowding, socio-economic inequality and unemployment exacerbate insecurity (ROK, 2010a:89). Furthermore, the participants suggested a number of remedies to these challenges, specifically in respect of adequate sensitization, and in reducing poverty.

### 6.4 KEY FINDINGS

The key findings relate to the objectives of the study. Thus they are drawn from the reviewed literature as well as from Phases 1 and 2 of the empirical investigation.
1. Many researchers from such varied fields as sociology, psychology, political science, anthropology, philosophy as well as biology underscore the significance of developing strong family-school-community partnerships. This is particularly vital if meaningful learning among the learners is to be realized.

2. Kenya’s basic education sector grapples with formidable challenges, such as weak family-school-community partnerships, and various forms of gender disparities, thereby compromising the quality of the education provided. Women are particularly poorly represented in leadership positions involving educational institutions at school, county as well as national levels. The national launching of the CFS initiative in 2010 was geared towards addressing these challenges.

3. The educational standards of most of the teachers, the parents and the PTA chairpersons involved in this study were found to be low. Thus they could not effectively execute their respective duties and responsibilities, including fostering family-school-community partnerships. The situation is aggravated by the fact that many of these key stakeholders were never inducted on the CFS initiative.

4. The sampled schools in Kakamega County hardly ever organized workshops or talks for the parents regarding such vital areas as pupils’ health and nutrition; gender equity and equality; family literacy; volunteering, and the fathers’ involvement in their children’s education.

5. Many parents lacked the sufficient knowledge and skills on parenting to be in a position to boost learning among the children. These parents also had little interaction with the schools. About a third of the teachers had never studied any course involving family-school-community partnerships in their professional life. They could not, therefore, effectively play the leadership role expected of them in this venture.

6. Involving the parents in decision-making at school was singled out as the most effective way of promoting family-school-community partnerships. Interestingly, the parents were seldom invited to participate in the making of major decisions at school.

7. Some school managers influenced the proceedings during AGMs and parent-teacher conferences with the aim of having minimal participation from the parents. This was
usually done with the intention of avoiding to account for, for example, embezzled funds and related actions.

8. The schools did not always encourage partnerships involving independent advocacy groups or businesses. Joint co-curricular activities with the community were also not common. On their part, the teachers did not frequently plan lessons that required parental or community participation.

9. The issue of sending the learners home during school hours for whatever reason was roundly castigated by the participants in this study. There were numerous risks associated with this practice, including those to do with insecurity, let alone wasting essential learning time.

10. Although they are generally known to be popular means of home-school communication, newsletters, e-mails and message books sent home on a daily basis were found to be the used very seldom in the schools in the county.

11. Most of the parents were not well-informed, recruited or trained to volunteer their services in the schools. But even for those who volunteered, their interests and talents did not often match the school-related needs due to such reasons as the language barrier, the lack of relevant policy, discouragement from some teachers and parents, as well as a lack of confidence.

12. Most schools lacked a parent room or family centre to be used by those who were ready to offer their services voluntarily. This could act as a discouragement to potential volunteers.

13. The parents received reports concerning their child’s progress in learning as well as conduct, at least twice during a school term lasting three months. The schools, however, hardly provided the parents with information about the standards of learning required by the children of school-going age as well as the level of the children.

14. Most of the parents discussed homework issues with their children. However, the schools often never engaged the parents to develop a homework policy.

15. Challenges like staff shortage, ignorance, poor attitudes and inept leadership abilities contributed to weak family-school-community partnerships in CFSs in the county. Particularly, it was revealed that due to inadequate staffing, most of the teachers did not have the time to initiate collaboration with the parents and the community because
of the heavy teaching load they had. This situation was compounded by the fact that the curriculum laid emphasis on passing the examinations at the expense of producing an all-round individual. Hence, hiring more teachers, capacity-building, and proper sensitization among the key partners could go a long way to reverse this scenario, thereby strengthening the family-school-community partnerships in CFSs in the county.

6.5 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings that emanated from this study, relevant policy recommendations are made with a view to addressing various issues pertaining to family-school-community partnership practices in CFS primary schools in Kakamega County.

The following recommendations to improve practice have been formulated:

**Increased exposure to the CFS initiatives:** Most of the parents, PTA chairpersons and teachers who participated in this study had low academic qualifications. Given the numerous roles and expectations, including improving family-school-community collaboration, as well as the global trends in the field of education today, it is required from these key education stakeholders to attain higher academic and/or professional qualifications in a bid to perform their duties effectively and efficiently. The fact that some of the parents interviewed had never undergone any form of formal education requires that deliberate efforts are made to impart literacy skills among those affected as well as other stakeholders. It is worth noting that parents’ ability to support themselves as well as their children partially depends on their level of education. This is because education determines the kind of jobs, hence the amount of income that they can find in the formal sector of the economy. One way to raise the educational standards of parents is through attending the adult and continuing education classes spread throughout the county and by extension the country. Among other key players and/or partners, both the county and national governments, public as well as private entities need to be engaged in as far as this venture is concerned. It is important to note that integrating formal education institutions and/or structures with grassroots organizations could immensely reduce the cost of such programmes.
Commendably, the Teachers Service Commission, charged with hiring and management of teachers in the country, has a policy in place on study leave. Particularly, the policy allows teachers in its payroll to advance their educational levels in accredited higher learning institutions for specified periods of time. Thus, the affected teachers can take advantage of this opportunity. Alternatively, teachers who wish to further their education can do so through the institution-based mode which involves studying at the higher learning institutions during vacations or holidays. It was also revealed that only slightly more than half of the participants had gone through an induction course concerning the CFS initiative. Thus, it is imperative that all such stakeholders be inducted on the CFS initiative for its successful implementation. This could be done through well organized and inclusive workshops as well as seminars. Among others, a CFS provides an ideal atmosphere for meaningful children’s learning and is community-based, while its creation calls for teamwork.

