

**THE ROLE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN IMPROVING DISCIPLINE IN  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF THE KGAKOTLOU CIRCUIT**

by

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## DECLARATION

Student number: 0565-268-5

I declare that *The role of parental involvement in improving discipline in secondary schools of the Kgakotlou circuit* 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.

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SIGNATURE

Mrs L. M. MANAMELA

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DATE

30 NOVEMBER 2015

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my husband, Placid, daughters, Khutso, Meladi and Makosha, and my mother, Elizabeth, for their support throughout my studies.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank God for giving me strength to continue with my studies and complete them successfully.

My thanks go to the Head of the Department of Education for giving me permission to conduct my research.

To the circuit manager of the Kgakotlou circuit, principals, educators, and parents of Mothimako, Ngwanalaka, Phomolong and Ramakanyane Secondary schools, your cooperation is highly appreciated.

Thank you Dr Baloyi, my supervisor, for supporting and encouraging me to finish my studies.

## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this study is to investigate the role played by parents in improving discipline in rural secondary schools, particularly those in the Kgakotlou Circuit of the Capricorn district. The problem is investigated using a literature study and empirical investigation with school management teams, teachers and the parents of learners in four secondary schools in the Kgakotlou circuit.

The literature review explores the development of parental involvement in education during the pre-apartheid, apartheid and post-apartheid eras. The benefits of parental involvement and barriers thereto are also explored as well as the management of parental involvement. The empirical study is done qualitatively and data is collected face-to-face from the participants during interviews. The interview questions examine the extent to which parents are involved in their children's education, school policies on parental involvement, communication between parents and educators and the duties of the school governing bodies. The findings indicate that some of the parents are willing to participate in their children's schoolwork, but do not know how to achieve this. Schools do not create enough opportunities for parental involvement.

Based on the literature review and empirical investigation, recommendations are made for school management teams, educators, and parents. The school management teams should design parental involvement plans according to their schools' unique characteristics. Educators are urged to guide parents as they are more knowledgeable. Parents should try to devise strategies to overcome their barriers to parental involvement in their children's education.

## **LIST OF KEY TERMS**

Circuit

Discipline

Learner

Parental involvement

Parent

Rural area

School governing body

School management team

Secondary school

Teacher

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
DoE	Department of Education
HOD	Head of Department
HIV	Human Immune Virus
NCHE	National Communication on Higher Education
NSNP	National Schools Nutrition Programme
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SASA	South African Schools Act No 84 of 1996
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

The lack of parental involvement in schools is one of the greatest challenges facing today's principals and educators. Research on parental involvement in recent years has revealed two important facts: parental involvement has a significant impact on the quality of the learner's teaching and learning experience, and on their results (Van Deventer and Kruger, 2009:9). Without a healthy cooperation between parents and educators, the child cannot be effectively educated. The parent and educator both have a special and important role to play in the education of the child.

In modern day society, the school has gradually taken over tasks that traditionally belonged to parents, with the result that parents have become less and less involved in the education of their children (Kruger, 2006:233). These tasks can be divided into three categories: physical care (including clothing); education and teaching; and the emotional and spiritual development which influences their moral education. Common law (Kruger, 2006:232) demands that parents take responsibility for the physical education of the child, developing the child's character, dealing with spiritual matters and ensuring the child's intellectual and cultural development.

The benefits of parental involvement include improved school performance, reduced drop-out rates, a decrease in delinquency and a more positive attitude towards school (Van Deventer and Kruger, 2009:9). The South African Schools Act No 84 of 1996 (SASA) (RSA, 1996b) also requires that parents as the primary educators of learners ensure they attend compulsory education from the school going age of seven, until the learner reaches the age of fifteen or the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, whichever comes first. Epstein (2011:39) mentions that students' scores suggest that schools are more effective when families and schools work together with the student on basic skills. This means that for a student to acquire the basic skills easily, there should be cooperation between the school and the student's home. Other benefits for parental involvement suggested by Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:16) are that parents have warmer feelings towards the school, and the fact that their own feelings of isolation are reduced if there is cooperation between the school and the family. The researcher shares this view and agrees that the partnership between parents and schools is beneficial to both the partners.

Parental involvement generally does not function satisfactorily in schools and is an under-researched field. Some of the parents are unable to be involved in their children's education, not because they do not want to, but because of the barriers that they are experiencing. Lucas (2006:4) describes the lack of confidence as one of the barriers to parental involvement. The lack of confidence may be caused by their personal unhappy experiences of school. The unhappy experiences may cause the parents to have a low self-esteem.

Most of the parents in the Kgakotlou circuit have a low self-esteem and thus do not want to visit the schools. The reasons are, amongst others, that they are drop outs or because they became pregnant while they were themselves learners. Du Plessis, P, Conley and Du Plessis, E (2007:123) suggests that time is one of the barriers to parents becoming involved. Parents battle to survive and cannot neglect their own jobs for fear of being fired. These are just a few of the many factors that prevent parents from being involved in their children's school work.

This study aims to add to the body of knowledge on this topic, and to find solutions to the problem. The remainder of this chapter provides information on the background to the study, states the research problem, its aims and objectives, discusses the reliability and validity of the research, defines concepts, and provides a summary of the chapter.

## **1. 2 Background of the study**

Research is usually built on what others have written on the subject in question; this is known as the literature review. The aim of a literature review is to establish what research has already been done in a chosen field of study. In the section below, some of the studies conducted on the issue of parental involvement in education are discussed.

Mbokodi (2008: iii) investigated the extent to which black parents involve themselves in school activities as envisaged by the SASA. This qualitative study investigated principals, teachers, learners and the chairpersons of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in selected schools in the major townships of Port Elizabeth. The findings revealed a desperate situation of non-involvement in school activities among black parents and suggest that this is the result of the failure of the Department of Education (DoE) to involve all stakeholders in strategies to involve parents in schools. This study recommended further research on parental involvement in disadvantaged schools since there was a clear need for this.

Baloyi's (2009) study indicated that parental involvement in South Africa is an under researched and often misunderstood subject amongst stakeholders in the schooling system.

This study investigated how effective parental involvement in Hlanganani South's schools could improve the culture of learning. Data was collected through interviews with four school managers, twenty-eight parents and six educators. The findings revealed that the lack of a culture of learning in Hlanganani South was exacerbated by factors such as a high unemployment rate, pervasive poor socio-economic background, high illiteracy rates and high failure rates. It also revealed that there was an urgent need for school managers to acquire skills, knowledge and strategies to bring about active parental involvement. Guidelines regarding strategies for such parental involvement were provided. These included regular communication between parents and schools, clearly communicated community expectations for the schools, and training for the SGB, educators and the School Management Team (SMT).

This study recommends that future researchers could conduct action research into parental involvement through case studies (implementing training) and comparative studies (of effective and ineffective strategies).

A study conducted by Duma (2010) investigated rural school governors' understanding of the legislation and policies that affect school governance. Quantitative methodology was used to obtain information from rural school governors. The conclusion reached was that it was essential that rural school governors be given the necessary training to develop a working knowledge of the legislation which has an impact on school governance. The study recommended that knowledge of legislation regarding the duties of SGBs should be made available to rural school governors.

Khumalo (2006) completed a mini-research study in which he investigated parental involvement in classroom activities. This revealed that parents lack knowledge about the importance of their involvement in classroom life, and that thoughtful and coordinated planning of such involvement could benefit all concerned at school, enhance learner achievement and ensure learner cooperation. The study recommended that parental involvement should receive more attention than it does at present.

Successful parental involvement in education requires that schools have effective and functioning SGBs. This is one way in which parents who are not members of these bodies can find out what is expected of them. The SGB, acting within a framework set by legislation and the policies of the DoE, has a general responsibility to ensure that the school performs in a manner that enables the provision of the best possible education for its learners (Naidu,

Joubert, Mestry, Mosoge and Ngcobo, 2008:149). The SGB must be familiar with its main task which, amongst other things, is the control of the finances of the school and the drawing up of the budget (Kruger, 2006:244). The SGB should start preparing the next year's budget during the third quarter of the school year (Mestry and Bisschoff, 2009:99).

Parental involvement has an impact on the behaviour of learners in school. McDermott's research builds on Piaget's model of children's stages of intellectual development. According to him (2008:59), the interpretation of a child's behaviour depends on how complex the thinking of the parent is. It is also necessary for school managers to nurture the moral environment of their individual schools. Everyday life in school contains within it many moral challenges, but often supervisors do not know how to name them (Sergiovanni and Starrat, 2007:69). Studies have also revealed that living conditions may impact negatively on the parent's ability to provide the socio-emotional resources needed for the child's emotional and cognitive development (Fleisch, 2008:72).

Parental involvement at school is particularly necessary during childhood, when children are separated from their parents for the first time and when they start to attend school. Parents are responsible for helping their children acquire the competency to survive away from home, i.e. the ability to separate from the parent or care-giver with a reasonable degree of ease and to feel comfortable at school (Hendrick and Weissman, 2011:164).

Many factors can hinder parental involvement in schools, the most common of which is time. Often both parents work and one or both parents may also have a second job. In many cases they have other children who need attention and elderly parents to care for (Friend, 2008:28). More detail on this and other aspects of this topic is fully explained in Chapter Two of this study.

### **1.3 The research problem**

Although the lack of parental involvement in education affects the South African education system in general, rural schools such as the schools in the Kgakotlou circuit of Mankweng in the Capricorn district are affected particularly severely. Kgakotlou circuit is in the Limpopo province and consists of secondary schools situated in the villages of Makotopong and Mothapo. Many of these learners exhibit behavioural problems both in the classroom and on the school premises.

Evertson and Emmer (2009:145-146) believe that there are two important categories of behaviour which should be observed in class: student involvement in learning activities and student compliance with classroom rules and procedures. Student conduct is indicated by behaviour such as attention during presentations and discussions, and satisfactory progress in individual work and other assignments. Student compliance with classroom rules and procedures is indicated by the ability of the student to follow the rules that have been communicated to the class. The secondary school learners of Kgakotlou show deviations in both of these behavioural categories, i.e. they are not involved in learning activities and do not comply with classroom rules and procedures. Many do not obey the school rules, nor do they abide by the code of conduct, in spite of the fact that they and their parents agreed to do so during admission. They show a lack of respect for themselves, their educators, their fellow learners and school property. They are not punctual and they often play truant.

All these aspects of behaviour have a negative impact on their performance in class which results in a high failure rate. This is because much of the time that is supposed to be used for teaching and learning is used instead to solve cases of misbehaviour and to bring about discipline – one of the most important characteristics of an effective school. In terms of section 8(2) of the SASA, a school's code of conduct must aim at establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment, dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of a quality learning process. The emphasis must therefore be on positive discipline.

In practising positive discipline, schools must take disciplinary action when a learner has transgressed, and must do so by following the correct procedures. Section 13(13.1) of the SASA makes provision for due process (including a fair hearing) before a learner may be suspended from school by the governing body. Due process guarantees a learner a fair hearing before he or she may be suspended for a period of one week, or expelled from the school by the Head of the DoE.

This study sees the lack of parental involvement in education as being one of the causes of misbehaviour. Section (6) of the SASA states that the ultimate responsibility for learners' behaviour rests with their parents or guardians. It is expected that parents support the school, insist that learners observe all school rules and regulations, and that they accept responsibility for any misbehaviour on the part of their child. They should also take an active interest in their child's schoolwork and make it possible for them to complete the assigned homework.

Parents of children attending Kgakotlou schools do not respond when they are called to meetings to discuss issues concerning their children's education, even though the governing bodies convey these messages. The research problem of this study examines the effects of the lack of parental involvement in rural secondary schools of Kgakotlou circuit on learners' behaviour. This problem is investigated in terms of the following specific questions:

- Why is there a lack of parental involvement in the Kgakotlou schools?
- What mechanisms are introduced by schools, in order to improve the current state of parental involvement in the Kgakotlou circuit?
- How do rural schools of Kgakotlou manage parental involvement?
- What is the policy of parental involvement in schools?

Obtaining clear and relevant answers to these questions will go some way to addressing the problem of a lack of parental involvement in Kgakotlou schools.

#### **1.4 Aims and objectives of the study**

The focus of this study is the role of parental involvement in improving discipline in secondary schools of the Kgakotlou circuit. The objectives of the study are outlined as follows:

- To undertake a qualitative investigation of the role of Kgakotlou parents in their children's education;
- To analyse and interpret the collected views of Kgakotlou school management regarding the challenges of management and parent involvement;
- To make recommendations and provide strategies to increase parental involvement in schools based on the findings;
- To investigate and analyse the degree to which parents are involved in their children's education; and
- To describe the concept of parent involvement in education.

#### **1.5 Research methodology and design**

A qualitative research approach is followed in this study. The researcher collects data in face-to-face situations by interacting with selected persons in their setting (field research).

Qualitative research describes and analyses people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions. The researcher chose this approach because it is exploratory and descriptive. Qualitative studies are important for, amongst other things, the improvement of educational practice (McMillan and Schumacher 2006:315). The approach is relevant to this study because it aims to suggest ways to improve the behaviour of learners in the Kgakotlou schools by devising strategies to encourage parental involvement.

The participants include school managers of secondary schools in the Kgakotlou circuit. They are chosen because they are likely to be knowledgeable and informative on the issue of parental involvement and the challenges facing its management. Sites are selected to locate people who can contribute meaningfully to the study (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006:319). In this study, the selected sites are schools where the actions and viewpoints regarding the management of parent involvement exist and can be studied.

Interview schedules are used to collect data from participants in the form of questionnaires and interviews. This technique is chosen because questionnaires are flexible, adaptable and have the ability to probe and clarify and include non-verbal behaviour. They also often have a high response rate (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006:211). The interview technique can be used to investigate many different problems and types of persons, even those who are illiterate or too young to read and write. Responses can be probed, followed up on, clarified and elaborated on to achieve specific and accurate responses. Nonverbal as well as verbal behaviour can be noted in face-to-face interviews, and the interviewer has the opportunity to motivate the respondent. Interviews generate a much higher response rate than questionnaires do, especially in the case of topics that concern personal qualities or negative feelings (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006:203).

Data analysis and interpretation is a relatively systematic process of coding, categorising and interpreting data to provide explanations of a single phenomenon of interest. Data analysis is an on-going cyclical process that is integrated into all phases of qualitative research. Through the use of inductive analysis, categories and patterns primarily emerge from the data, rather than being imposed on it prior to collection (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006:364).

In this study, the researcher does not wait until all the data is collected before starting with its analysis. Data analysis is rigorous and should not be separated from the collection process. Data is captured using tape-recorded interviews. Before the data can be interpreted, it is organised. Thereafter, any notes made are examined and all the material analysed.

Qualitative researchers integrate the operations of organising, analysing and interpreting data analysis.

### **1.5.1 Theoretical framework.**

This study follows Epstein's framework which identifies six major types of involvement in schools. They fall within the areas of overlapping spheres and have emerged from many studies done on the work of educators in schools (Epstein et al.(1997) in Lemmer, 2007:221). Below is the description of the six types of parental involvement as described by Lemmer (2007:221).

Type 1 – Parenting: Schools should assist families with parenting and child-rearing skills, family support, understanding child adolescent development and also the setting and home conditions so as to support learning at each stage and grade level.

Type 2 – Communication: Schools should communicate with families about school programmes and students' progress with school-to-home and home-to-school communication.

Type 3 – Volunteering: Schools should encourage recruitment, training, work and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at school or in other locations to support students and school programmes.

Type 4 – Learning at home: Schools should involve families with their children in learning activities at home, including homework and other curricular linked activities and decisions.

Type 5 – Decision making: Schools should include parents as participants in school decisions, governance and advocacy activities through PTAs, committees, councils and other parent organisations.

Type 6 – Collaborating with the community: Schools should coordinate the work and resources of the community business, colleges or universities and other groups to strengthen the school programmes, family practices and student learning and development.