**Teacher preparation for home-school-community partnerships:** As this study ascertained, up to 30.7% of the teachers indicated that they had never studied a course to do with family-school-community partnerships at either the teachers’ training colleges, or during in-service education and training or at university level. Based on this finding, it could imply that family-school-community partnership courses are not explicitly offered in the teacher preparation programmes. This fact points to a mismatch between rhetoric and reality in so far as teacher training and school practice is concerned. Hence, since it was expected from all the teachers, whether trained or not, to implement the policies involving family-school-community partnerships, the teacher preparation institutions, and in-service programmes should offer the relevant content as well as training in this crucial area. As pointed out earlier on, some of the challenges facing teachers in Kenya include poor working conditions as well as remuneration. Further, more than ever before, teachers now handle much bigger classes as a result of the Free Primary Education policy which became operational in 2003. Therefore, it can be argued that improving on the same would increase the morale of the teachers to execute their duties, including building sound family-school-community partnerships.
Father participation: Research shows that female parents tended to attend more to their children’s education, whether at school or at home, compared to their male counterparts. This study revealed that special activities were seldom held to encourage the fathers to participate in their children’s education. It is important, therefore, to regularly conduct such events to have the male parents participate as much as possible in the education of their children. Similarly, there existed a conspicuous gender imbalance among the PTA chairpersons and the DQASOs in favour of men, a state that calls for appropriate intervention. One key way to address such disparities is through embracing both the national values and principles of governance as enshrined in the Constitution of Kenya. These include equity; the rule of law; human dignity; social justice; non-discrimination and protection of the marginalized; sharing and devolution of power; transparency; accountability as well as sustainable development.

Home-school communication: As found in this study, the teachers were seldom involved in compiling newsletters for the pupils’ families. This issue has to receive attention. Instead, the teachers have to be engaged as much as possible when these documents are prepared. In this way the teachers will consider themselves as being part of the activities that the school undertakes. It was also established that newsletters, e-mails, and the message books that were sent home daily were hardly ever used as means of communication between the home and the school in the county, as opposed to what was found in the reviewed literature. This could be due to a lack of the prerequisite infrastructure, including electricity, information communication technology skills among the stakeholders, and poverty. The combined efforts involving the national and county governments, the schools, the individuals and the relevant institutions should be initiated to surmount these challenges. In this way, the family-school-community partnerships in CFSs, as well as quality education will be enhanced immensely. This study found that face-to-face meetings involving the families and the community members were more effective compared to other ways of communication between the home and the school, hence should be encouraged. An interesting finding, however, was that some pupils were sent home, even during school hours, for reasons that the participants in this study did not consider to be justifiable. Cases of rape, kidnapping and other vices involving the pupils being sent home had been reported, especially if they were walking alone. It is recommended that this practice be addressed on
district and school level and that the principals should develop an appropriate policy in this regard.

Volunteering: Most practices involving the volunteering of parents were hardly ever carried out in CFSs in Kakamega County. Therefore, the teachers need to encourage the parents and other stakeholders to render their services as volunteers, including bringing them to class where appropriate. On their part, the schools need to create rooms or family centres for the parent volunteers, organize workshops or seminars meant to offer the relevant training that the volunteers require and to ensure that their interests and talents match the needs of the intended beneficiaries. It is important to reiterate that ignorance, poverty, poor attitude, and lack of a policy concerning volunteering were cited as reasons that made the interests and talents of parent and community volunteers not to match the needs of the school. Other reasons revealed were shortage of volunteers, language barrier, discouragement from others, exam oriented curriculum, lack of confidence and ambiguity regarding activities where volunteers were required. A key intervention measure to increase volunteering is sensitization and capacity-building among the parents through workshops and seminars conducted at the school, district, and the county, and where possible, on national and international levels. The schools should also invite alumni to participate in programmes involving the children’s education. Alumni may serve as role-models to the pupils, the teachers and the parents, and contribute towards the acquisition of the prerequisite learning and teaching resources and the improvement of the schools’ infrastructure.

Parenting skills: It was revealed that schools did not facilitate the provision of relevant information to the parents on parenting skills. Thus, parent-education programmes should be initiated, particularly on topics such as children’s rights, family-school-community partnerships, family-life education, and literacy skills. Regarding the latter, the schools should host adult and continuing education classes. Furthermore, the parents should be better informed about the curriculum that the children were following, and encouraged to participate in developing homework policies at the school, and guidelines for their children’s television viewing and their use of the internet. It is important therefore, that schools, the relevant organizations, individuals and government departments step in to address these glaring gaps in as far as parenting as well as provision of education for citizenship are concerned.
Uphold the principles of accountability and transparency: As this study established, some school managers entertained minimal parent participation, particularly during AGMs and parent-teacher conferences. Accordingly, such managers dictated or influenced proceedings as well as decisions during such occasions. Cases of preparing some parents or even teachers to advance particular arguments, in favour of certain individuals or the entire school management, before holding the actual deliberations were cited. More often than not, such arguments were geared towards covering up some questionable acts that such individuals had been involved in, like financial fraud. In these circumstances, free participation of the stakeholders was stifled. Indeed, this practice works against the principles of accountability, transparency as well as democracy hence should be curbed at all costs. Thus, the various stakeholders need to be encouraged as much as possible to express their views freely as this stands to enrich the relevant debates and more importantly, foster mutual understanding and partnership among them. The budgets of both the national as well as county governments also need to be monitored and scrutinized, especially with regard to its impact on children’s education. More importantly, this should be undertaken with a view to rationalizing resource allocation as well as improving its effective and efficient use. In other words, appropriate mechanisms that enhance transparency and accountability of both county and national services, including collaboration among homes, schools and communities should be put in place. Indeed, such a move will ensure that the highest quality possible services are offered. Among others, such a move will discourage wastage of both human and financial resources.

Concerted efforts to combat poverty: Studies indicate that poor households spend more time on attempts to meet such basic needs as food, shelter and clothing as opposed to, say, building strong family-school-community partnerships and/or improving the quality of education that children receive. Indeed, as established in this study, such parents hardly turned up for scheduled meetings at school. As a remedy therefore, efforts need to be initiated to address the burden of poverty among citizens. Among others, equipping poor parents with appropriate entrepreneurship skills as well as extending sustainable loan facilities to them would increase their income. Indeed, the extra money realized could boost the parents’ self-confidence thereby giving them greater authority in as far as decision making both at home as well as school is concerned. While this undertaking remains the obligation of the county and national
governments as well as the affected households, among other key players, it is worth noting that forming strong relevant partnerships is critical in this pursuit.

**Foster education for creativity and innovation:** It was found out in this study that teachers tended to focus more on preparing learners for examinations hence had little time to engage in family-school-community partnerships. An examination oriented curriculum encourages rote learning and/or memorization at the expense of fostering such desirable skills as creativity, inquiry, discovery as well as ideal citizenship. Compared to the former, the latter practices are crucial in solving problems that we face in daily life. Thus, instead of laying a lot of emphasis on examinations in as far as the curriculum is concerned, deliberate efforts need to be made to concretize such pragmatic skills and/or practices as inquiry, creativity, discovery, good citizenship as well as collaboration among the various stakeholders so as to provide meaningful education to children. As noted in previous literature, child-centred as well as rights-based teaching methods are crucial in order to produce creative, healthy, confident and peace-loving citizens. Particularly, the primary school curriculum needs to undergo appropriate review. It is important to observe that any such curriculum review needs to take into account emerging issues that heavily influence career choices today like life skills, community involvement in socio-economic development, volunteerism, entrepreneurship, work ethics and lifelong education. This responsibility is mainly vested in the individual teachers, schools, curriculum developers and governments.

**Organize regular joint co-curricular and cultural events:** As this study found out, schools did not always organize joint co-curricular as well as cultural activities with the local community. Involving local communities in sporting events is particularly known to be one of the most appropriate ways of strengthening family-school-community partnerships. Thus, such activities require to be conducted more regularly. Through such events, the community feels to be part and parcel of the school and vice versa. In particular, such events lead to establishment of strong social ties. If carefully planned, pupils stand to benefit greatly, especially in academic achievement through such activities. Ideally, a CFS should motivate and empower the learners, teachers, parents and the community as well in order to realize the goals that the school sets.
6.6 POSSIBLE AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings derived from this study indicate the need for further research in the following areas:

a) The implementation of similar studies in the other counties in the country where family-school-community partnerships are claimed to be weak, so as to corroborate these findings. Such studies will particularly contribute greatly to both the design of effective teacher preparation programmes and to improve the implementation of the CFS initiative in the country.

b) Research into home-school-community partnerships in secondary schools will particularly extend the findings since parental involvement wanes in secondary schools.

c) The relationship between the teacher’s workload and the implementation of family-school-community partnerships is proposed for investigation.

d) Research on the role of alumni, especially with regard to school performance, infrastructural development and family-school-community partnerships, is recommended.

6.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

When considering the research findings, the limitations of the study need to be taken into account.

This study focused only on Kakamega, one of the 47 counties in Kenya, and involved a random stratified sample in Phase 1. Thus the findings gathered by means of the use of questionnaires can only be generalized to this population; they cannot be generalized to other CFS primary schools in other counties in Kenya. To corroborate these findings, similar studies covering a wider geographical and demographic area, including a bigger sample, are required. Furthermore, although the findings of Phase 2 added depth as well as richness of data, no claim is made to generalization. This was also not the aim of the qualitative phase.
Moreover, self-report instruments, like the questionnaire and the interview schedules used in this study are generally known to have limitations in respect of both validity and reliability. Furthermore, the respondents and/or participants may not necessarily have given their honest feelings in the items contained in the data-collection instruments. In other words, they may have given answers which they felt were acceptable rather than true.

6.8 CONCLUSION

The family-school-community partnership is an important component in so far as children’s education is concerned. This is also the case in respect of primary schools in Kenya, and this has been recognized by the CFS initiative in the country. This descriptive and exploratory study aimed at indicating the effectiveness of home-school-family partnerships with particular reference to Kakamega County based on a literature review and mixed method inquiry. The study suggested areas for improvement based on the findings.
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APPENDIX 1: COVERING LETTER AND QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

Assessment of the Effectiveness of Family-School-Community Partnerships in Kenya’s Child Friendly Schools.

Dear respondent

This questionnaire is intended to gather information to constitute part of a doctoral thesis entitled Assessment of the Effectiveness of Family-School-Community Partnerships in Kenya’s Child Friendly Schools for the degree of Doctor of Education (D.Ed Comparative Education) at the University of South Africa. You have been selected by either a purposive or simple random sampling strategy from the population of primary school teachers in Kakamega County. Hence, I invite you to take part in this survey. The questionnaire will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

The aim of this study is to assess the effectiveness of family-school-community partnership practices in primary schools in the county with a view to providing policy recommendations to facilitate the implementation of the Child Friendly School (CFS) initiative.