The researcher thinks that the six types of parental involvement identified by Epstein, et al. (1997) are very important practices for involving parents in the education of their children. If schools can use these strategies to involve parents, the problem of non-involvement will be addressed.

## **1.6 Validity and reliability**

Validity of qualitative design refers to the degree to which the researcher's interpretations share the meanings intended by the participants (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006:324). In this study, the researcher uses tape recorders to provide accurate and relatively complete records of all interviews. Situational aspects that affect data recording are noted. Once the researcher had analysed the data, she discusses the interpretation with the participants to ensure their agreement.

Reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions (Mbokodi, 2008:64). The researcher uses tape recordings and handwritten notes to provide reliability checks.

## **1.7 Planning of the study**

The study consists of five chapters:

Chapter 1 provides the introduction and background to the study, the research problem, the aim study and an explanation of terms used.

Chapter 2 gives a review of the literature and provides the theoretical background for the investigation.

Chapter 3 describes the research design and methodology in full.

Chapter 4 provides the results and an analysis and discussion of the data.

Chapter 5 serves as a synthesis and summary of the results. It includes the conclusions drawn to address the research problem and aims of the study, thus ensuring that these have been honoured. Finally, well-argued recommendations for the future are made.

## **1.8 Definition of terms**

### **1.8.1 Parent involvement**

Wright, Stegelin and Hartle (2007:301) quote Joyce Epstein when defining parental involvement as parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community. They say that each function requires unique resources and lead to different results for families, teachers and schools.

Parent involvement can also be defined as the participation of parents in a wide range of school-based and home-based activities to improve their children's education. It implies support given to the school by parents and can take the form of cooperation and participation which in turn leads to partnership (Kruger, 2006:234).

### **1.8.2. Parent**

Parent means: (a) the parent or guardian of a learner, (b) the person legally entitled to the custody of a learner, or (c) the person who undertakes to fulfil the obligations of a person referred to in (a) or (b) (Brunton, 2003:B-4).

A parent is also be defined as a person's father or mother (Wehmeier, 2005:1059)

The researcher's definition of a parent is a person who gave birth to a child and is responsible for the upbringing of that particular child. This definition agrees with the two definitions quoted above.

### **1.8.3 Educator**

Educator refers to any person, excluding anyone appointed to exclusively perform extracurricular duties, who teaches, educates or trains other persons or who provides professional educational services, including professional therapy and educational psychological services at a school (Brunton, 2003:4).

Kruger and van Deventer (2003:16) describe an educator as a person whose role encompasses not only the teaching of specific content and mentoring of learners in the love of learning, but also as frontline social workers.

The researcher agrees with the above definitions and believes that an educator is a person who, besides offering a specific subject to learners, also takes care of the educational psychological and social needs of learners.

### **1.8.4 Rural area**

Wehmeier (2005:1285) defines a rural area as being an area which is not connected to a town or city. A rural area is defined as an area that is characterised by land use and the activities that focus on primary activities such as farming, forestry, fishing and mining. When one of these primary activities dominates an area, such an area is described as being unfunctional (Wilson, Oelofse, Winter and Zukulu 2007:168).

Dilley, Earle, Euston-Brown, Keats and Ravenscroft (2001:114) describe a rural area as being an area that is inhabited by a small population and has settlements, isolated farmsteads and villages which are dispersed or isolated from each other. They areas are often unfunctional and have only primary activities.

The researcher agrees with the above definitions and also believes that a rural area is an area that is situated far from town, is isolated, and is a place where farming takes place.

### **1.8.5 Circuit**

According to the researcher, a circuit is a group of schools which are situated near one another in the same area. These schools may be either rural or urban and be either primary or secondary schools. Such schools belong to the same area and same district.

## **1.9 Summary**

From the above discussion, it is clear that the management of parental involvement in education and especially in rural schools requires urgent attention. Inappropriate behaviour by learners must be managed properly and promptly to prevent it from continuing or spreading (Evertson and Emmer, 2009:149). This chapter has provided an introduction to the research, the background to the study, the aim of the study, the research methodology adopted and the design of the study. The issues of reliability and validity are discussed and the important terms used are defined.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2. Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to review the literature on parental involvement in the education of their children. The concept of parental involvement is explained and this is followed by a discussion of the literature which is based on the development of parental involvement during the pre-apartheid, apartheid and post-apartheid era. The benefits of parental involvement to learners, schools and teachers and parents, families, and communities are discussed, as is the barriers to parental involvement in the education of children.

#### **2.1 The concept of parental involvement**

Education is the key to a better future for children. It is through education that children grow up to become responsible adults who will add value to their society and provide their country with the skills and knowledge it requires to grow. It ensures that every child can live a better life, regardless of their family background. If a child is educated, he or she can make a better life for himself, even if he or she comes from an economically disadvantaged family background. However, it is not easy for schools or families to educate children alone.

A big challenge in this partnership of education is the fact that some parents do not have time to be involved in their child's schoolwork because of work demands. They leave home early in the morning and come back late in the afternoon. In order for children to be effectively educated, there should be effective cooperation between parents, teachers, schools, and all the members of the community. The reason is that schools cannot educate a child fully without the cooperation of the parents, for example, a child cannot do schoolwork in class if the parents do not provide the required stationery. On the other hand, teachers at school serve as parents during the day and act on behalf of parents in emergency cases.

The school principals and teachers should see to it that there is a relationship between teachers and parents by organising activities that will invite participation from parents. This is the reason why parent involvement has become one of the managing areas for principals. Parent involvement benefits schools by addressing issues such as the behaviour of children. Parental involvement at school is particularly necessary during childhood when children are

separated from their parents for the first time when they start to attend school. Parents have a responsibility to help their children become competent to survive from home, and part of this is the ability to separate from the parent or care-giver with a reasonable degree of ease and feel comfortable at school (Hendrick and Weissman, 2011:164). In other words, parents must help the child to adjust to school by ensuring that the child has everything that the school needs. For example, a school-going child will need a schoolbag and the required school fees. The principal and educators in rural areas need to come up with strategies to involve parents in their children's education because they are generally the ones who have post-matric education and thus more knowledge when compared with the parents. It is sometimes difficult for schools to communicate with parents, but there are many ways to achieve this; they can communicate with the parents through newsletters, telephonically or by using technology such as emails and short messages. Communication can also be done through parents meetings which are organised by the SGBs required by Section 20 of the SASA (RSA, 1996b).

Section 20(d) (RSA, 1996b) states that one of the functions of the SGB is to adopt a Code of Conduct for learners after consultation with the learners, parents and educators. The importance of communication cannot be overemphasised if successful parent involvement is to be implemented. When comparing the communication tools used in urban and rural schools, the researcher found that urban schools are able to communicate successfully with parents because they have different or more resources.

In the Kgakotlou circuit there are no urban schools, only rural schools. This places the educators in a very difficult situation because parents are not interested in what their children are doing at school. Moreover, the schools are under resourced and this makes it even more difficult for them to practice parental involvement. The schools in this circuit depend on money from the department. The funds allocated are very little and it takes a long time before the department actually pays the money out.

Schools in this circuit practice parental involvement by calling parents meetings quarterly. It is during these meetings that parents in all grades are told about their children's performance and given reports. The schools are plagued by a lack of attendance by parents. Despite having used the few resources available (e.g. newsletters), only a few parents ever respond. This is very discouraging to the educators who try to involve the parents because they realise that there is a need for a parent-teacher partnership in order to create an inviting school climate.

The situation is the same in the Capricorn district and throughout the Kgakotlou circuit. The Capricorn district consists of both rural and urban schools, but there are more rural schools than urban ones. Parental involvement at district level occurs when parents participate by becoming members of SGBs. SGBs of town schools differ from those of rural schools. Parents who are SGB members in town schools are usually educated and this means that the SGB becomes a functional unit; in rural schools this is not usually the case.

A lack of parental involvement has been identified throughout the education system both in South Africa and in global communities. Lemmer and Van Wyk's (2008) article presents a qualitative inquiry of paternal involvement in a small sample of public primary schools in South Africa. The participants were selected by means of purposeful sampling and the findings indicate that although schools were doing more to involve parents, certain reservations were detected in the principal's attitude.

The above findings show that, despite the many challenges, schools are trying their best to encourage parental involvement. The main challenge is that the educators who are supposed to come up with strategies to involve parents sometimes fail to do so. This is because when they were trained at their teachers colleges, they were trained only to teach children and not shown how to involve parents in education. This has resulted in educators not seeing the importance of involving parents. The situation is worse in rural areas and is especially distressing in the Limpopo province.

A number of studies on this topic have been conducted internationally and some of these are explained below:

A study conducted by Altschul (2011) investigated parental involvement and the academic achievement of Mexican American youths. The national representative data (N=1, 609) from the National Education Longitudinal study was used. The study focused specifically on Mexican American families and youths, which is a population at high risk for academic underperformance. The findings showed that the positive effects of parental involvement among Mexican American parents occurred through involvement in the home, whereas parental involvement in school organisations was not associated with a youth's achievement.

According to the above study, when parents are involved in education of the child at home, there are positive effects, including improved academic achievement. The researcher shares this view because when they see their parent being involved they develop interest in their schoolwork. It makes a difference when parents help them with their homework or tasks that

need to be completed at home; even simply checking their school books makes a difference. At the start of a new year, children are given stationary and textbooks to take home and cover so they are not worn out by the end of the year. Children are very happy when their parents help them in this way and even though it is a simple thing to do, it means a lot to the child.

Cooper-Baker (2009) investigated parental involvement by studying generational differences and the diversity of families from the voice of grandparents, children and grandchildren over the age of 18. The researcher viewed the study through the lens of the overlapping spheres of influence for school-family-community partnership. The overarching questions guiding the investigation centred on what parental involvement is and whether it really matters in the success of children. The study consisted of one African American family, one Hispanic family and one Caucasian family. One of the findings was the fact that partnership with the home, school and community gives all families more equal opportunities to become involved in their children's education. The findings support the theory that overlapping spheres of influence are linked to children's success.

The findings of the above study prove the importance of overlapping spheres of influence in school-family-community partnerships. It shows that without such partnerships, the chance for successful education decreases significantly.

In the following sections, the development of parental involvement in the South African education system is discussed, as are the benefits of and barriers to parental involvement in schools.

## **2. 2 The development of parental involvement in the South African education system**

### **2. 2. 1 Parental involvement during the pre-apartheid era**

The researcher's view of education during this period is that education was the responsibility of parents, old community members and the church. Children did not go to school because there were no schools. They were not taught how to write and were given verbal teaching. Girls learned domestic chores like washing clothes, cooking or washing the dishes while boys were taught farming with animals or with plants. Children had to learn by imitating their parents and elders and by listening to them. At the church, children learned how to pray and memorised passages from the Bible taught by church elders.

The teaching did not follow a particular curriculum. Jansen (2009:29) describes the curriculum as subject content prescribed by the national education departments and taught in schools. In other words, teaching in this era was not organised as there were no departments or schools at this time. When children reached puberty they were taken to the mountains where they were taught about responsible womanhood for girls and manhood for boys. Once again, this was the responsibility of old members in the community. The children were also taught respect, for example, they were not allowed to call older people by their names and were supposed to greet every older community member that they came across.

The fact that these children learnt by imitating their parents and elders prove that parental involvement has always been an important aspect of a child's education.

### **2. 2. 2 Parental involvement during the apartheid era**

Education during this period was characterised by Bantu Education. Wilson (2009:88) describes the Bantu Education Act of 1953 as the most destructive aspect of apartheid. The Act embodied a philosophy that specified that it would not educate black South Africans for positions in the economy beyond those they were expected to occupy. The researcher views the Bantu Education Act as a way of promoting division between black and white South Africans and a way of oppressing the black South Africans.

As mentioned previously, before the Bantu Education Act was passed, education was characterised by missionary education. The Bantu Education Act meant that missionary education had to stop, and this would increase illiteracy among blacks. Illiteracy amongst black South Africans meant that all the high positions in the workplaces would be filled by white South Africans, resulting in white supremacy over blacks. Some of the characteristics of Bantu Education are discussed below.

#### **(a) Education inaccessibility**

The Act ensured that education was not easily accessible for blacks. Many high schools during that period had hostel facilities for learners who stayed far from the school. Parents who could afford hostel fees enrolled their children in these hostels. Those that could not afford the fees would either have to walk long distances to attend or else drop out of school.

In addition to having to walk for long distances, students were not allowed to choose their subjects. The school chose the subjects for students and only a few were allowed to study 'good' subjects like Mathematics. (Many were however allowed to study Functional

Mathematics.) The reason for this was the fact that the education system of that time was preparing students to serve in their communities, and not to occupy high positions in the workplaces. Black Africans generally studied subjects that would allow them to follow careers such as teaching, nursing or police work.

**(b) Inequality**

Another characteristic of apartheid education was inequality. Bojang (2011:4) explains that South Africa had a system of government known as apartheid or “separateness.” When people are separate, they have different lives, different opportunities and attend different schools.

The researcher thinks that when people go to different schools and have different opportunities, they cannot be equal. The apartheid government ensured that as far as education was concerned, black South Africans were not given the same opportunities afforded to white South Africans. Schools that were built for white South Africans were well resourced and had enough teachers whereas schools for black South Africans did not. Black South Africans were not allowed to attend white schools. The result was that whites received a better education than blacks. Giliomee (2011:509) mentions that apartheid education was also characterised by inadequate funding. When the expenditure on black education grew, the sharp increase in the number of children absorbed by the system resulted in per capita spending on black children falling by a third. This resulted in the system paying very little attention to the need for secondary education until the early 1970s.

The inadequate funding of black secondary education caused problems such as a lack of resources. Students were expected to buy their own textbooks and bring their own lunch every day. Although this was a financial burden on parents, the advantage was that it encouraged parents to be involved in the education of their children.

Meredith (2011:419) describes the National Party policy as having produced a legacy of inferior schooling, poorly trained teachers, overcrowded classrooms and inadequate equipment.

**(c) Medium of instruction**

Another characteristic of apartheid was the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. Buddy-Evans (2012) mentions the fact that whilst the battle against enforced education in Afrikaans was eventually won, the apartheid government’s Bantu education policy meant that black children did not receive the same opportunities as white children.

Besides studying subjects in Afrikaans, it was also compulsory to study Afrikaans as a subject. This shows how the Bantu education policy regarded Afrikaans as being more important than other languages.

**(d) Corporal punishment**

Corporal punishment was also a characteristic of apartheid education. Children were beaten at school when they made mistakes or behaved badly (e.g. if they made a noise in class, were disobedient or late). The researcher's view on corporal punishment is that it was useful as a means of disciplining children at school. During that time, schools did not have significant discipline problems because children knew that if they make a mistake they would be punished. The problem with corporal punishment is that it can easily go too far or be overdone. Teachers would beat a child for failing a test without trying to establish the cause of failure. The result was a high dropout rate which was usually followed by unemployment.

**(e) Initiation practices in schools**

Initiation practice is described by Wehmeier (2005:767) as the act of becoming a member of a group, often through a ceremony. The researcher describes initiation as a way of welcoming new people into a particular group with the aim of teaching them their culture and traditions. During the apartheid era many high schools, especially those that had hostel facilities, practised initiation activities that resulted in humiliation and degradation. The same applied in tertiary institutions. Activities included wearing a name tag on the head throughout the day, walking around with an egg in your hand or wearing the right shoe on the left foot.

Although the activities were funny to the old students, they were very humiliating for newcomers. Some students left school because they could not stand the humiliation.

Parental involvement levels in education were relatively high during the apartheid era. This was because parents were required to pay school fees, buy uniforms and sometimes even textbooks. Parents were also expected to pay into the building fund and buy materials for practical subjects such as needlework or knitting. In addition, parents participated as members of school committees.

**2.2.3 Parental involvement after apartheid**

The period, after apartheid, was characterised by democracy. Wehmeier (2005:389) defines democracy as a system of government in which all the people of a country can vote to elect

their representatives. By voting, people are given an opportunity to have a say in their government, including a say in their children's education.

As mentioned earlier, the apartheid education system was characterised by inequality between black and white South Africans, an inaccessibility of education for blacks, the administration of corporal punishment in schools, humiliating initiation practices, and illiteracy amongst black South Africans. These negative practices were carried out so as to oppress the blacks. The activities were supported by the policies of Bantu Education until the change to democracy in 1994. After 1994, new policies were developed, some of which are discussed below:

#### **(a) Policy and legislation**

A 'white paper' is a discussion document made available for comment to members of Parliament and the public. It is usually referred to as a 'draft white paper' or 'green paper,' and is one of the stages followed when changing legislation. The education white papers deal with various facets of reform in education since 1994. The different documents as explained in (Mothata, 2000) are discussed below.

Education White Paper I was published in 1995 and entitled *White Paper on Education and Training*. It is the first ever official policy document in education published by the ANC-led government. It sets out the policy directions, values and principles for education system in accordance with the Constitution. Three important directives emphasised in this document are the integrated approach to education and training, the outcomes-based approach to education, and the principle of lifelong learning. It embraced access to education and training for all, and embraced the doctrines of equity, redress and transformation from the legacies of the past (RSA, 1995)

Education White Paper 2 published in 1996 and entitled *Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools*. It was based on the proposals set out in the *Hunter Report*. It builds on the principles set out in white paper 1 but deals specifically with governance, organisation and funding of schools. This white paper addresses aspects regarding parental rights, the governance policy of schools, public schools, roles and responsibilities of educators, and learners with special educational needs. This white paper formed the basis of the SASA (RSA, 1996)

It was because of this Act that parents became more involved in their children's education. One of the strategies for involvement created was the possibility to become a member of the SGB. The SASA states that the management of every public school is vested in its governing body and it may perform only such functions and obligations and exercise only such rights as prescribed by the Act (Brunton, 2003:B-11). It stipulates that the SGB has its own functions to fulfil in a school and is clear that it should not interfere with the administrative duties which are the responsibility of the SMT as sometimes happens.

Some of the functions of the SGB as stated by Section 20 of SASA are: promoting the best interest of the school, developing a mission statement for the school, and encouraging parents, learners and educators to render voluntary services to the school. Moreover, it is the responsibility of the SGB to market their school. At my school the SGB is trying their best to encourage parent participation even though most of the parents fail to participate due to time restraints. Some of the parents participate by cooking for learners and paying a little money to buy firewood for cooking.

Education White Paper 3 was published in 1997 and is entitled *A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education*. This document is the culmination of an extensive process of investigation that was initiated with the establishment of the National Commission on Higher Education (NHCE) in February 1993. It discusses a number of things including the needs and challenges of higher education, aspects regarding inadequate distribution of access and opportunity for students, the mismatch between the output and needs of a modernising economy, structural changes, student financial support and governance of the *Higher Education Act of 1997*(RSA,1997).

The *White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy* was published in November 1997 by the office of the former Deputy President of RSA, Thabo Mbeki. It outlines policy initiatives regarding the disabled community of South Africa. The vision of this integrated strategy is a 'society for all.' This means that, there must be an integration of disability issues in all government development strategies, planning and programmes. The paper is important for a few reasons. Firstly, the objectives of the strategy are to facilitate the integration of disability issues into government developmental strategy, planning and programmes. Secondly, it is a system for the co-ordination of disability in various line functions at all spheres of government. Thirdly, it encourages the development of strategies that will enhance capacity building which will in turn enhance the ability of government at all levels to implement recommendations contained in the strategy. Fourthly, it suggests a programme of

public education and awareness aimed at changing fundamental prejudice in South African society (RSA, 1997).

The first principle, upon which the strategy is based, includes a people-driven process which is a fundamental principle which informs the outlook of the disability rights movement and the right to self-representation. This means that the collective determination of disabled people must be used to inform the strategies of the government. Secondly, integration and sustainability are important issues. Historically, disability issues have been addressed in a piecemeal, fragmented way. This has been one of the key factors contributing to the marginalisation of disabled people, and the dire poverty in which the majority find themselves. In addition, the white paper focuses on a situational analysis of disability in South Africa which is said to be ‘disappointing.’ In rural areas this is exacerbated by the lack of hospitals, poor living conditions and an inability to access the help they need. The white paper further outlines the causes of disability and describes policy guidelines regarding issues affecting the disabled community like education, employment, transport, rehabilitation, health care and housing.

The above white papers were debated by parliament, parliamentary task groups or portfolio committees and they form the basis of education Bills and later acts of education. These white papers gave rise to the formation of Constitution Act No. 108 of 1996 (RSA, 1996a). The constitution of RSA is the supreme law of the country, the basic law of the nation, the first source of law and it contains the fundamental principles according to which the country is governed. No law or conduct which is inconsistent with it is valid. Since 1994, the education system has been restructured in order to bring it in line with this Act. The restructuring of the education system ensured that issues such as parental involvement in education were addressed.

In terms of Section 29 of the constitution, everyone has the right to a basic education including Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), and the right to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible. This means that all South African citizens, irrespective of race, class, gender, creed or age, have the opportunity to receive basic education. Again, it means that the government’s resources must be used according to the principle of equity, so that they can provide essentially the same quality of learning opportunities for all citizens.

Although the constitution gives all citizens the right to basic education regardless of age, young children cannot access education on their own. They need adults (usually their parents) to help them. Parents must participate in the education of their children as required by the constitution. This they can do by supporting their children financially (by paying school fees, organising transport, etc.), giving moral education, ensuring that schoolwork is done, or by being part of the SGB.

Other acts that were passed during this period include the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (SASA). The aim of SASA was to provide a uniform system of organisation, governance and funding of schools, establish minimum and uniform norms and standards for the provision of quality education across the school system, and amend certain laws relating to school.

The contents of the Act include stipulations regarding admission to public schools, the ages of compulsory attendance, discipline, language policy, freedom of conscience and religion, and the status of public schools. Guidelines are provided regarding the establishment and maintenance of public schools, the composition, powers and duties of SGBs, the closure and funding of public schools and payment of school fees. SASA is used to ensure that the right to basic education is given to citizens.

Section 39 of SASA states that parents are liable for the payment of school fees unless he or she has been exempted from payment in terms of this act. School fees may be determined and charged at a public school only if a resolution to do so has been adopted by a majority of parents attending the annual budget meeting as required by Section 38 of SASA. The resolution on payment of school fees must provide for the amount of fees to be charged and equitable criteria and procedures for the total, partial, or conditional exemption of parents who are unable to pay school fees. A parent may appeal to the Head of Department (HOD) against a decision of a governing body regarding the exemption of such a parent from payment of school fees (Section 40 of SASA). A parent who wishes to appeal the decision of the SGB must do so in writing within 30 days of the receipt of the notification of the decision.

A resolution on the payment of school fees must state the amount of fees to be charged, and stipulate equitable criteria and procedures for the total, partial or conditional exemption of parents who are unable to pay school fees. A parent may appeal to the Head of Department

against a decision regarding the exemption of such a parent from the payment of school fees (Section 40 of SASA 1996) (Clarke, 2007:49-50).

Section 20 of SASA lists the following functions of SGBs:

To promote the best interests of the school and strive to provide quality for all learners at school.

To adopt a constitution (constitution for the governing body);

To develop a mission statement for the school;

Adopt a code of conduct for learners;

To support the principal and staff in the performance of their duties;

To determine the times of the school day which needs to be consistent with the conditions of employment of the school staff (for state employees, this information is set out in the Employment of Educators Act No 76 of 1998);

To administer and control the school's property, buildings and grounds occupied by the school (including school hostels);

To encourage parents, learners and staff to render voluntary services to the school;

To recommend to the head of the education department, the appointment of educators;  
and

At the request of the head of department, to discuss the reasonable use under fair conditions of the facilities of the school for education programmes not conducted by the school.

It also notes that the SGB may allow reasonable use of the school facilities for community, social and fund-raising purposes. Naidu et al. (2008:149) mention that the SGB, acting within a framework set by legislation and the policies of the DoE, has the general responsibility of ensuring that the school performs in a manner that enables the provision of the best possible education to its learners. As mentioned earlier, the SGB is responsible for controlling school finances. Mestry and Bisschoff (2009:99) explain that the SGB should start preparing the next year's budget during the third quarter of the school year as this is one way to control finance.

Although parents are required by the legislation (i.e. the constitution and the SASA) to participate in their children's education, there is still a lot of non-participation, especially by

parents in rural areas such as Limpopo. Parents in this area do not know how to organise activities that may be used for fund raising purposes. The main reason for this is the fact that even the educators themselves do not know how to organise parent involvement activities. The issue of parent involvement was not included in the syllabus when teachers were trained during the apartheid period. The researcher, being the product of apartheid education, also cannot fully implement parent participation although she sees the need for it. According to the researcher's experience as an educator in a rural area, some of the reasons for non-participation include poverty, the prevalence of child-headed or grandparent-headed families, single parenting, and families living with HIV/Aids.

#### **(b) Parental involvement in Limpopo Province and Capricorn District after apartheid**

During the pre-apartheid era, Limpopo province (the name given to the former Northern Province) was characterised by apartheid education. As mentioned earlier, parental involvement existed but it was not regulated. Parents of children participated by paying school fees, buying uniforms, or providing lunch. Any other participation was in the form of informal education at home.

The birth of democracy in 1994 brought changes regarding the way in which education was practiced. New acts such as the Constitution Act No. 108 of 1996 and the SASA were passed and had to be followed. The Constitution Act No. 108 of 1996 (RSA, 1996a: Section 29) states that everyone has the right to basic education irrespective of age, class, gender or creed. The Limpopo province began to work according to the constitution although it was done under difficult circumstances. Limpopo province consists of both rural and urban schools but the majority of schools are rural. The constitution says everyone has the right to basic education which means all children must attend school. The children who attend school in town can do so because their parents can transport them, buy them uniforms and participate in the SGB. The opposite is true in rural schools as there are still children sitting at home when they are of school going age. This happens especially with children who are supposed to be at high schools.

Parents fail to participate in their children's education because of many reasons. One of the reasons for non-participation of parents in Limpopo is urbanisation. Most of the parents work far from home, that is, they have moved to cities in search of better jobs. This results in them either leaving the children alone or with grandparents. In addition, the rural areas are more

affected by HIV and AIDS than the urban areas and many parents pass away and leave the children alone. The reason for the high infection rate is poverty as most of the people are unemployed and cannot afford to live a healthy lifestyle.

The SASA requires that parents must ensure compulsory education from the school age of seven until the learner reaches the end of his or her fifteenth year or completes the ninth grade, whichever comes first. The schools in Limpopo communicate this to parents during parent meetings because most of the parents are not even aware of this educational legislation. Despite being told this, they still do not force their children to come to school. Some of them don't do it because they are ignorant, but most do not do so because they do not stay with their children.

### **2.3 The benefits of parental involvement in education**

Parental involvement in education is necessary in schools because the teachers alone cannot ensure that a child is equipped mentally, intellectually, morally and culturally for adulthood. Parental involvement can be practised in three ways: co-operation, participation and partnership.

Co-operation implies that parents support the child at home through their actions, such as demonstrating loyalty towards the school and supervising children's homework. Participation means that parents become more involved in school matters e.g. by serving on certain committees and becoming involved in fundraising projects. Partnership constitutes the highest level of parent involvement at school level. Van Deventer and Kruger (2009:9) discuss the benefits of parental involvement and say that they include improved school performance, reduced drop-out rates, a decrease in delinquency and a more positive attitude towards school.

Parental involvement and support benefits schools because they have a profound influence on the culture of learning and teaching. A school with such a culture is characterised by the fact that all role players value the processes of teaching and learning, practise a commitment to teaching and learning, make available the resources needed to facilitate the process and put structures in place to facilitate the process of teaching and learning. A sound culture of learning benefits learners, teachers and parent communities.

In the Capricorn district, Kgakotlou circuit, parental involvement is minimal. The schools in the circuit are situated in rural areas and this makes it even worse. The schools experience

discipline problems, especially in the secondary schools. The main reason for these problems is that parents do not fully participate in their children's education. These secondary schools are always on the list of underperforming secondary schools when the Grade 12 results are compared at the end of the year.

As mentioned earlier, parent involvement can be in the form of co-operation, participation and partnership. In order to fully implement parental involvement, all three forms of participation must occur in a school. In the Kgakotlou schools, parents participate only in one form, by being a member of the SGB where they participate in decision making. The 'participation' form of involvement occurs sporadically in the form of buying vegetables which are sold at school for fundraising. Involvement through 'co-operation' is not evident. Parents do not support their children at home, for example they do not supervise their children's homework, check their books or come to school to watch their children during extra mural activities. The only time you see the parent is when the child is forcefully sent home to go and fetch a parent; they do not come to school otherwise. Sometimes the parents still fail to come and this results in the child dropping out of school. The situation in these rural schools shows that there is a great need for parental involvement in education.

Studies conducted on the issue of parental involvement in education have revealed that there is generally a lack of parental involvement in schools, especially in rural schools. Some of these studies are discussed below.

Mbokodi (2008:iii) investigated the extent to which black parents involve themselves in school activities as envisaged by SASA. This was a qualitative study and the participants included principals, teachers, learners and chairpersons of SGBs of selected schools in the major townships of Port Elizabeth. The findings revealed a desperate situation of non-involvement in school activities among black parents, which is the result of the failure of the DoE to involve all stakeholders in strategies to involve parents in schools. This study recommended further research on parental involvement in disadvantaged schools since there was a clear need for it.

Baloyi's (2009) study indicated that parental involvement in South Africa is under researched and often misunderstood by stakeholders in the school system. This study investigated how effective parental involvement in Hlanganani South's schools could improve the culture of learning. The result was that the cause of a lack of culture and learning was exacerbated by factors such as high unemployment rates, poor socio-economic backgrounds, and high

illiteracy and failure rates. The researcher agrees with the study because when parents do not work, they cannot participate e.g. they won't be able to support their children financially; if they are illiterate, they cannot help them with homework.

Data for this study was collected through interviews with four school managers, twenty eight parents and six educators. The findings revealed that a lack of a culture of learning in Hlanganani South was exacerbated by factors such as a high unemployment rate, poor socio-economic background, high illiteracy rates and high failure rates. It also revealed that there was an urgent need for school managers to acquire skills, knowledge and strategies to bring about active parent involvement. The study recommended that researchers could in future conduct action research into parental involvement through case studies and comparative studies of effective and in-effective strategies (Baloyi, 2009).

A study conducted by Duma (2010) investigated rural school governors' understanding of the legislation and policies that affect school governance. Qualitative methodology was used to obtain information from rural school governors. The conclusion was that it is essential for rural school governors to be given the necessary training to develop a working knowledge of the legislation which has an impact on school governance. The study recommended that knowledge of legislation regarding the duties of SGB should be made available to rural school governors.

A study conducted by Khumalo (2006) investigated parental involvement in classroom activities. It revealed that parents lack knowledge about the importance of their involvement in classroom life and that thoughtful and coordinated planning of such involvement could benefit all concerned at school, enhance learner achievement and ensure learner cooperation. The study recommended that parental involvement should receive more attention than is presently the case.

Lemmer and Van Wyk's (2008) article draws on a qualitative inquiry of parental involvement in a small sample of public primary schools in South Africa, selected by means of purposeful sampling. The findings indicated that the schools were doing more to involve parents than is legally required. Nevertheless, a certain reservation to parent involvement was detected in principals' attitudes. The study suggests that together with enabling legislation, schools can develop valuable initiatives to make parents more active and equal partners. The benefits of parental involvement for learners, teachers and schools, and parents' families and communities are in the next section.