Please complete this questionnaire which comprises seven parts as honestly and freely as possible. You are not required to indicate your name or organization anywhere in this response form. However, you are requested to provide such information as gender, designation, level of education and teaching experience, all of which will contribute to a more comprehensive analysis of the study. All the information obtained from this questionnaire will be kept confidential and only used for research purposes.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary and you have the right to omit any question if so desired or to withdraw from this survey without penalty at any stage. Upon completion of the thesis, an electronic summary of the findings of the study will be presented to the respondents upon request.

Permission to undertake this survey has been granted by the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, Unisa. If you have any research-related enquiries, they can be addressed directly to me or my supervisor. Our contact details are: Prof E M Lemmer (supervisor), Department of Educational Foundations,
College of Education, Unisa, email: lemmeem@unisa.ac.za or Mr Benard Omenge Nyatuka, email: bomenge@yahoo.com, Cellphone: 0722 96 75 51.

If you are willing to participate, please indicate your informed consent by completing the mutual consent form below.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Benard Omenge Nyatuka

**INFORMED CONSENT**

I have been given adequate opportunity to read this covering letter. I understand the information about this study, the conditions under which I will complete the questionnaire and the use of the findings. My signature indicates my willingness to participate in this study.

____________________
PARTICIPANT’S NAME (PRINT PLEASE)        PARTICIPANT’S SIGNATURE
DATE: __________

____________________
RESEARCHER’S NAME (PRINT PLEASE)        RESEARCHER’S SIGNATURE
DATE: __________
**ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FAMILY-SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN KENYA’S CHILD FRIENDLY SCHOOLS**

**INSTRUCTIONS:**
Please mark the correct or most correct answer(s) with a tick (✓) as appropriate.
This response form is divided into seven (7) parts.

- **Part A:** Biographical data
- **Part B:** Parenting skills
- **Part C:** Home-school communication
- **Part D:** Volunteering
- **Part E:** Learning at home
- **Part F:** Decision making at school
- **Part G:** Collaboration with the community

### Part A: Biographical data

**Date:** Day---------/Month---------/2014.

1. **Gender.**
   - 1 Male
   - 2 Female

2. **Designation.**
   - 1 Headteacher
   - 2 Deputy headteacher
   - 3 Senior teacher
   - 4 Teacher

3. **Please indicate your highest academic qualification.**
   - 1 Certificate
   - 2 Diploma
   - 3 Bachelor’s degree
   - 4 Master’s degree
   - 5 Doctorate
4. Kindly indicate your length of teaching experience.

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<th>Less than 3 years</th>
<th>4 - 6 years</th>
<th>7 - 10 years</th>
<th>Over 10 years</th>
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5. Have you been inducted on the Child Friendly School (CFS) initiative?

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<th>Yes</th>
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6. Please indicate the level(s) of professional training where you have undertaken a course on family – school – community partnership.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teachers’ training college</th>
<th>Inservice education and training (INSET)</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>None of the above</th>
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7. Are you a member of your school’s CFS technical team?

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<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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Part B: Parenting skills
In this and the subsequent parts, please use the four-point frequency-scale to respond to the items below, unless indicated otherwise.

1. Always
2. Often
3. Sometimes
4. Seldom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My school provides information to parents regarding home conditions to support learning at each age and grade level.</td>
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</table>
2. My school organizes workshops or talks to parents on the pupil’s health and nutrition.

3. My school provides workshops or talks to parents on the pupil’s protection and safety.

4. My school holds special activities to encourage fathers to participate in the child’s education.

5. At my school teachers make home visits to provide families with guidance on homework and other issues.

6. My school provides workshops or talks to parents on ways families can improve the child’s reading and literacy skills.

7. My school sensitizes parents on equity issues, especially regarding equitable treatment of boys and girls.

8. Families have sufficient opportunities to share information about children’s talents and needs with teachers.

9. Pupils share their needs concerning education with me.

10. Parents share their expectations of children’s education with the school.

11. My school provides support to single parents.

| Part C: Home-school communication |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Items                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1. My school holds parent-teacher conferences/meetings to discuss the pupil’s work and/or conduct. |   |   |   |   |
| 2. Teachers follow up parent-teacher conferences/meetings to ensure that progress is made with the pupil’s work and/or conduct. |   |   |   |   |
| 3. As a teacher I am involved in compiling newsletters for pupils’ families. |   |   |   |   |
4. I do send home folders of pupils’ work for parents’ review and comments.

5. My school encourages parents to contact the school whenever necessary.

6. My school gives attention to parents who contact the school to discuss concerns regarding children’s abilities and progress.

7. Parents are given clear information regarding school policies, programmes and other activities within school.

8. Teachers contact parents regarding poor progress or behaviour.

9. Teachers contact parents to communicate good news about pupil’s achievements.

10. My school informs non-custodial parents about the child’s progress.

11. My school organizes meetings with the whole parent body.

12. My school communicates good news about pupil’s achievements.

13. The following are the various ways that schools use to communicate to pupils’ families. Please tick only those that are applicable to your school.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Letter, notice or memo</td>
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<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Home visit</td>
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<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>e-mail</td>
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<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>Parent-teacher conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>Meeting parents informally in the community</td>
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<td>f</td>
<td>Telephone calls</td>
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<td>g</td>
<td>Meetings during co-curricular activities like sports, performances and other events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>When parents drop off children at school</td>
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<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>When picking up a pupil’s progress report and or card</td>
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<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>SMS messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>A notice board at the school entrance</td>
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<td>l</td>
<td>A message book which is sent home daily</td>
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<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>Regular newsletters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>Glad notes which congratulate a child on an achievement</td>
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</table>
14. Below are some of the issues which require parents to make appointments to see teachers during the school term. Please indicate only those that apply to your school.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Pupil’s learning progress/achievement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Pupil’s health and nutrition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Pupil’s safety and protection.</td>
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<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>Equitable treatment of boys and girls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>Pupil’s conduct/behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>Meeting as PTA committee members.</td>
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<td>g</td>
<td>Any other (specify)</td>
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Part D: Volunteering

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<th>Items</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My school recruits parent volunteers and makes them know that their time and talents are welcome.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Teachers plan lessons to include help from families and the community.</td>
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<td>3. My school provides training to parent volunteers to match the time and talent with the work to be done.</td>
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<td>4. My school communicates with parents and other stakeholders at the beginning of every year to identify talents, available times and locations of volunteers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. My school recognizes family and community members for the support they provide by thanking them publically.</td>
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<td>6. My school creates flexible schedules to have more parents participate in school activities.</td>
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<td>7. My school gives parent volunteers opportunities to address problems the classroom experiences.</td>
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<td>8. My school involves parents/community members to obtain materials as well as resources to be used either inside or outside the classroom.</td>
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</table>
9. Does your school have a parent room or family centre where parent volunteers can work, meet and make resources?

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<th>Yes</th>
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10. Do the interests and talents of parent/community volunteers in your school match the needs of those intended to benefit?

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<th>Yes</th>
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</table>

11. Please explain your answer in 10 above.

Part E: Learning at home

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<th>Items</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My school provides information for families and the community about the essential learning standards as per pupil’s grade and age.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. My pupils’ families have a good understanding of the curriculum to help their children learn at home.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. My school makes families and the community aware of the homework policy and how to implement it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Teachers give homework that requires pupils to discuss and interact with families about what they are learning in class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. My school engages parents in setting learning goals for pupils each year and planning for related activities.</td>
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<td>6. Teachers send home activities for pupils to do during school vacations or long weekend breaks.</td>
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<td>7. My school provides a calendar for parents which identifies important</td>
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8. My school informs parents about the school library and the opportunities for loaning books.


11. Do you agree with the rest of the teachers on how to co-ordinate homework assignments in your school?

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<th>Yes</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

12. Does the school have an active parent-teacher association, parental group or committees to promote learning at home?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
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</table>

### Part F: Decision making at school

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My school includes family and community representatives in the board of management and related committees.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Parents and the community are involved while making school decisions which directly concern them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. My school nominates family and community members for regional and district committees, councils, seminars, workshops, etc.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4. My school encourages parents from all segments of the population to become leaders and to get leadership training.

5. My school informs all parents about the procedures whereby pupil representatives are elected.

6. Where necessary, my school involves pupils in decision making.

7. My school informs all parents about the procedures whereby parent representatives are elected to school bodies so that all parents have an equal chance to vote or to stand for election.

8. My school allows independent advocacy groups to lobby and work for school reform and improvement.

9. Are all parents in your school informed about the names and contact details of parent representatives on relevant school bodies?

   | 1 | Yes |
   | 2 | No  |

10. Do pupils in your school elect their leaders?

    | 1 | Yes |
    | 2 | No  |

**Part G: Collaboration with the community**

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<th>Items</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My school provides families with information about community activities that relate to learning skills, talents, mentoring and tutoring.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. My school makes information about such social support services as community health, nutrition, safety, culture, recreation, guidance and counseling available to pupils and parents.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. My school works with family and community representatives to find</td>
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</table>
and apply for grants to further pupil learning.

4. My school organizes sessions to encourage parents and community members to expose pupils to future job opportunities.

5. My school fosters service integration through partnerships involving businesses, civil organizations and other agencies.

6. My school thanks local professionals including merchants, civil organizations and other agencies who offer support to school activities.

7. My school organizes joint co-curricular and cultural activities with the local community.

8. My school invites professionals from various fields to the classroom or school to discuss issues like the curriculum, HIV/AIDS, pregnancy, substance and sexual abuse, etc.

9. Parents are supplied with a list of names of community organisations, such as welfare organisations and clinics, and their phone numbers so that they can be easily contacted for help.

10. My school helps match community contributions to school goals.

11. Pupils in my school do support the community through services such as cleaning public areas, recycling waste products, performing plays or singing to their seniors and the community.

12. Are alumni ever invited to participate in school programmes involving pupils?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.
APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PARENTS/PTA CHAIRPERSONS

Introduction

My name is Benard Omenge Nyatuka. I am doing research on family-school-community partnerships as part of my doctoral thesis entitled: Assessment of the Effectiveness of Family-School-Community Partnerships in Kenya’s Child Friendly Schools for the degree of Doctor of Education (Comparative Education) at the University of South Africa (Unisa). I would like to know more about your views and experiences or practices regarding family-school-community partnerships in your school. I hereby request you to answer the following questions honestly and freely according to your own knowledge and understanding. The information you provide (please refer to the written consent form) will be treated confidentially and will not in any way be used for any other purpose other than for research and school improvement only.