### **2. 3. 1 Benefits of parental involvement to learners**

The people who benefit most from an effective working relationship between teachers and families are the children. According to Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:14-15), children experience the following when their families are involved in their education:

#### **(a) Improved academic achievement**

Research has shown that children are more successful if their parents participate at school and encourage education and learning at home, regardless of their educational background or social class (Van Wyk and Lemmer, 2009:14-15).

#### **(b) Improved attitudes to learning**

When parents show an interest in their children's education and cherish high expectations for their performance, they encourage positive attitudes that are the keys to achievement (Van Wyk and Lemmer, 2009: 14-15).

#### **(c) Decreased drop-out rates**

The likelihood of learners leaving school without completing their studies is greatly reduced when their parents are actively involved in their schooling (Van Wyk and Lemmer, 2009:14-15).

#### **(d) Increased security and emotional stability**

Learners who are aware that their parents are interested in their schoolwork experience emotional stability and security, are better able to adjust to school, and are better able to overcome obstacles (Van Wyk and Lemmer, 2009 :14-15).

#### **(e) Improved behaviour and better school attendance**

A review of many studies has shown that there is a positive link between parent involvement and learners' behaviour at school as well as their school attendance (Van Wyk and Lemmer, 2009:14-15).

Jansen (2009:115) explains that research has confirmed that a home environment which is supportive of a child's schooling can make a difference to the way the child achieves. McDermott (2008:59) builds on Piaget's model of children's stages of intellectual development and states that the interpretation of a child's behaviour depends on how complex the thinking of the parent is.

Evertson and Emmer (2009:145-146) believe that there are two important categories of behaviour which should be observed in class, student involvement in learning activities and

student compliance with classroom rules and procedures. Student conduct is indicated by behaviour such as attention during presentations and discussions, and satisfactory progress in individual work and other assignments. Student compliance with classroom rules and procedures is indicated by the ability of the student to follow rules that have been communicated to the class.

The literature reviewed above proves that when teachers and learners work together, discipline in schools can improve. The educators in rural schools need to develop strategies to involve parents in their children's education since these parents are often reluctant to do so and do not show an interest in their children's education. This can help to improve discipline in these schools.

The researcher further agrees with the suggestion by Banks and Banks (2010:419) that parent involvement programs should be conceptualised broadly enough to include grandparents and other family members. This is because in some families, grandparents or siblings fulfil the role of the parent. This might be because the biological parents of these children have passed away, or because the mother or father lives with a grandparent.

### **2. 3. 2 Benefits to teachers and schools**

Parents are often their children's first and most important educators. Learners come to school with knowledge values and beliefs they have learnt from their parents and communities (Van Wyk and Lemmer, 2009:15-16). In the following section, the benefits that teachers and schools experience with parent involvement are discussed.

#### **(a) Improved relationships among parent, teachers and schools**

Principals and teachers, who know parents by virtue of their participation in school activities, treat these parents with great respect. Parents who understand the aims, nature and functions of the school are less likely to criticise the teacher, and are more likely to contribute positively towards the education of their children. The researcher believes that parental involvement in schools can build trust between the parents and teachers because as they discuss the child's schoolwork, the parent will reveal factors that are impacting on the child's performance. The educator can listen carefully and help where necessary. Moreover, if the educator knows the home circumstances of children, it is easier for him/her to carry out the teaching tasks.

Parental involvement can also help the schools to create a positive school climate. In schools where parents are actively involved, a positive school climate exists. A positive school climate involves developing a school community where all members share essential values, participate in decision making and support a common purpose or aim. It encompasses the way in which things are done and is a reflection of the values, beliefs and shared understanding of school personnel, learners, parents and others involved in the school community (Van Deventer and Kruger, 2009:17).

Knowledge of the child's home situation can positively influence his/her education. All parents can contribute valuable information about their children, e.g. their interests, relevant medical details, possible problems at home, disabilities, learning difficulties etc. (Van Wyk and Lemmer, 2009:15). Where learners have already developed learning difficulties or disabilities, it is essential to invite parents/caregivers to be active partners in the whole process of making sure that the problem does not worsen (Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana, 2010:300).

#### **(b) Increased commitment to teaching**

Teachers frequently report positive feelings about teaching and their school when there is more parent involvement at the school. This commitment results in such schools becoming high-achieving schools. In other words, teachers develop more interest in their work when parents are involved to the extent that they can make sacrifices by, for example, teaching during weekends and holidays.

Parent involvement can lessen the teacher's workload by assisting them with sporting activities during field trips, in the classroom and with disciplinary problems at school. They can also help to improve the school grounds, protect school property and help in organising fundraising activities.

The researcher also thinks that effective parental involvement in education benefits teachers and schools. One of the reasons is that if parents of learners are involved in their education, learners try very hard to behave in an appropriate manner. Factors such as absenteeism, late coming, undone homework, etc. are reduced. The children do not want their parents to be absent from work in order to come to school because they have transgressed. Teachers benefit when the parents help their children with homework because children gain more understanding of what they have learnt at school, and this makes it easier for the teacher to finish the syllabus.

### **2.3.3 Benefits to parents, families and communities**

Parental involvement in schools can benefit communities by providing job opportunities to community members. Schools sometimes require support staff to take responsibility for some of the administrative duties in the school. The school can hire a member of the community who is qualified but does not have a job, or one who is matriculated but for some reason cannot further his/her studies to do this. The SGB and the person will need to agree on the wages that will be paid. Male community members are usually hired to be the caretaker of the school.

Schools are also used by community members as service centres. Some church members use classrooms for their church services because they do not have church buildings. An agreement is drawn up between the church members and the SGB of that particular school regarding the conditions for the use of the school buildings. When the community uses the school facilities, they tend to develop a love for the school and thus become more involved with school activities.

Other benefits to parents and families were identified by Lemmer (in Van Wyk and Lemmer, 2009). They are:

#### **(a) Improved self-esteem**

Parents with little or poor education experience a feeling of inferiority with regard to the education of their children. Where parents become partners in their children's education and are shown how important their contribution is, their self-confidence increases greatly (Van Wyk and Lemmer, 2009:16). In other words when parents realise that teachers really need them in order to totally educate their children, they develop confidence in themselves and thus increase their participation. The researcher experiences this feeling of pride in the parents every time she hands out progress reports of learners to the few parents that respond when they are called to school.

The schools must therefore provide a means of encouraging parental involvement by, for example, organising activities where teachers and parents can be together and talk about school issues. Browne and Gordon (2009:172) mention individual conferences as an example of where the family or teacher can share knowledge and information, resolve conflicts, solve problems together, and set out goals for a child that can be reinforced at home and at school.

#### **(b) Parent empowerment**

Oosthuizen and Coetzer (2010:76) explain that one way of empowering parents is by providing a library containing books, articles and videos on child education. Parents who are able to read can read different books, while those who cannot read can watch videos on child education. This will help the parents to get a better understanding of why they should participate in their children's education. At the same time they can learn different ways to help their children with schoolwork.

### **(c) Decision making**

Frederickson and Cline (2011:19) mention decision making as being one of the benefits of parental involvement for parents and community members. They say that parents are encouraged to choose the education that they want for their child and to complain if the education falls short of their expectations. The researcher shares this view because parents are expected to help a child choose subjects that can be studied whilst all the time considering the career that the child wants to follow. When schools give them the opportunity to decide, the parents feel their importance in the education of their child.

### **(d) Social problems (e.g. teenage pregnancy and drug abuse)**

Schools can help parents to deal with social problems such as pregnancy and drug abuse because school children generally spend more time at school than at home. Because teachers are also 'parents' to children, they are able to notice if a girl is pregnant or a boy is using drugs. Such children show a sudden change in behaviour, for example boys become disobedient and are always at the toilets whilst girls are sickly or moody. The worst problem is underperformance. After talking to the children, teachers usually inform the parents about their children's condition. It is then that many parents find out about problems because they often spend long hours away from home for work.

### **(e) Decreased feeling of isolation**

Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:16) mention that for both parents and teachers, collaboration reduces the characteristic of isolation of their respective roles. It is reassuring for parents to know that teachers share their concern about their children. Likewise, teachers find it comforting to realise that parents recognise the complexity of their task in the classroom. The researcher also believes that parents feel satisfied knowing that teachers also care about the future of their children and are prepared to help them.

## **2.4 Barriers to parental involvement**

Barriers to parental involvement in education are factors which prevent effective parent involvement from taking place. Parents are the primary educators of their children, but for some reason, they are not able to fulfil this task. According to Kruger (2006:232), common law demands that parents take responsibility for the physical education of the child, developing the child's character, choosing how they want to bring up children concerning spiritual matters, developing a child's intellectual abilities and the cultural development of the child. Research findings by Singh, Mbokodi and Msila (2004:301-305) on parental involvement in eight historically disadvantaged secondary schools accentuate the lack of parental involvement and the need for it. The findings revealed aspects or factors which are barriers to parent involvement and which can in all probability be extrapolated to most, if not all historically disadvantaged schools.

These barriers affect parents in both urban and rural areas, but the rural parents are more affected. One of the main barriers is the fact that in the modern-day, western society, the school has gradually begun to take over tasks that are meant for parents (Kruger, 2006:233). For example, children as young as six months are taken to crèche, possibly because the mother is still a learner who must attend school. Parents of such learners must often go to work because the family cannot afford a maid. As a result, the tasks that were the responsibility of a parent must be done by a caregiver at a crèche. Other barriers of parental involvement in education are discussed in the sections below.

### **2.4.1 Poverty**

Poverty is a primary factor that places children at risk of failure at school (Van Wyk and Lemmer, 2009:160). Children from poor families have, amongst other things, poor nutrition, hunger problems, medical problems, lowered educational achievement, academic difficulties and, most of all, behavioural problems. All these factors make it difficult for educators to teach these children. The researcher agrees with the authors because this is something that she observes every day when going to work. The school is situated in a poverty stricken area where in most families, the social grant is the main income for the family. The children do not have proper uniforms, have no lunch during break, and cannot afford anything extracurricular. The school is a 'no fee school' and the money that the department gives cannot meet all the financial requirements. Thus the school sometimes ask parents for assistance, for example they are asked to contribute when children undertake sports trips, but

this is difficult for them. Poverty also affects the living conditions of people (Fleisch, 2008:72). Poor people often do not have a place where children can study effectively.

Although the department is trying to solve the problem through the implementation of the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) where learners at 'no fee schools' are fed every day, a lot still needs to be done to achieve this. This is because according to the programme, learners must get the food at 10:00 but they must often stay at school till late in the day.

#### **2. 4. 2 Learners staying with grandparents**

Some learners stay with their grandparents, not their parents. Two reasons for this are urbanisation and the high number of orphaned children. Urbanisation occurs when people leave their homes and go to cities in order to find work. These people leave their children with their grandparents and only visit home once a month. The result is that they are not around to check their children's schoolwork and that the grandparents must carry the burden of parenthood. Other children stay with their grandparents because their parents have passed away; in these instances the grandparents assume the full parental role. In both the cases, grandparents are expected to play the parental role, but this is not possible because they are old and often need to be taken care of themselves.

The department also provides learners who live far from school with transport to school. This is done in order to reduce non-attendance of school by rural learners. This measure has helped many learners who stay with their grandparents or with their siblings to attend school regularly. This has also benefitted learners who stay with their parents but do not have reliable transport.

Besides a lack of money, grandparents cannot be involved in their grandchildren's education due to their physical condition. Caring for grandchildren places a huge responsibility and strain on the grandparents, no matter how willingly they may be. Many parents, especially in rural areas, do not live with their children because they work in big cities and only come home once a month. Parents do not have time to check the child's schoolwork because they must soon return to work. Some children are forced to stay with their grandparents because their parents are divorced; others because the mother has married another man who is abusive to the child. In all these cases, grandparents cannot play the parental role because they are old and they themselves need to be taken care of.

### **2. 4. 3 Single parenting**

Single parenting also feeds the problem of non-participation of parents in education. This category of parent often has severe financial constraints and must parent a child with a total or partial absence of emotional support and guidance from another adult (Van Wyk and Lemmer, 2009:154). The situation is worse in rural areas because many of these single parents are still learners attending secondary school and so they are expected to be a parent and a learner at the same time. In other instances, learners must care for both their own children and their siblings.

### **2. 4. 4 Substance abuse in families**

Couchenour and Chrisman (2011:145) state that substance abuse is also a cause of non-participation of parents in their children's education. When family members use illegal drugs, or misuse alcohol or prescription drugs, children often suffer great difficulties. Parents who are addicted to drugs or alcohol typically cannot provide consistent nurturing for their children. The researcher shares this view and thinks that parents who abuse substances cannot play their parental role effectively. Such parents do not have time to participate and they often do not remember to check their children's schoolwork. They do not attend school meetings and neglect their children, for example by not buying them food or clothes. The main reason for this is that whatever money is available is used to buy addictive substances.

### **2. 4. 5 Time, transportation and childcare**

Time, transportation and childcare prevent effective parent involvement, in the sense that many mothers work outside home, and thus spend time commuting to work. Improvements in technology (cell phones, e-mailing and computers) has resulted in less leisure time. Even when parents have time available to devote to school, some families have transport difficulties and public transportation may not serve the school at the times they are free to visit. Moreover, parents may need to arrange for the care of siblings when they wish to visit the school and this can be challenging (Van Wyk and Lemmer, 2009:17-18).

### **2. 4.6 Lack of guidance from teachers**

Many parents would be willing to spend more time on activities with their children if teachers gave them guidance. However, teachers themselves need guidance as few educational institutions and school systems provide new and inexperienced teachers with information on

working with families. Parents are usually only contacted when there is bad news about their child and this makes them reluctant to visit the school on other occasions (Van Wyk and Lemmer, 2009:18).

#### **2. 4. 7 Negative school experiences and language barriers**

Parents feel uncomfortable just entering the school grounds. Parents for whom the language of teaching and learning is a second language (e.g. English), find it difficult to communicate with teachers. Parents with little education or those with negative school experiences are also less inclined to make family-school contacts (Van Wyk and Lemmer, 2009:18).

#### **2. 4. 8 Lack of supportive environment**

Many neighbourhoods lack easy access to libraries, cultural institutions, health services and recreation. The fear of crime and the high transport costs incurred by families in disadvantaged communities deter many committed parents from making the trip to school after hours to attend meetings and other events. Parents are more likely to become involved in their children's education if they perceive that the school has strong practices to involve parents at school and at home (Van Wyk and Lemmer, 2009:18-19). Schools need to develop these practices and encourage programmes that involve parents in school policy.

#### **2. 4. 9 Lack of strong practices by the school to involve parents in education**

Friend (2008:121) mentions that the lack of strong practices by the school to involve parents is one of the barriers to parental involvement in education. Schools may not make parents feel welcome i.e. educators may ask them to wait for a lengthy period of time for a meeting, or they may inadvertently ignore or minimize concerns that parents raise. Some educators believe certain parents are 'no good' parents and they make only a minimal effort to interact with these parents. Some parents are intimidated by other parents who are knowledgeable about education and who insist on a particular program or service; in such instances communication becomes constrained or limited.

The researcher, being an educator in a secondary school, shares these views. In addition, diseases such as HIV and Aids are further barriers to the participation of parents in schools. Some parents are sick and it is difficult for them to be actively involved in education. Others are not involved because they do not receive messages about meetings sent via the learners. Illiteracy is also a barrier to parent involvement because illiterate parents cannot help children

with their schoolwork. A negative attitude also feeds non-participation because a parent who has a negative attitude about school (because he or she has failed previously) will not show interest in their child's schoolwork. Schools need to come up with strategies for parental involvement because they are often more knowledgeable in this regard than the parents.

Although educators are expected to come up with strategies for parental involvement, there are sometimes obstacles to this process itself. These include a tendency to look down on parents by educators, a negative attitude towards working with parents, or having too much work to do. The lack of training in working with parents can also be an obstacle because teachers are trained to work with learners and not with parents. Educators may also be threatened by parents who might question or challenge their professional competence. They will then resent parental involvement and regard it as interference rather than seeing it as a genuine concern for their child's education.