Personal details

Before the interview begun I collected the following data on paper from the participants:

School----------------------------- District-----------------------------
Pseudonym (please choose any name that you would like to be referred to in my written account-----------------------------------

Gender: Male------------------------------- Female--------------------------------
Age----------------------------------- Occupation----------------------------------
Highest level of formal education attained:
None ----------- Primary----------- Secondary--------- Post – secondary ------------

Were you inducted on the CFS initiative? If yes, what are your roles in this initiative?
How many children do you have in Preschool?-----------Primary school?------------------------
Secondary school?----------------------------- University?-----------------------------
How many of your children attend this school?----------- What grades are they in?----------

How far is the school from your home? --- About how long does it take you to get to the school?- ----------------------------------

268
Do you have a cell phone?------------Do you have a landline?------------
Do you have email at home or work?--------------------------

Parenting support
Let us chat about the challenge of parenting children today. It is not an easy task!
Has the school given you any kind of support or information concerning parenting? Kindly elaborate.
How does the school communicate this kind of help to you?
Which topics would you suggest to be discussed regarding the topic of parenting?

Communication
Let us now chat about communicating with the school, the teachers and community about your child.
Have you met your child’s teachers? If yes, how have you got to know them? (through meetings at school, the church or the community, etc).
Which ways does the school usually use to communicate with you? (letters, SMS, phone calls, home to school book, face to face, etc).
Has any teacher ever visited you and your family at home? Please explain the purpose of the visit?
Do you ever request for a meeting with the teacher(s)? How do you go about it?
Do teachers communicate good news about your child with you? How do they do that?
Are you comfortable during parent-teacher meetings? Why?
Is there anything regarding home-school communication that you would like to change?

Volunteering
Have you been involved in any activities at the school as a volunteer? Please describe a recent experience on the same.
Did teachers explain to you how/what to do when you were volunteering? Did they give you the necessary equipment or resources? (e.g. If you were cooking, or making tea, were there facilities?)
Are you aware of other parents who assist at the school? What kind of assistance do they give?
Would you like to contribute further to the school? How could you do this?
Children’s learning at home
Do you get regular reports of your child’s learning progress and or conduct? Which means are used to do this? Do you discuss your child’s learning progress and or conduct with the teacher? Do you understand the assessment system as given on the reports cards? Do you discuss your child’s homework with them? How do you assist or check the homework? What are your favourite activities that you share with your child at home/out of school? (chatting during meals, in the car/bus/taxi? Reading/telling stories? Reading the Bible/any sacred book and praying? Discussing local or national events? Kicking a soccer/rugby ball? Going for walks?, etc.) Do you think of yourself and the teacher as a team or do you feel the teacher is the expert who should educate your child formally? Please comment freely.

Decision making
Do you regularly attend parent meetings where budget is discussed and policies made? Are schedules concerning parent meetings convenient for you to attend? Are you aware of special policies at the school? (Homework policy, language policy, gender policy, health and nutrition policy, safety and protection policy, policy on inclusion of special needs children, religion?, etc.) Do you have a SGB at the school? Do you know who is on the SGB? Are there committees at the school such as a Mothers’ committee, PTA committee, sports committee involving parents? Are you a member? If so, please describe what you do on the committee? Does the school seek your opinion before making such major decisions as increasing school fees, changing school times or changing school uniform? How is this done? Do you consider yourself as a school leader? In which other ways could you offer your services to the school?

Community collaboration
Does your community play a role in your school? How is this done? Does the school make you aware of resources in the community that may be used to enrich the learning/teaching process? Is your school/child’s class involved in activities meant to assist the community? Kindly elaborate.
Additional information
In what ways is family-school-community collaboration being enhanced in your school to ensure meaningful learning among pupils?
What do you consider as the main barrier to effective family-school-community partnership at school?
In your opinion, what is the most effective practice or way to involve parents at school?
Are there any challenges facing the implementation of the CFS initiative in your school with respect to family-school-community collaboration? Please elaborate.
In your opinion, what can be done to address these challenges?

THANK YOU FOR THIS WONDERFUL INTERVIEW.
APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR DQASOS

Introduction

My name is Benard Omenge Nyatuka. I am doing research on family-school-community partnerships as part of my doctoral thesis entitled: *Assessment of the Effectiveness of Family-School-Community Partnerships in Kenya’s Child Friendly Schools* for the degree of Doctor of Education (Comparative Education) at the University of South Africa (Unisa). I would like to know more about your views and experiences or practices involving family-school-community partnerships in your school. I kindly ask you to answer the following questions honestly and freely according to your own knowledge and understanding. The information you give (please refer to the written consent form) will be treated confidentially and will not in any way be used for any other purpose other than for research and school improvement alone.

Personal details

Before the interview started I collected the following data on paper from the participants:

District-----------------------------------------------

Pseudonym (please choose any name that you would like to be referred to in my written account)---------------------

Age--------------------------------

Gender: Male-----------------------------   Female-------------------------------

Highest level of education-------------------------

Were you inducted on the CFS initiative?

What are your roles in the CFS initiative?

Parenting support

Have you ever organized parent training programmes/workshops/seminars in the district?

Do you provide information for the parents of the children in your district on homework?

Positive discipline?Or any other parenting skills?
How well are the families informed about parenting skills in your district? Is this based on first-hand experience?
Would you be interested in organising a parenting workshop? What kind of topics would you like to see addressed?

**Communication**
Have you met the parents of the children in your district? Do you know them through the schools only or through any other community organisation e.g. church, sports club?
Can you describe the most common form of communication with schools/parents?
How often do you communicate with schools/parents?
Have you ever visited a learner’s home? For what purpose?
How do you communicate good news about schools to parents/community?
Is there anything regarding home-school communication in the district that you would like to change?