In order to address these obstacles, the researcher thinks that educators can develop themselves by studying further. They may enrol with tertiary institutions for courses that relate to the subjects they are teaching. This will bring back their professional competence and help them to adapt to changes occurring in the education system.

The department can also help by constantly work shopping teachers regarding activities for parental involvement. Parental involvement in schools should form part of the curriculum for student teachers so that they can be trained and competent to implement it when they start teaching.

#### **2. 4.10 Communication barriers and ways to overcome them**

Olsen and Fuller (2012:104-110) describe several barriers that may interfere with the creation of shared meanings and responsibilities. These are discussed below.

##### **(a) Parent's perspective**

Parents criticize teachers for ineffective communication. They believe that it is the teacher's obligation to make the initial contact and report on a child's performance at school.

The researcher shares this view and thinks that teachers should take the lead in establishing communication since they are the ones who have knowledge about what is happening in the classroom. In order to overcome this barrier, teachers should understand these expectations and begin to lay the foundation for a partnership with parents.

Parents also criticize teachers for waiting until issues become severe before contacting parents and say that they would like to be informed when the issue first appears (Hawes in Olsen and Fuller, 2012:105). Feedback should be provided on a continual basis for both positive and negative events and communication should be constant throughout the school year (Montgomery in Olsen and Fuller, 2012:105).

The researcher suggests that parents should be involved early on so as to make it easier for the teachers to develop a mutual understanding of the problem and collaborate on possible solutions.

Parents believe it is the school's responsibility to teach students the most important skills. However, they often question the amount of work that is given to a child (Olsen and Fuller, 2008). Teachers must explain their expectations to parents at the beginning of the school year and offer them avenues in which they can become involved.

Teachers should be sensitive to research that shows that parents report feelings of confusion and insecurity about their roles and responsibilities as partners with teachers (Yerger in Olsen and Fuller, 2012:105). As suggested above, teachers must explain their expectations at the beginning of the school year and offer parents avenues to become involved.

Parents appreciate teachers who take time to explain and discuss matters concerning their children and the learning process, as well as how they are progressing at school. It helps parents to know what is expected of their children in the educational process (Olsen and Fuller, 2012:105).

Parents have restrictions that keep them from interacting with their child's school. These restrictions may be caused by factors such as a lack of time, reliable transport, technology and skills. To address these issues, teachers can survey parents at the beginning of the year to learn about these challenges.

#### **(b) Teacher's perspective**

Teachers are convinced that many parents place their careers and social events before their involvement in their child's education. Some think that parents do not provide the quality of character education and guidance that they did in the past (Olsen and Fuller, 2012:106).

Other teachers think that parents need to update their knowledge of fundamental skills (especially maths and reading) so that they can help their children with homework. Parents can be provided with an opportunity to take classes to refresh old skills and learn new ones.

Other teachers feel that they do not have sufficient training to establish communication lines with parents and families. Professional development initiatives for teachers can help improve these communication skills (Olsen and Fuller, 2012:106).

## **2.5 Summary**

This chapter has provided an introduction to the literature review, a discussion of the concept of parental involvement, and also of the development of parental involvement in the South African education system. This was done with reference to parental involvement during the pre-apartheid era, apartheid era and after-apartheid era. The benefits of parental involvement to learners, teachers and schools, parents, families and communities, as well as the barriers to parental involvement were then discussed.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

#### 3.1 Introduction

As mentioned in Chapter One of this study, this chapter will present a detailed discussion of the research methodology and design that was followed in this research. It will also describe the population and sampling strategies, instrumentation and data analysis, interpretation methods and ways of dealing with the reliability and validity aspects of the research.

According to Punch (2009:112) the research design is the basic plan for a piece of research and it includes four main ideas: strategy, conceptual framework, the question of who or what will be studied, and the tools and procedures used to collect and analyse empirical materials. Wiersma and Jurs (2009:119) believe that a research design is a plan or strategy for conducting research, and it deals with matters such as selecting participants for the research and preparing for data collection, that is, the activities that comprise the research process.

The researcher understands the research design to be a description of how the study will be conducted, in other words, how, from whom and when the data will be collected, and how it will be analysed and interpreted. The aim of a research design is to specify a way of gathering information that will be used to answer the research question. The researcher concurs with Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtler (2010:24) who say that the research design can be divided into three categories: quantitative approaches, qualitative approaches and approaches that incorporate both of these.

In the quantitative approach, researchers use measurements and observations to represent communication phenomena such as amounts, frequencies, degrees, values or intensity. Thereafter they compare or relate them using descriptive or inferential statistics (Keyton 2011:37). On the other hand, qualitative research methods emphasise empirical, inductive, and interpretive approaches applied to interactions within a specific context. The qualitative researchers are interested in the whole of the phenomenon, regardless of how complex or messy it gets.

The research approach followed in this study was qualitative, that is, the researcher collected data in face-to-face situations by interacting with school managers in their setting (field research). The researcher chose this approach because it is exploratory and descriptive;

qualitative studies are considered an important tool in the improvement of educational practice (MacMillan and Schumacher 2006:315). The data was non-numerical and was in the form of words and pictures. The researcher relied on the inductive mode of the scientific method which has exploration or discovery as its major objective (Johnson and Christensen, 2012:376). Qualitative researchers uses an emergent design which means that methodologies may change throughout the study in order to better represent the reality of the persons and settings studied (Lodico et al., 2010:143). This study intended to conduct interviews with the participants, but when informative documents were discovered during the process, these were used even though the information was not covered in the interviews.

The phenomenon was studied in an open-ended way, without prior expectations or theoretical explanations already existing; instead explanations were developed based on the interpretations of what was observed (Johnson and Christensen, 2012:376). This approach is relevant to this study because it can be used to describe the concept of management in relation to parental involvement, establish how Kgakotlou schools manage activities to encourage parental involvement, and to suggest ways to improve the behaviour of learners in these schools by devising strategies to encourage parental involvement.

The remainder of this chapter provides more information on the qualitative approach, in particular, population and sampling strategies, instrumentation and data collection techniques, data analysis and interpretation, and the concepts of validity and reliability.

## **3.2 Research methodology and design**

### **3.2.1 Research approach**

The research approach in this study is qualitative i.e. the researcher collected data in face-to-face situations by interacting with school managers, teachers and parents in their schools (field research). Qualitative research is defined by Newby (2010:115) as a research method which is concerned with understanding how people choose to live their lives, the meanings they give to their experiences and their feelings about their condition. Muijs (2011:3) describes qualitative research as an umbrella term encompassing a wide range of methods such as interviews, case studies, ethnographic research and discourse analysis, to name just a few. Keyton (2011:58) believes that qualitative research methods emphasise empirical, inductive, and interpretive approaches applied to interactions within a specific context, which means that qualitative researchers are interested in the whole of the phenomenon and are in

direct opposition to quantitative research. Qualitative researchers do not convert their observations or participants' observations into numerical form, nor do they separate out or isolate part of the interaction from the whole.

The researcher agrees with the above mentioned authors and believes that qualitative research is a research method in which data is collected using a face-to-face technique where most of the data collected is in the form of words rather than numbers. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews with the participants.

### **3. 2. 2 Characteristics of qualitative research**

#### **(a) Understanding of people's lives**

The characteristics of qualitative research are concerned with understanding how people live their lives, the meanings they give to their experiences, and how they feel about their situations on a daily basis. It can include approaches such as ethnography which is the process of observing individuals or groups either as participants or non-participants and of analysing and structuring the record. Action research (which is a cyclical research and development procedure) moves from problem to goal, through action to reflection on the result in relation to the goal and case study. It is an investigation of a single issue, usually with the aim of finding out how it impacts on the lives of people, and perhaps have more understanding of that particular issue.

The approach is relevant to this study because the researcher also interprets the phenomenon of parental involvement in education in terms of the meanings and feelings that people assign to it. One important aspect of the qualitative approach is its ability to improve educational research projects (Check and Schutt, 2012:210) and this study aims to improve the behaviour of learners in the Kgakotlou schools, by coming up with strategies to encourage parental involvement in these schools. The researcher investigated parental involvement in schools with a view to get a new understanding of the concept.

Data was collected in a natural way, for example the researcher visited the schools and spoke to the principals of these schools. The natural way of collecting data is when data is collected through a conversation between the researcher and the participants. When a researcher asks questions and participants answer them, it draws on the natural behaviour of human beings.

**(b) Descriptive data**

Qualitative research yields descriptive data and it takes the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. The written results of the research contain quotations from the data to illustrate and substantiate the presentation. The data includes interview transcripts, field notes, photographs, videotapes, personal documents, memos and other official records (Bodgan and Biklen, 2007:5).

As qualitative research is descriptive in nature (i.e. it uses words instead of numbers), the researcher uses words to describe the research findings and record the interview responses from participants. The participants also use words when expressing their views on parental involvement in education.

**(c) Concern with process**

Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products (Bodgan and Biklen, 2007:6). In this study, the researcher is concerned with the process when trying to establish how school managers attach meaning to parental involvement in their schools and what the natural history of parental involvement in their schools is. In other words, in this research, parental involvement is a process under study.

**(d) Inductive analysis**

Qualitative research is an inductive research method and is different from the deductive approach used in quantitative research. Inductive research begins with specific data which is used to develop a general explanation (theory) to account for the data (Check and Schutt, 2012:36). In other words, qualitative researchers do not gather data in order to test a hypothesis they have before an investigation as is the case with quantitative research. Instead, they gather pieces of information in order to develop a general understanding of a particular issue or process.

The researcher analysed the data inductively in this study by collecting pieces of data from the participants (school managers, teachers and chairpersons of the SGB) and using these to form general codes and themes. Check and Schutt (2012:243) describes coding as a process of segmenting and labelling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data. The researcher formed codes using the collected data, selected useful data, and disregarded what was not of use.

### **(e) Participant perception**

Punch (2009:117) mentions participant perception as being an important characteristic of qualitative research. Here the researcher attempts to capture data on the perceptions of local actors from the inside through a process of deep attentiveness, empathetic understanding, and suspending or bracketing of preconceptions about the topics under discussion.

The researcher in this study also wants to know the participant perspective on parental involvement in education. The participants are school managers, teachers and parents and they were asked to explain their perspective on parental involvement in their schools. Punch (2009:117) quotes Miles and Huberman's (1994:6-7) summary of the recurrent elements in qualitative research. Some of these are:

1. Qualitative research is conducted through an intense and/or prolonged contact with a "field" or life situation. These situations are typically "banal" or normal ones, reflective of the everyday life of individuals, groups, societies and organisations.
2. The researcher's role is to gain a holistic overview of the context under study: its logic, arrangements, and explicit and implicit rules.
3. The researcher attempts to capture data on the perception of local actions from the inside through a process of deep attentiveness of empathetic understanding and of suspending preconceptions about topics under discussion.
4. After reading through these materials, the researcher isolates certain themes and expressions that can be reviewed with informants but that should be maintained in their original forms throughout the study.
5. One of the main tasks is to explicate the ways people in a particular setting come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day-to-day situations.

A prolonged time was spent in the field during the investigation and collection of data phase. It was in this time that the school managers, teachers and parents were interviewed.

### **(f) Subjectivity**

Muijs (2011:4) describes qualitative researchers as subjectivists. In contrast to the realistic view that the truth is 'out there' and can be objectively measured and found through research, they point to the role of human subjectivity in the process of research. They are of the opinion that reality is not 'out there' to be objectively and dispassionately observed by us, but is at

least in part constructed by us and by our observations. No pre-existing objective reality can be observed; all truth can only be relative and is never definite as the positivist claims.

In this study, reality was constructed during the continued process of collecting data. The truth that was revealed at the end of the investigation was therefore relative, that is, it was 'true' only from the researcher's view.

### **3.3 Research method**

According to Newby (2010:115) qualitative research includes approaches such as ethnography, action research or case study. Ethnography refers to the process of observing individuals or groups either as participants or non-participants, and of analysing and structuring the record. Action research is a cyclical research and development procedure that moves from problem to goal, through action to reflection on the results in relation to the goal, and then moves forward by revising action or goal or both. Case study is an investigation of a single instance, usually with the goal of identifying and perhaps understanding how an issue arose, how a problem was resolved, often with a purpose of isolating critical incidents that act as decision points for change.

Keyton (2011:280) mentions that there are a variety of ways to collect qualitative data. Common ways include narratives, interviews, focus groups, and ethnography. Wiersma and Jurs (2009: 236) state that data collection may be either interactive or non-interactive. Interactive techniques involve the researcher interacting with the subjects who are being studied while non-interaction lacks that interaction.

Lodico et al, (2010:35) explain that case studies can be differentiated from other forms of qualitative research by the fact that they focus on a 'single unit' or a bounded system. A bounded system is explained by Lodico et al (2010:35) as being determined by asking whether there is a limit to the number of people who could be interviewed or a finite amount of time prescribed.

Case studies focus on an individual, small groups or individuals within a group and document that group's individual's experience in a specific setting.

As mentioned earlier, this study is a case study. A case study is described by Punch (2009:119) as a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context. The case may be an individual, a role, a small group, an organisation, a community, or a nation. It could also be a decision, a policy, a process, an incident, or an event of some sort. Stake (in Punch,

2009:119) identifies the following three types of cases: An intrinsic case study is one in which the study is undertaken because the researcher wants a better understanding of a particular case. An instrumental case study is where a particular case is examined to give insight into an issue or define a theory. The third is a collective case study where the instrumental case study is extended to cover several cases so as to learn more about the phenomenon, population or general condition.

Hopkins (2008:123) describes a case study as being a relatively formal analysis of an aspect of classroom life. The main use of the case study in classroom research is that it provides a relatively formal and fairly definitive analysis of a specific aspect of teaching behaviour or classroom life. The researcher describes a case study as a method of research which studies a case, using different techniques such as observations and interviews. The researcher chose this method of data collection because it is one of the most commonly used methods in qualitative research. As mentioned earlier, a case study studies a program, event, or activity in detail over time; in this research the activity in the parental involvement which occurs in schools.

This study is an intrinsic case study because its aims to explore, that is, the researcher attempts to learn about a little-known phenomenon (parental involvement in schools). Intrinsic case studies also occur when the study is undertaken because the researcher wants a better understanding of this particular case (Punch, 2009:119). As the researcher used interviews with school managers, teachers and parents to investigate, a greater understanding of the concept of parental involvement was obtained.

The researcher believes that a case study method is relevant in this study because she gathered information from school managers, teachers and parents and in doing so she learnt the patterns of behaviour of these participants, and the way they understand things.

Newby (2010:51) describes a case study as a detailed analysis of an individual circumstance or event that is chosen either because it is typical, unusual, because there was a problem or because something worked well. It is the relationship between the general and specific that must be resolved when a case study is researched. The author also notes that case studies aim to identify patterns and that they are also interested in variations from the expected.

In this study, parental involvement in education is a circumstance or event that was chosen because there is a problem with it. The problem is the fact that parents are not practising it, or are not involved in their children's education as is expected by SASA.

In the Kgakotlou circuit, learners exhibit behavioural problems because of the lack of parental involvement in their education. Evertson and Emmer (2009:145) state that there are two important categories of behaviour which should be observed in class, that is, student involvement in learning activities and student compliance with classroom rules and procedures. Student conduct is indicated by behaviour such as attention during presentations and discussions together with satisfactory progress in individual work and other assignments. Student compliance with classroom rules and procedures is indicated by the ability of the student to follow the rules that have been communicated to the class (Evertson and Emmer, 2009:146).

The secondary school learners of Kgakotlou show deviations in both the above mentioned categories of behaviour. There is little involvement in learning activities and limited compliance with classroom and school rules and procedures. Many do not comply with school rules, nor do they abide by the code of conduct of their schools in spite of the fact that they, together with parents, agreed to do so during admission. The learners show a lack of respect for themselves, their educators, their fellow learners and the school property. They are not punctual and they play truant. These aspects of behaviour have a negative impact on their performance in class and this ultimately results in a high failure rate. In addition, much of the time that is supposed to be used for teaching and learning is instead used to solve cases of misbehaviour and to bring about discipline which is one the most important characteristics of an effective school.

The researcher believes that the lack of parental involvement in their child's education is one of the causes of their misbehaviour. The SASA states that the ultimate responsibility for learners' behaviour rests with their parents or guardians. Parents of children attending Kgakotlou schools fail to carry out that responsibility because despite the efforts made by the SGB to call them for meetings to discuss issues concerning their children's education, only a few ever respond. This study aimed to learn the reasons for these parent's lack interest in their children's school activities because their non-participation impacts negatively on their scholastic performance.

The result is that children whose parents are not involved in their education develop a negative attitude towards school and this result in problems such as discipline in classrooms. Shindler (2010:272) describes three levels of classroom behavioural problems. Level 1 refers to student actions that violate classroom rules or social contract and is rooted in forgetfulness, a lack of understanding or carelessness. Level 2 is subdivided into two categories. The first

refers to cases where students knowingly reject their commitment to the social contract in words or actions and is typically rooted in defiance, a desire for power or a cry for help. The second is where the student exhibits dysfunctional behaviour on a regular basis and it is typically rooted in a deeply conditioned pattern of thinking and ego defence. Level 3 comprises incidents where the student experiences a struggle with his or her behaviour for which there is a biological or organic basis to the lack of self-control.

Colvin (2010:64) mentions disrespect as being another discipline problem in the classroom. Disrespect refers to those behaviours that infringe upon the rights of others and are perceived as negative. Disrespectful behaviours include affronts directed toward others, such as insults, verbal assault, rudeness, put-downs and slurs. The researcher thinks that if there is a partnership between parents and teachers (such as through communication, volunteering and decision making), these behavioural problems can be reduced.

Lemmer (2007) believes that parental involvement in South African schools has been primarily limited to financing schools and parent volunteering. Legislation extended the right to parents and the community to participate in the school's governing structures. The researcher agrees with the author that during the apartheid era, parent involvement was limited to the financing of schools and parent volunteering. The reason is that she witnessed parent involvement during that time and it was limited to the payment of school fees and buying of textbooks for their children. At that time many students were motivated to study because they felt sorry for their parents but today students do not take their schoolwork seriously because they have nothing to lose.

Lemmer (2007) also discusses Epstein's six types of parent involvement which form an integrated theory of family-school relations and which is characterised by a set of overlapping spheres of influence. This is in comparison to the sequential perspective which stresses the critical stage of parents and teachers' contribution to the child's development. The theory means that the work of the most effective families and schools overlap and they share goals and missions.

### **3.3.1 Theoretical framework**

This study follows Epstein's typology of parental involvement which is described below:

Epstein's framework of six major types of involvement that fall within the areas of overlapping spheres evolved from many studies which examine the work of educators in schools. Lemmer (2007:221) briefly describes the six types of parent involvement as follows:

Type 1 – Parenting: Schools should assist families with parenting and child-rearing skills, family support, understanding child adolescent development and setting, as well as home conditions so as to support learning at each stage and grade level.

Type 2 – Communication: Schools should communicate with families about school programmes and students' progress with school-to-home and home-to-school communication.

Type 3 – Volunteering: Schools should make recruitment, training, work and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at school or in other locations to support students and school programmes.

Type 4 – Learning at home: Schools should involve families with their children in learning activities at home, including homework, and other curricular linked activities and decisions.

Type 5 – Decision making: Schools should include parents as participants in school decisions, governance and advocacy activities through PTAs, committees, councils and other parent organisations.

Type 6 – Collaborating with the community: Schools should coordinate the work and resources of the community businesses, colleges or universities and other groups to strengthen school programmes, family practices and student learning and development.

According to the researcher, the six types of parent involvement identified by Epstein et al.(1997) are all important practices for involving parents in the education of children. If schools can use these strategies of involving parents, the problem of non-involvement will be addressed.

### **3.3.2 Advantages and disadvantage of case studies**

There are both advantages and disadvantages to using case studies with qualitative research method. Mbokodi (2008:49) refers to qualitative research as naturalistic research and notes that one particular advantage of naturalistic research is that it has ecological validity. Ecological validity refers to the extent to which the research is conducted in situations that are similar to the everyday life experiences of the participants. In other words, ecological

validity refers to the process of conducting research in a setting that is known to the participants. In this study, the school is well known to the school managers, teachers and parents.

Atkins and Wallace (2012:108) mention that case studies provide a means for the researcher to capture and interrogate the real world, be it a situation, an organisation, or a set of relationships in all its complexity in a way that quantitative approaches cannot do. The authors further states that in educational research the case study provides a means of conducting a small-scale investigation in order to explore a research question or a theory. Its inherent flexibility means that it can be used to explore a variety of contexts and situations from the experience of individuals to the workings of large institutions like universities. It also makes it possible to explore single cases of people, classes or organisations and compare policy implementation in a number of schools .

This study is conducted in the natural environment of the participants, for example the principals were interviewed at school and parents at a venue of their choice. Some were interviewed at their homes and others at their place of work. The disadvantage of using a case study as a qualitative research method is that it is subjective and this can result in difficulties in establishing the reliability and validity of the information generated.

### **3.4 Population and sampling strategies**

#### **3.4.1 Population**

A population is described by the researcher as being a group of people who live in a particular place and are included in the research study. In many educational research studies, it is not possible to include all members of a population. In this study, the population consisted of school managers, teachers and chairpersons of the SGBs of secondary schools in the Kgakotlou circuit. It was not possible for the researcher to include these representatives from all secondary schools in the circuit because of the unavailability of time and cost implications.

The population in this study was chosen on the grounds that they have knowledge about the phenomenon under study, that is, they have knowledge about parental involvement in education and are also interested in this topic. The researcher has prior knowledge of the population and she made a selection on this basis. The school managers are part of the

population because they are the ones who must see to it that the activities that involve parents in school are implemented. They are the ones who should initiate and manage parental involvement activities in their schools, and the researcher believed that she could get rich information from them in this regard.

The teachers form part of the population because firstly, they and their school managers are implementers in the school environment. The principal cannot implement parental involvement activities without help from the teachers. For example, when parent meetings are called, the principal will ask class teachers and subject teachers to come and report on the learners' progress in class. The researcher held the view that teachers could share their experience of parental involvement in their schools with her. Secondly, teachers act as parents to learners during the day, that is, they are in "logo parentis" with the learners' parents.

The chairpersons of SGBs were included in the research population because they have knowledge about issues regarding school governance and the researcher felt that they could share this information with her. The chairpersons head the SGB and most of them stay in the village and so are likely to know why parents are reluctant to take part in school activities. The researcher agrees with Wiersma and Jurs (2009) that a population consists of individuals who are included in a research study. These authors further note that it is usually not possible to include all members of a population in a research study and say that a sample is more commonly used. The procedures of sampling are discussed hereunder. Keyton (2010:125-129) states that a population consists of all units, or the universe, people, or things possessing the attributes or characteristics in which the researcher is interested.

The researcher is aware that there are other stakeholders in education, but believes that the school managers, teachers and SGB chairpersons can provide more rich data on the management of parental involvement activities in schools and barriers to these activities than other role players in the school environment.

### **3.4.2 Sampling strategies**

Wiersma and Jurs (2009:325) describe a sample as being a subset of the population to which the researcher intends to generalise the results. In order to achieve this, the researcher needs the sample (the individuals actually involved in the research) to be representative of the larger population. Keyton (2010:125-129) mentions that it is impossible, impractical, or both to ask everyone to participate in a research project, or even to locate everyone or everything in the

population. This author further describes the sampling frame as being the list of available units possessing the attributes or characteristics of interest. He continues saying that there are two types of sampling procedures: probability sampling and non-probability sampling.

**(a) Probability sampling**

Probability sampling is a statistical basis and is the most rigorous way to identify whom or what to include as part of a sample. What is characteristic of and common to probability sampling techniques is that the probability, or chance, of any element being included in the sample is known for everyone or every element in the sample. Wiersma and Jurs (2009:325) state that a random sample involves what is called probability sampling, which means that every member of the population has a nonzero probability of being selected for the sample. In other words, all members of the population have some chance of being included in the sample. In this study, probability sampling is described as a sampling technique where all members of the population have equal opportunities of being included in a sample; this is the mostly commonly used method in quantitative research. Punch (2009:251) states that representativeness is a key concept in probability sampling. This means that probability sampling is done in order to ensure representativeness.

In probability sampling, findings are inferred back to the population. Keyton (2010:126-127) mentions four common probability sampling techniques. The first is simple random sampling where every person has every chance of being selected to participate in the study. Systematic sampling is when the number of entries of the population, or the sampling frame is determined and a unique number is assigned to each element in the sampling frame. The research decides on the number of entries and divides the population figure by the sample figure. The third technique is stratified random sampling where the population is divided according to subgroups of interest or homogeneous groups and elements are randomly selected from each subgroup of the population. This is done with respect to its proportion to the population as a whole. The last technique is cluster sampling and here the researcher identifies the population by groups or clusters during the first stage and then applies simple random sampling to each cluster to select the final sample.

**(b) Non probability sampling**

Keyton (2010: 129) describes non-probability sampling as a sampling that does not rely on any form of random selection. Non probability sampling is used in communication research

when no other sampling technique will result in an adequate and appropriate sample. It is also used when researchers study communication variables that are believed to be generally distributed through a population. Researchers also use non-probability sampling because they desire research participants with special experience or communication ability.

Methods of non-probability sampling cited by Keyton (2010:129) are convenience sampling, volunteer sampling and snowball sampling. In convenience sampling the researcher selects those people who are convenient to him or her as respondents. In volunteer sampling, the researcher relies on individuals who express interest in the topic or who are willing to participate in research. Snowball sampling occurs when participants help researchers obtain their sample by identifying other similar participants. It is used particularly when the research topic is controversial, or when a specific population of participants is difficult to find.

### **3.4.3 Purposeful sampling**

Purposeful sampling is another non-probability method of sampling. Wiersma and Jurs (2009:342) state that the logic of purposeful sampling is based on a sample of information-rich cases that are studied in depth. There is no assumption that all members of the population are equivalent data sources, but those selected are believed to be information-rich cases. Various methods of purposeful sampling are discussed below.

### **3.4.4 Comprehensive sampling**

Wiersma and Jurs (2009:343) state that comprehensive sampling is used when every unit is included in the sample. This type of sampling applies when the number of units is small. It can for example be used when historians do biographies of individuals or an analysis of a single event or issue. An example of comprehensive sampling identified by the researcher is found in Giliomee's (2011) discussion of the Afrikaners. In it he conducted interviews with leading political actors.

### **3.4.5 Maximum variation sampling**

Maximum variation sampling is a strategy in which units are selected for the sample because they provide the greatest differences in certain characteristics (Wiersma and Jurs, 2009:343). Maximum variation sampling is intended to generate two types of information: detailed descriptions of the case that highlight their differences, and information on the commonalities across the cases that exist in spite of their variations. The researcher views maximum variation sampling as a strategy by which samples are chosen because they vary greatly in terms of the characteristics of the researcher's interest.

### **3.4.6 Extreme case sampling**

This involves units that have a special or unusual characteristic, for example studies of effective or exemplary schools typically involve extreme case sampling. The schools are included because they have been successful based on specified criteria. The logic of using extreme case sampling is that what is learned from the extreme cases may be applied to typical cases (Wiersma and Jurs, 2009:343). An example of extreme case sampling is the study of management in schools which will involve one or more schools considered to be well managed based on specified criteria.

### **3.4.7 Typical case sampling**

Typical case sampling select units that are considered typical of the phenomenon under study. It takes the middle road between maximum variation and extreme case sampling, for example in the study of primary schools, instead of selecting very good primary schools and very poor primary schools, typical primary schools will be selected (Wiersma and Jurs, 2009:345).

### **3.4.8 Homogeneous sampling**

Homogeneous sampling is used when the purpose of the study is to focus on a particular subgroup, which in some sense is considered homogeneous. An example is the study of sport management in schools. The researcher may decide to involve only a sample of sport organisers in schools which will be considered as a homogeneous subgroup of the teacher population (Wiersma and Jurs, 2009:345).

### **3.4.9 Intermittent selection of subjects**

Wiersma and Jurs (2009:346) state that qualitative research often involves what other researchers have called the intermittent selection of subjects. That is, individuals may be selected for the sample as the research is in progress. When it becomes apparent that additional individuals or individuals initially not anticipated can provide useful data, they are included in the sample. Lodico et al. (2010:164) views this selection as opportunistic sampling. Opportunistic sampling may be used to select persons or documents encountered at later points in time if these are seen as being able to convey useful information.

### **3.4.10 Convenience sampling**

Keyton (2010:132) describes convenience sampling as a sampling where the researcher selects those people who are convenient to him or her respondents. Once again, in

convenience sampling, researchers are not necessarily trying to infer results from a sample to a population.

### **3.5 Sample size**

Keyton (2010:132) mentions that regardless of which technique is used, the size of the sample must also be determined prior to selecting the sample. Sample size refers to the number of people from whom you need to observe or collect data to obtain precise and reliable findings. Sample sizes in qualitative research are typically small when compared to sample sizes in quantitative research.

Qualitative research uses purposeful sampling. Creswell (2012:2006) states that purposeful qualitative sampling selects people or sites who can best help understand a phenomenon. After considering her options, the researcher decided to use purposeful sampling. She selected school managers, teachers and chairpersons of the SGB of the Kgakotlou circuit to be the participants in this study. These participants were selected because they are knowledgeable and informed, for example the school managers and teachers have knowledge about the legislation affecting parental involvement laid out in SASA. The school managers are required by the department to implement what SASA requires in their schools, and it is on this basis that the school managers can help the researcher with information on parental involvement in education.

On the other hand, teachers were selected because, besides having knowledge about the legislation on parental involvement in education, they act as parents of learners during the day when their parents are either at home or at work. As a result, they know the importance of parental involvement in schools and are likely to be informative about this matter. Parents are selected as participants because they are informative regarding reasons why they fail to participate in school activities, and why they do not help their children with their schoolwork. The researcher has selected the above mentioned participants because they are likely to provide her with the information she requires.

### **3.6 Choosing and becoming part of a site**

Guided by the research question, the researcher selected a site for study and four secondary schools of the Kgakotlou circuit were then selected. Lodico et al. (2010:161) mention that due to the intensive and long-term requirements of data collection, convenience and access are important considerations, as is how much can be learnt from the site. In line with what the

author said, the researcher chose the schools because they were conveniently situated. In addition, the population desired were all connected in some way to these schools.

This study aims to investigate parental involvement in education in the Kgakotlou circuit and the schools selected do represent the secondary schools in this circuit. The researcher observed a trend of non-involvement of parents in school activities where she works and was motivated to investigate and find out if the same trend exists at other schools. The schools are situated not very far from where the researcher works and this reduced transport costs, saved time and reduced the effort required a little. The other reason for their selection is that the schools are rural secondary schools, a requirement of the research question.

### **3.6.1 The researcher's role**

In all qualitative research, the researcher must decide to what degree she or he will become involved with the participants. Qualitative researchers seek to create respectful and close relationships with participants that involve either active participation in the participants' day-to-day activities, or in-depth learning about their lives through observations and interviews (Lodico et al., 2010:161). In this study, the role of the researcher included both participation in the participants' day-to-day activities and in-depth learning about their lives through observations and interviews.

### **3.6.2 Population sampling**

Adams (2010:68) describes sampling as a way of gathering information from only a fraction of the population of a group or phenomenon which one wants to study. It allows the researcher to select a fraction of respondents from a population. As discussed above, the two types of sampling procedures accepted are random and non-random sampling.