**Children’s learning at home**
Other than the school assessment reports, do you regularly report to parents/community on children’s learning? How do you do this?
Do you have a homework policy in your district? How do you communicate this to schools, parents and community?
Have you ever organised a home programme to involve parents in children’s reading? Maths? Any other subject?
Do you share ideas with schools, parents/community on how to handle their children over the holidays or long weekends?

**Volunteering**
Do you ever ask parents/communities to assist in activities at school? Name the activities.
What kind of special skills are represented by parents of the children in your district?
Do you train or guide parent/community volunteers who wish to assist in schools?
How do you thank them?

**School decision making**
Do you attend the general parent-teacher meetings held at schools in your district? What kind of issues are discussed at these meetings?
Is there a parent-teacher organization policy in your district? What does it contain? Are you satisfied with the policy?

Are you ever consulted on the composition of the members of the school governing bodies/committees? Please elaborate.

Do schools and parents regularly inquire from you about important issues and decisions affecting their children’s learning?

**Collaborating with the community**

What role does the local community play in the life of schools? (Mention social structures/organisations that are engaged in the school -clinic, police, family welfare, social clubs, businesses, etc).

Do you have a list of useful community contacts that you can draw on for expertise if necessary? Are you ever involved in facilitating community outreach activities together with schools in your district? How do you do this?

**Additional information**

From your assessment records, how effective are family-school-community partnerships in your district?

In what ways have family-school-community partnerships changed over the past two years in your district?

What are the roles and responsibilities of the parents and community in the CFS initiative?

Are there any challenges facing the implementation of the CFS initiative in schools within the district with respect to family-school-community collaboration?

In your opinion, what can be done to address these challenges.

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART IN THIS INTERVIEW.**
APPENDIX 4: RESEARCH PERMIT
APPENDIX 5: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE FROM CEDU (UNISA)
Research Ethics Clearance Certificate

This is to certify that the application for ethical clearance submitted by

BO Nyatuka [49021249]

for a D Ed study entitled

Assessment of the effectiveness of family-school-community partnerships in Kenya's child friendly schools

has met the ethical requirements as specified by the University of South Africa College of Education Research Ethics Committee. This certificate is valid for two years from the date of issue.

Prof KP Dzvimbo
Executive Dean : CEDU

Dr M Claassens
CEDU REC (Chairperson)
mcdtc@netactive.co.za

Reference number: 2014 AUGUST /49021249/MC

19 AUGUST 2014
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

REF:WP/GA/29/17/VOL.II/208

18th June, 2014

Benard Omeng Nyatuka
University of South Africa
P. O. Box 392
SOUTH AFRICA

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

The above has been granted permission by National Council for Science & Technology vide letter Ref. NACOSTI/P/14/7581/2133 to carry out research on "Assessment of the effectiveness of Family-School-Community partnerships in Kenya’s Child Friendly Schools" Kakamega County, for a period ending 31st December, 2015.

Please accord him any necessary assistance he may require.

MAJANI ALEX TOM, C.D
COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
KAKAMEGA COUNTY

APPENDIX 7: HEADTEACHER CONSENT FORM
Dear Sir/Madam,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am currently undertaking my doctoral (D.Ed-Comparative Education) studies at the University of South Africa (Unisa). My study is entitled: Assessment of the Effectiveness of Family-School-Community Partnerships in Kenya’s Child Friendly Schools. The National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, Unisa, have approved my request to conduct research (see attached copies). I have special interest in the family-school-community partnership practices at your school. The envisaged participants are teachers, PTA Chairperson, a parent and yourself.

Participating in the research will facilitate formulation of policy recommendations to improve on family-school-community partnerships in primary schools. The ultimate goal is to enhance children’s learning and or achievement. While the PTA Chairperson and parent will be interviewed, preferably within the school, the teachers as well as yourself will complete a questionnaire.

There will be no risks for being involved in the study. Participation is entirely voluntary and all information will be kept confidential. The respondents’ and schools’ names will also not be revealed. There are no monetary rewards to be given to participants. Participants are expected to indicate whether they agree or disagree to participate by completing a consent form. I will discuss the findings of the study during a special information sharing session. The results of the research may be published in a scientific journal or presented at a scientific conference.

This research is conducted under the supervision of Prof E.M. Lemmer of the Department of Educational Foundations, Unisa. If you have any queries regarding the research or any other related matter, please feel free to contact either Prof Lemmer on e-mail: lemmeem@unisa.ac.za or myself using the details below.

Your support and willingness to allow the school to participate in this research is appreciated.

Thank you.
Benard Omeng Nyatuka
E-mail: bomenge@yahoo.com, Cell: 0722 96 75 51

INFORMED CONSENT FROM THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MANAGEMENT (BOM)
I have been given the chance to read this consent form. I understand the information about this study. Questions that I wanted to ask about this study have been answered. My signature (on behalf of the BOM) indicates our wholehearted support for the study.

____________________                 ---------------------
BOM SECRETARY (NAME IN PRINT)   SIGNATURE       DATE

--------------------
BOM SECRETARY (NAME IN PRINT)   SIGNATURE       DATE

RESEARCHER (NAME IN PRINT)   SIGNATURE       DATE

APPENDIX 8: TEACHER CONSENT FORM
Dear Teacher

I am currently pursuing doctoral studies (D.Ed-Comparative Education) at the University of South Africa (Unisa). The National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation as well as the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, Unisa, have approved my request to conduct research (see attached copies). I have a special interest in family-school-community partnership practices in primary schools in Kakamega County. My thesis is entitled: *Assessment of the Effectiveness of Family-School-Community Partnerships in Kenya’s Child Friendly Schools* and would like to invite you to participate in this research.

Participating in this research will enable you to provide valuable information to be used in improving children’s learning and or achievement. Please note that there are no risks involved in this study. Participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw without any penalty. I also wish to assure you of your anonymity and confidentiality as a participant in this study. Neither your name nor that of the school will be revealed. However, a pseudonym may be used.

The results of the study will be presented in the form of a thesis and may also be published in a scientific journal. A summary of the results will also be shared with the respondents as well as other stakeholders in the field of education. On personal request, I will also make the summary of the results available to you as a participant in electronic form after the examination process has been completed.

This study is conducted under the supervision of Prof. E.M. Lemmer of the Department of Educational Foundations, Unisa. Please feel free to contact either Prof Lemmer at email: lemmeem@unisa.ac.za or myself, using the details provided below, for any queries you may have.

Thank you.

Benard Omenge Nyatuka

E-mail: bomenge@yahoo.com           Cellphone: 0722 96 75 51
INFORMED CONSENT

I have been given the chance to read this consent form. I understand the information about this study. Questions that I wanted to ask about this study have been answered. My signature says that I am willing to participate in this study.

____________________                 ---------------------
TEACHER (NAME IN PRINT)        SIGNATURE       DATE

-----------------------------------------------          -----------------------------------             -----------------
RESEARCHER (NAME IN PRINT)                   SIGNATURE                       DATE

APPENDIX 9: PARENT/PTA CHAIRPERSON CONSENT FORM
Dear Parent/PTA Chairperson

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as a doctoral student entitled: *Assessment of the Effectiveness of Family-School-Community Partnerships in Kenya’s Child Friendly Schools* at the University of South Africa (Unisa). Permission for the study has been granted by the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, Unisa. I have purposefully identified you as a possible participant because of your valuable experience and expertise regarding my research topic.

I would like to provide you with more information about this study and what your involvement would entail if you should agree to take part. In this interview I would like to have your views and opinions on this topic. The results of the study will facilitate formulation of policy recommendations to improve on family-school-community partnerships in primary schools. The ultimate goal is to enhance children’s learning and achievement.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately 40 minutes to take place in a mutually agreed upon location at a time convenient to you. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences.

With your kind permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the transcription has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study and any identifying information will be omitted from the report. However, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like to have additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact either me at 0722 967 551 or by email at: bomenge@yahoo.com or my supervisor, Prof. E.M. Lemmer, Department of Educational Foundations, Unisa, email: lemmeem@unisa.ac.za
I look forward to speaking with you very much and thank you in advance for your assistance in this research. If you accept my invitation to participate, I will request you to sign the consent form which follows on page 2.

Yours sincerely,

Benard Omenge Nyatuka.

**INFORMED CONSENT**

I have read the information presented in the letter about this study. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to the study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted. I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio-recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses. I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous. I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by the researcher. With full knowledge of all the foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

____________________                 --------------------
PARTICIPANT (NAME IN PRINT)        SIGNATURE       DATE

-----------------------------------------------          -----------------------------------             -----------------
RESEARCHER (NAME IN PRINT)                   SIGNATURE                       DATE
APPENDIX 10: DQASO CONSENT FORM

The DQASO,
----------------------------------District.

Dear Sir/Madam
I am currently undertaking my doctoral (D.Ed-Comparative Education) studies at the University of South Africa (Unisa). My study is entitled: Assessment of the Effectiveness of Family-School-Community Partnerships in Kenya’s Child Friendly Schools. The National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation as well as the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, Unisa, have approved my request to conduct research (see attached copies). I have special interest in the family-school-community partnership practices in primary schools in your district. The envisaged participants are headteachers, teachers, PTA Chairpersons, parents and yourself.
May I take this early opportunity to invite you to a scheduled interview focusing on the above study. Participating in the research will facilitate formulation of policy recommendations to improve on family-school-community partnerships in primary schools. The ultimate goal is to enhance children’s learning and or achievement. While the PTA Chairpersons, parents and yourself will be interviewed, the teachers will complete a questionnaire.
There will be no risks for being involved in the study. Participation is entirely voluntary and all information will be kept confidential. The respondents’, schools’ and districts’ names will also not be revealed. There are no monetary rewards to be given to participants. Participants are expected to indicate whether they agree or disagree to participate by completing a consent form. I will discuss the findings of the study during a special information sharing session. The results of the research may be presented at a scientific conference and or published in a scientific journal.
This research is conducted under the supervision of Prof E.M. Lemmer of the Department of Educational Foundations, Unisa. If you have any queries regarding the research or any other related matter, please feel free to contact either Prof Lemmer on e-mail: lemmeem@unisa.ac.za or myself using the details below.
Your support and willingness to participate in this research is highly appreciated.
Thank you.
Benard Omenge Nyatuka
E-mail: bomenge@yahoo.com, Cell: 0722 96 75 51

INFORMED CONSENT
I have been given the chance to read this consent form. I understand the information about this study. Questions that I wanted to ask about this study have been answered. My signature indicates my wholehearted support for the study.

_________________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________
DQASO (NAME IN PRINT)           SIGNATURE         DATE

_________________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________
RESEARCHER (NAME IN PRINT)       SIGNATURE         DATE
**APPENDIX 11: ADDITIONAL TABLES**

**Table 1** Induction on Child Friendly Schools Initiative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>207</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>58.1</td>
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<td></td>
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**Table 2** Membership in CFS Technical team

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