The population consisted of SMTs, teachers, parents and learners in the Kgakotlou circuit. As mentioned in Chapter One of this study, purposeful sampling was used. According to Patton in (Lodico et al., 2010:134), the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information rich cases for in-depth study. Information rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research .

The goal or purpose of purposeful sampling is not to obtain a large and representative sample, but to select persons, places or things that can provide the richest and most detailed information to help answer all research questions. In this study, school managers and teachers are selected because they are the ones who should manage the activities of parental involvement in their schools and so would be able to provide information in that regard. The

SGB chairpersons were selected because they are likely to know why parents are not involved in education because they themselves are parents and they were chosen by other parents to represent them.

In this study, purposeful sampling is used. Purposeful sampling occurs when the researcher specifies the characteristics of a population of interest and tries to locate individuals who have those characteristics (Johnson and Christensen, 2012:231). In the case of this study, the researcher is interested in school managers, teachers and SGB member in rural secondary schools who are affected by the lack of parent involvement in the education of their children. She located them and thereafter asked them to participate in the research study. Johnson and Christensen (2012:231) further mention that the optimal situation would be when the researcher specifies the criteria that potential participants must meet to be included in a research study, but then attempts to obtain a random sample of these people. This is however not always possible and practical.

### **3.7 Instrumentation and data collection techniques**

Qualitative researchers in education study both spoken and written representations, as well as records of human experience, and use multiple methods and data sources (Punch, 2009:144). Data collection in qualitative research includes observations, interviews and document analysis. These methods of data collection are discussed below.

#### **3.7.1 Observations**

Menter, Elliot, Hulme, Lewin and Lowden (2011:163) state that observation is a flexible research method that can be used to gather quantitative or qualitative information in various contexts and settings. Punch (2009:155) mentions two main practical issues in planning the collection of observational data, that is approaching observation and recording. Approaching observation means establishing the focus of the observation, selecting the cases for observation as being appropriate, and selecting within cases for what the researcher has decided to observe. The general possibilities for recording observational data range from the use of video and audio-visual equipment to the use of field notes.

#### **3.7.2 Interviews**

(Macmillan and Schumacher, 2006: 26) describe interviews as face to face techniques to collect data from people in their natural settings. They are a practical qualitative method for discovering how people think and feel about their communication practices. Field interviewing as a qualitative research method is a semi-directed form of discourse or

conversation with the goal of uncovering the participant's point of view. Lodico et al.(2010:122) state that interviews are conducted one-to-one (one researcher to one participant) and the interviewer lets participants express their thoughts regarding a topic or experience in their own words. Tomal (2010:44) defines interviewing as the process of asking questions of an individual or a group of individuals and obtaining their verbal responses. The respondents generally give their candid opinions which are then directly recorded or paraphrased by the interviewer.

The researcher shares these views and believes that interviews are discussions between the researcher and the participant with the aim of obtaining information on a particular issue. In this study, interviews were used to collect data and so are discussed more fully hereunder.

#### **(a) Types of interviews**

Lodico et al. (2010:122-124) identify five types of interviews. The first is 'one-to-one' where the researcher conducts interviews individually. Focus group interviews are used when the goal is to explore the perceptions or experiences of small groups of persons who have common basis for responding. Structured interviews require the researcher to come to the interview with a set of questions and to not deviate from these questions. In this way she or he asks the same questions of all participants. Semi-structured interviews are typically planned carefully before the interview is carried out and unstructured interviews are more conversation-like and allow the greatest flexibility.

In this study, all the different types of interviews were used during data collection. The researcher used interviews in this study because of the advantages inherent in them. The researcher agrees with Koshy (2011:88) who outlines the advantages (see below) of carrying out interviews during data collection.

#### **(b) Advantages and disadvantages of interviews**

A major advantage is that the researcher can generate written transcripts. Firstly, interview transcripts provide powerful evidence when you are presenting your data and making conclusions. Secondly, they provide a relaxed context for exploration. Thirdly, information from interviews can supplement what has been gathered through questionnaires and surveys. Fourthly, the interviewer can steer the discussion through a fruitful route. Fifthly, group interviews save time and are realistic in classroom contexts and lastly they can provide unexpected but useful perspectives.

Hopkins (2008:111) also discusses some of the advantages of interviews in the classroom. The teacher is in direct contact with the pupil, pupils are more at ease because they are

familiar with teacher, the teacher is able to seek information directly from pupils, it can be done in lesson time or outside the class, and they can follow up on problems immediately they arise.

Tomal (2010) mentions some disadvantages in using the interviewing technique. They are that they can be affected by time limitations, the potential inaccuracy of interpretations of the participant's responses, a difficulty in interviewing a large number of people, and the possibility that the participant will be uncomfortable with interviewing process.

#### **(c) New methods of interviewing**

Face-to-face interviews are the most commonly used mode of conducting research, where the researcher has to use a tape recorder to record the conversations. However, qualitative researchers are increasingly relying on technology such as telephones, instant messaging, emails, computer conferencing as the new methods of interviewing (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013: 362-364).

#### **(d) Telephone interviews**

These take place over a telephone and offer a synchronised method of collecting data, even though there is no visible connection between the interviewer and interviewee. They can be used where:

- (a) Interviewee social cues are not critical information sources for interviewer;
- (b) The interviewer has a small budget and little time to travel;
- (c) The research site has closed or limited access;
- (d) The standardisation of the interview situation is not important; and
- (e) Anonymity is required or requested (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013:362-364)

#### **(e) Instant messaging**

This method can be used when both the interviewer and interviewee are competent typists and have access to computers. Speed is very important in this case (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013: 362-364).

#### **(f) Email interviews**

This method does not allow visible contact between the interviewer and interviewee. The interviewer and interviewee live in different parts of the world and can be separated by several time zones making it difficult to have synchronous interviewing. This method also allows the interviewee time to respond to developing dialogue. It is advantageous to the

interviewer because it saves travel costs as the interviewer does not have to visit the interviewee (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013: 362-364).

**(g) Computer conferencing**

This is used when distance prevents face-to-face interviewing. It is the use of computers and telecommunications technology to hold discussions between people operating computers in separate locations. It requires the use of the internet or other public or private network. It allows for real-time, synchronous communication as well as visibility between the interviewer and interviewee. Because of this, social cues of the interviewee can provide critical information to the interviewer. Both parties must have access to computers and conferencing technology (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013: 362-364).

As mentioned earlier, the participants in this study are school managers, teachers and SGB chairpersons of secondary schools in the Kgakotlou circuit. A typically probing and open-ended interview was conducted with them. In this study, an unstructured, conversational type of interview was conducted where the questions arose from the situation i.e. a conversation with a purpose took place. This was combined with a structured interview which was scheduled for the specific purpose (Aryl, Jacobs and Razavieh, 2002:434). All these interview formats have the same characteristics i.e. the questions are open-ended and designed to reveal what is important to understand about the phenomenon under study (Market and Morehouse in Aryl et al., 2002:434).

Interview schedules i.e. verbal questionnaires used to interview participants, were prepared by the researcher. This technique was chosen because questionnaires are flexible, adaptable and have the ability to probe and clarify (MacMillan and Schumacher, 2006:211). The approach adopted in this study was face-to-face interviewing because a person to person relationship constitutes the heart of the interview (Newby, 2010:339). The researcher asked questions on parental involvement in a face-to-face situation from the participants who are SMT members, teachers or principals of secondary schools.

The researcher used the tape recorder to collect the interview data. This is important because it is much less distracting than taking notes and also provided a verbatim record of the responses (Newby, 2010:339). The data was analysed by following steps that are involved in qualitative data analysis as suggested by Lodico et al.(2010:180).

The first step is to prepare and organise data generated during the interviews that were tape recorded, and to transfer the recorded interviews into a written form. As the tape recorder is

playing, notes are made on the general issues or ideas that are reported, using the participants' own words. Data was organised using different accepted methods.

Site or location information was collected from the data. Thereafter, information on the following, where relevant, was extracted: persons or groups studied, chronological and time matters, types of data that might be assembled, observations in field notes and journal texts, and types of events or issues addressed. After this, data pertaining to each issue or event could be grouped together.

Step 2 involved reviewing and exploring the data. The researcher engaged in multiple readings of the data with each reading serving a different purpose (Lodico et al., 2010:182). Step 3 involved coding the data into categories which involved an examination of many small pieces of information and abstracting a connection between them.

Step 4 involved the writing of thick descriptions or detailed descriptions of people, places, and events in the study. Step 5 involved building themes and testing hypotheses. Themes (like codes) are then described in a few words or phrases, but they identify the major concepts or issues that the researcher uses to interpret and explain data. Step 6 is the final step and it involved reporting and interpreting data (Lodico et al., 2010:192).

### **3.8 Research Ethics**

According to Bell (2010:47), research ethics is about being clear about the nature of the agreement you have entered into with your research subjects or contacts. It involves getting the informed consent of those you are going to interview, question, observe or take material from. Each institution, including Unisa, has an ethics committee whose function is to ensure that no badly designed or harmful research is permitted. The researcher applied to Unisa to get an ethical clearance certificate before starting with the fieldwork. The researcher completed an ethics form which was obtained from the ethics committee through the supervisor.

Check and Schutt (2012) outline six guidelines that cover ethical issues in research. They are that the research should cause no harm to subjects, that participation in research should be voluntarily, that subjects must give their informed consent to participate in research, that researchers should fully disclose their identity, that anonymity or confidentiality must be maintained for individual research participants, and that the benefits from the research project should outweigh foreseeable risks.

On the basis of the above guidelines, the researcher ensured that the research did not cause harm to the participants, even though it was difficult to foresee any potential problem or harm that may be caused by research. It was decided that problems would be dealt with as they arose in the process. The second step was to obtain an informal consent from the participants will fully informing them about the research and giving them time to decide whether to take part or not. If they decided to participate, they were asked to indicate this by signing the consent form. This study was conducted in Kgakotlou circuit, thus a letter requesting permission to conduct research in Kgakotlou schools was sent to the circuit manager.

The researcher applied to Unisa to get an Ethical Clearance certificate before starting with the fieldwork. As the study was undertaken at secondary schools in the Kgakotlou circuit, the researcher wrote a letter to all the schools selected to ask for permission to proceed with the research. The letter explained all the details of the research and included the period for the interview which depended on whether enough data was collected.

The letter also gave details about the researcher. This included information on sponsors or organisational affiliation, the general intended use of the data, and methods to protect of the rights of the human subjects. Formal authorisation was obtained as this is essential in order to proceed to the field and establish a research role.

This study followed a utilitarianism approach i.e. judgement of ethics of a study depended on the consequences of the study for both individual research participants and the larger benefit that could arise from the study results. Once again, this approach seemed to be the primary approach that permits a rational and logical basis for debating ethical issues that arise in the conduct of research (Johnson and Christensen, 2004:96).

The researcher ensured that the study was ethically acceptable and that research participants were treated ethically by everyone involved in the study. The following guidelines identified by Johnson and Christensen (2004:102) helped to assure the ethical acceptability of the study

- The participants were informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. The participants were given a consent form which outlined the research project, risks and discomforts that could be encountered, how confidentiality and anonymity would be handled, and voluntary participation and the participant's right to ask questions before signing the form. If after reading and understanding the consent form, the participants decided to participate in the study, he or she indicated this by means of a signature.

- The research participants were protected from physical and mental discomfort, and any harm and danger that could arise from research procedures.
- The confidentiality or anonymity of the participants and the data was guaranteed.

### **3.9 Data analysis and interpretation**

Data analysis refers to the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes etc. Data interpretation refers to developing ideas about findings and relating them to literature and the broader concepts or concerns (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007:159). Analysis involves working with the data, organising, breaking it into manageable units, coding, synthesising and searching for patterns. Lodico et al. (2010:181) mention that the quickest and least accurate approach involves making notes while listening to tapes from interviews and recording the general issues or ideas that are reported, using participants' own words as much as possible. Possible illustrative quotes are then noted and recorded. The authors then describe some common methods of organising data and some of these are discussed below.

Site or location data is gathered in studies in which multiple sites or locations were observed. Where groups are studied, data is organised by an individual person or group, or by collating data from persons or groups with similar characteristics or backgrounds. Sometime information is placed in chronological order and the data is organised into the time periods in which it was collected. A fourth way to organise data is where interview transcripts, field notes and journals entries are assembled. Data pertaining to each issue or event addressed in this material is grouped together, especially in cases where interviews focused on different issues (Lodico et al., 2010:182).

In line with the methods of organising data that was explained above, the researcher organised data by grouping data from persons or groups with similar characteristics or backgrounds. In this case, data that was gathered from school managers, teachers and SGB chairpersons of different schools was grouped together because they share similar characteristics.

Lodico et al.(2010:182) describe the second step of analysing data as reviewing and organising data. In other words, researchers engage in multiple readings of their data with each reading serving a different purpose. They engage in an initial review to get a sense of the overall flow and structure of the data. Thereafter the researcher organises data and reads it in order to get an overall sense of what is contained in it.

The third step of analysing data is coding data into categories. Coding is the process of identifying different segments in the data that describe related phenomenon and labelling these parts using broad category names. It is an inductive process of data analysis that involves examining many small pieces of information and abstracting a connection between them (Lodico et al., 2010:183). In this study, coding was done by hand. The researcher wrote the code in the margin of the data source, and then organised the data into piles with the same codes and cut up data sheets as needed (Lodico, et al., 2010:184). In other words, codes were written in the margin of the page containing data from school managers, teachers, and SGB chairpersons.

The fourth step is the writing of thick, detailed descriptions of the people, places and events in the study. The aim was to provide rich, in-depth descriptions of the experiences, perspectives and physical settings represented in the data (Lodico et al., 2010:185). After coding the data into categories, the researcher wrote a detailed description of the people, places and events in the study.

Lodico et al.(2010:185) mention the fifth step as the building of themes and testing of hypotheses. Themes are typically big ideas that combine several codes in a way that allows the researcher to examine qualitative subsections guiding the research. That is, themes provide the organising idea that the researchers the uses to explain what he or she has learnt from the study. During this stage, the researcher builds themes using the coded data.

The final stage of data analysis is the writing of the research report and it includes the researcher's interpretations of what the data means. Most qualitative research is reported in a mostly non-quantitative, narrative manner which often makes it enjoyable to read (Lodico et al., 2010:192). This study is a qualitative study which means the research report has been written in a narrative manner. This makes it possible to explain the findings of the research and interpretations of the data collected by the researcher.

In this study, data was analysed inductively. According to this approach, data analysis is an on-going, cyclical process that is integrated in all phases of the qualitative research. Categories and patterns primarily emerge from the data rather than being imposed on it prior collection (Macmillan and Schumacher, 2006:364).

During a single research study, qualitative researchers alternate between data collection and data analysis; this method is called interim analysis. The researcher used this method because she collected data over an extended time period and needed to continually learn more about

what she was studying during this time frame. The use of inter analysis helped the researcher to develop a progressively deeper understanding of the research topic and to guide each round of data collection (Johnson and Christensen, 2004:500).

Qualitative researchers do regular interim analyses throughout data collection process to keep track of changes in data collection strategies and evolving ideas (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006:367). Other analytical techniques that could be used included scanning all data collected at that point for whatever possible ideas they contained, an emphasis on describing what is happening or what people are saying, and looking for recurring ideas or meanings that may become themes.

In this study, the researcher used the above mentioned analytical techniques. She scanned all the data and searched for recurring ideas and meanings after interviewing the participants. The responses from the school managers, teachers, and chairpersons of the SGB to questions asked during the interview were examined to see if recurring ideas and meanings emerged.

### **3.10 Organising, coding and categorizing**

Lodico et al. (2010:180) state that organising data is making sure that data is in a form that can be easily analysed. The researcher also believes that the collected pieces of data need to be organised first before it can be analysed.

Wiersma and Jurs (2009:238) define coding as a process of organising data and obtaining data reduction. This is the process by which qualitative researchers see what they have in the data. Lodico et al. (2010:183) define coding as the process of identifying different segments of the data that describe related phenomenon, and the labelling of these parts using category names.

Savin-Baden and Major (2013:426) mention that categorising is a phase that involves movement from seeking the particular (individual codes) to seeking the general (patterns within those codes). Categories tend to be either non-hierarchical or flat (a general list) or hierarchical (a list of categories or sub-codes).

Qualitative researchers integrate the operations of organising, analysing and interpreting data and they call the entire process data analysis. There are five sources that researchers use to get started. They are the research question, research instruments (such as an interview guide), themes, concepts and categories used by other researchers, prior knowledge or personal experience of the researcher, and data itself (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006:367).

In this study, the researcher used the first four sources which contain predetermined categories i.e. the research question, the research instruments, themes, concepts and categories used by the other researchers, and prior knowledge and experience. In addition, data was generated throughout the process.

### **3.11 Interpreting data**

In interpretation, the researcher goes beyond the descriptive data to extract meaning and insights from the data (Aryl et al., 2002:470). This involves reflecting about the words and abstracting important understandings from them.

The researcher in this study reflected on information obtained from the school managers on parental involvement in schools. She attached meaning to the words and acts of the study's participants. The interpretation was guided by questions that were used to check the quality of data as suggested by Dey (in Aryl et al., 2002:471). The questions include:

- Is the data based on your own observation or is it hearsay?
- Is there corroboration by others of your observation?
- In what circumstances was an observation made or reported?
- How reliable are the people providing data?
- What motivations might have influenced a participants report?
- What biases might have influenced how an observation was made or reported?

### **3.12 Validity and reliability of research**

#### **(a) Validity**

Validity in qualitative research concerns the accuracy or truthfulness of the findings. The term used to refer to this characteristic is credibility (Aryl et al., 2002:451). The four major areas and the types of evidence in qualitative research are credibility, transferability, dependability and promoting action, and collaboration that researchers might present to support the quality of their overall study and their analysis and interpretation of their data (Lodico et al., 2010:169). The researcher used the first three areas which, namely credibility, transferability and dependability in order to enhance validity.

Validity can be external or internal. External validity is the extent to which the research design succeeds in allowing one to generalise beyond the subjects under investigation to a wider population. It is an indication of the generalisability or transferability of study findings (Nunan, 1992:17 in Wilson, 2013:149).

Internal validity is highly applicable to the qualitative context and refers to the extent to which a study actually investigates what it purports to investigate (Nunan, 1992:14 in Wilson, 2013:150).

### **(b) Reliability**

Reliability refers to the vigour, consistency and trustworthiness of the research. It is a precondition for validity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:292 in Wilson, 2013:147). In qualitative studies, reliability is checked by asking if someone else did the research, would he or she have obtained the same results and arrived at the same conclusions? Wilson (2013:148) describes three ways in which reliability can be checked.

Firstly, the researcher should situate the study within the context of an existing wider, intellectual and professional debate and provide a clear account of the aims and objectives of the research.

Secondly, reliability depends on the degree of transparency of research rationale and decisions guiding the selection of the research sample.

Finally, reliability depends on the accessibility of data collection and analysis procedures. These involve keeping transcripts of interviews and records of observations and other field notes.

### **(c) Credibility**

Credibility refers to whether the participants' perceptions of the setting or events match the research report i.e. they address whether the researcher accurately represents what the participants think, feel and the processes that influences their thoughts, feelings and actions (Wilson, 2013:148).

Evidence of credibility in this study included a discussion of how the researcher engaged in repeated, prolonged and substantial involvement in the field. The amount of time devoted to data collection depended on the nature of the study i.e. the researcher indicated how much time was spent in the field and how she established and nurtured strong relationships with the participants.

### **(d) Dependability**

According to Lodico et al. (2010:172), dependability is a criterion for qualitative research that parallels reliability in quantitative research. It refers to whether one can track the

procedures and processes used to collect data and interpret it. Good qualitative studies provide a detailed explanation of how the data was collected and analysed.

In this study, dependability is shown by providing detailed explanations of how the data was collected and analysed. The devices that were used during data collection were mentioned. The researcher increased dependability by discussing the nature of the relationship between her and the participants. She also made the data available for review by other researchers.

#### **(e) Transferability**

Transferability is the degree to which the findings of a qualitative study can be applied or generalised to other contexts or to other groups (Aryl et al., 2002:454).

The researcher shows transferability in this study by providing the reader with a detailed or thick description of the context so that the reader can make the necessary comparisons and judgements about similarity and hence transferability.

### **3.13 Conclusion**

Qualitative studies are studies which use communication and data collected in face-to-face situations like interviews and observations. Qualitative research describes and analyses people's individual collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions. In this chapter, qualitative research was explained in terms of its characteristics, advantages, research methods, population and sampling strategies, instrumentation and data collection techniques, data analysis and interpretation techniques, validity factors and the reliability of the research.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter described in detail the method and instruments that the researcher used to collect data from participants. It also gave a description of how the data was analysed and interpreted after the data collection process was done. This chapter will focus on the findings from interviews with SMTs, educators and parents. It will also describe how the process of data collection was done as well as present the data analysis and interpretation.

#### **4.2 Arrangement of interview transcripts and data analysis**

The data collection was done in a face-to-face situation and the conversations were recorded using a voice recorder. Notes were also taken during the process. The interviews were conducted with participants from four secondary schools of the Kgakotlou circuit. In each of the schools, four participants were supposed to be interviewed, that is, one SMT member, one parent and two educators.

According to the ethical considerations, all participants had to agree to take part voluntarily and the researcher had to undertake to treat the information provided confidentially. The researcher ensured ethical consideration was achieved by giving the educators an informed consent form which they had to read and thereafter indicate their acceptance by a signature. In the case of parents, the researcher had to read the parents' consent form which was written in English and translate the information into Sepedi. The parents were to show their understanding by also signing on the consent letter although some of them were not comfortable with signing it. The four schools were named 'A,' 'B,' 'C' and 'D' to avoid using their names because this was required by the ethical considerations. Table 4.1 below describes the profiles of the participating schools:

Table 4.1: Profiles of the participating schools

School	No of Teachers	Type of Location	Feeding Area	Economic Status	Home Language
A	9	Village	Neighbourhood	Low income	Sepedi
B	15	Village	Neighbourhood	Low income	Sepedi
C	8	Village	Neighbourhood and surrounding areas	Low income	Sepedi
D	9	Village	Neighbourhood	Low income	Sepedi

Data analysis was done by following the steps as outlined in Check and Schutt (2012:243). These are described below:

1. The researcher listened to the voice recording several times in order to transcribe the interviews verbatim.
2. The transcription was read repeatedly to differentiate between relevant and irrelevant responses with regard to the interview questions.
3. The data was coded into categories by hand where the researcher wrote the code in the margin of the data source i.e. the page containing data from SMTs, educators and parents.
4. The researcher gave the interview transcription to an independent decoder who conducted a further reliability check which in order to guarantee the trustworthiness of the result.
5. The identified categories and sub-categories were compared with that of the independent decoder to seek similarities.
6. Validity was checked by comparing the results of the research with similar results found in the literature review.

### 4.3 Interviews with school management teams

As mentioned earlier, the interviews were to be conducted with one SMT member or the principal of the school. At two schools, interviews were conducted with the principals and at two schools with the heads of departments. Table 4.2 below provides the profiles of the participants.

Table 4.2 Profiles of participants

School	Participant	Position Held	Sex	Subject Taught
A	1	Principal	Female	Languages
	2	Senior teacher	Female	Geography
	3	Teacher	Female	Mathematics
	4	SGB Chairperson	Female	Not Applicable
B	1	SMT member	Female	Languages
	2	Teacher	Male	Languages
	3	Teacher	Female	Agricultural Sciences
	4	Parent component of SGB	Male	Not applicable
C	1	SMT member	Male	Economics
	2	Teacher	Female	English
	3	Teacher	Female	Sepedi
	4	Parent component	Female	Not applicable
D	1	Principal	Male	Life Sciences
	2	Teacher	Male	Life orientation

	3	Teacher	Male	Accounting
	4	SGB chairperson	Female	Not applicable

#### **4. 3. 1 Opening the interview**

After the interviewees and the researcher were seated, the researcher formally introduced herself and thanked the interviewees for giving her an opportunity to interview them. This was done in all the four schools that were visited. The researcher explained the purpose of the interview and the value of the information that was to be obtained from the conversations. She then asked for permission to capture the interviews on the voice recorder. All the participants had no objection to the use of the voice recorder. The interviewees were told that they were free to respond in Sepedi or English or both.

As mentioned in Chapter 3 of this study, the participants are school managers, teachers and chairpersons of the SGBs of four secondary schools in the Kgakotlou circuit. Four secondary schools were chosen because it would not be possible for the researcher to include participants from all the secondary schools in the circuit because of the limited time available and the costs that would be incurred. It is for this reason that school managers, teachers and SGB chairpersons of only four schools were chosen as participants.

#### **4. 3. 2 Population**

The population was chosen on the grounds that they have knowledge about the phenomenon under study, that is, they have knowledge about parental involvement in education and are also interested in the topic. The members of SMTs are part of the population because they are the ones who should implement activities that involve parents in their schools. They therefore have relevant information to share with the researcher.

Teachers form part of the population, because they work together with the school managers as implementers. The school manager needs teachers in order to implement parental involvement activities. Teachers are also participants because they act as parents of learners during the day. It must be remembered that learners spend the whole day with teachers and only see their parents at night. Teachers play two roles in the learner's lives, that of being a teacher and that of being a parent. The researcher thinks that teachers have a lot of information on the activities that involve parental involvement.

The chairpersons of the SGBs were selected as participants because they have knowledge about issues regarding school governance. These parents stay in the village, thus they are likely to know why other parents are reluctant to take part in school activities.

The researcher is aware that there are other stakeholders in education, for example learners and departmental officials, but believes that the school managers, teachers and SGB chairpersons can provide sufficient relevant data on the management of parental involvement activities.

#### **4. 3. 3 Sampling strategies**

The researcher selected school managers, teachers and chairpersons of SGBs as participants as they are the people who can best help to understand the phenomenon under study. A qualitative research design was chosen and it required purposeful sampling. Creswell (2012) states that purposeful qualitative sampling selects people or sites that can best help to understand a phenomenon. The participants in this study were purposefully selected because they are knowledgeable and informed about the topic under investigation and legislation affecting parental involvement as stated in SASA.

#### **4. 3. 4 Choosing a site**

Lodico et al. (2010:161) mention that due to the intensive and long term requirements of data collection, the researcher must consider how much can be learnt from the site, as well as how convenient the site is, and whether sufficient access can be gained to it. In line with this, the researcher chose four secondary schools. The schools were chosen because all the participants could be accessed there. Furthermore, the researcher is a teacher in one of the secondary schools. She has observed a trend of non-involvement of parents in school activities where she works and would like to investigate if the same trend exists at other schools. The other schools were chosen because they are not far from where the researcher works; this reduced transport costs incurred and saved time.

##### **(a) Interview one: Principal of school A**

The school is situated in a rural area where drug abuse (dagga) is very common among both the learners and parents (according to the principal). These parents are surprisingly very cooperative and the school never experiences non-attendance of parents meetings. The principal is a female. She stays in the nearby suburb and travels to school on a daily basis.

Although the school has many classrooms, current enrolment is low because parents withdrew their children from the school after its matric results became poor.

Question one: How would you describe parent involvement at your school?

Response:

Parents respond positively and are very involved in the activities of the school. They are involved in activities such as volunteering regarding cleaning of the yard and accompanying learners on educational tours. When there is a parents meeting, they come in large numbers. Some of the reasons that encourage parents to be actively involved are the visible changes at the school. The school used to look neglected until I initiated that the school be revamped. A very inviting reception area, where visitors wait until they are served and a well tiled and curtained office are the examples.

Question two: What is the policy of the school on parental involvement?

Response:

The SGB organises parents meetings once per term. It is in these meetings where parents are told about the pass requirements for Grade 9 learners as well as subject choices for Grade 10. Parents are encouraged to assist their children with projects by, for example, buying them material for the projects and assembling the projects. This is because projects boost the learners' marks. Parents are also advised to let their children choose subjects in which they perform better when they go to Grade 10. They are not supposed to force their children to do subjects that are difficult to them. Special meetings are called to allow parents to check their children's books i.e. class work and homework books. During these meetings parents get a chance to meet the subject teachers, where they ask questions in case there are things that they do not understand.

Question three: Are there structures on which the parents serve?

Response:

Yes. Parents serve as SGB members, fund raising committee, and procurement committee.

Question four: What encourages parents to attend parents meetings?

Response:

When the school decides on a date for parents meetings, they ensure that it does not clash with the date for the social clubs meetings. The school also organises lunch for the parents

because some of them have to walk long distances. The school ensures that every learner is given the invitation letter in time and if a learner's parents fail to attend the meeting, he/she is going to be sent home to fetch the parents on Monday. The school also make sure that meetings are held on weekends so that parents do not have to absent themselves from work.

Question five: How do educators handle visiting parents at school?

Response:

Educators have a positive attitude towards visits by parents. They treat them as adults, do not shout at them, respect them and also give them privacy. Some of the times when parents visit the school are when their children have transgressed and need to be disciplined and when their children are pregnant. The policy of the school regarding pregnancy is that when a learner is pregnant, the parent must accompany her to school every day from her sixth month of pregnancy and parents do exactly that.

**(b) Interview two: SMT member of school B**

The school is situated between two villages each of which has its own tribal office. The principal is a male who stays in a nearby suburb and travels to school every day. There are two heads of departments i.e. one for languages and one for commercial subjects. The interview was conducted with the head of department for languages.

Question one: How would you describe parental involvement at your school?

Response:

Parent involvement is satisfactory. Parents are very supportive and cooperative to the school, for example, the parents of pregnant learners come to school with them and wait until after school to help in case of an emergency.

Question two: What is the policy of the school on parental involvement?

Response:

The policy states that parents should take responsibility for their children by ensuring that they are happy, have uniforms and all the other school necessities. The policy also requires that parents should sign their books at home after checking them. Parents are also supposed to pay an amount of R20-00 per quarter towards security. They help with the cleaning of the yard during the first week of re-opening. They are also supposed to pay for transport during the learners' educational excursions.

Question three: Are there structures on which the parents serve?

Response:

Yes. Parents serve in the SGB and financial committee.

Question four: What encourages parental involvement to attend the SGB meetings?

Response:

Parents are encouraged by the fact that they are given reports on finances and any matter relating to school property during parent meetings. They are also given learners' progress reports during the meetings. They are invited to award giving ceremonies and end of year functions.

Question five: How do educators handle visiting parents at this school?

Response:

Educators appreciate the visit by parents because they can help each other in solving the learner's problems. They give guidance to parents who visit the school regarding their children's schoolwork. Educators get to know learners better through their discussions with the parents.

**(c) Interview three: SMT member of school C**

This school is situated in a small village with few houses. It caters for learners from that village only and as a result it has low enrolment figures. The school is situated far from the main road which makes it difficult for learners to travel to it from the surrounding villages. The principal is a female who grew up at that village but stays in a nearby suburb and travels to school daily. The interview was conducted with one of the heads of department.

Question one: How would you describe parental involvement at this school?

Response:

The parents of this school are not involved in their children's education. When parents meetings are called by the SGB, attendance is very poor. The parents do not cooperate with the school at all. They do not help the school as far as the school's code of conduct is concerned. Learners do not follow the school's code of conduct e.g. cell phone policy. The school policy states that learners must not bring cell phones to school but they do. Parents do not ensure that learners leave cell phones at home. When the learner is sent home to go and

call the parents, he/she will just bring a relative or a neighbour who cannot help to solve the problem.

Question two: What is the policy of the school on parental involvement?

Response:

Parents are stakeholders in the education of their children and their input is needed in any decision that is taken by the school regarding the welfare of their children. The problem is that whenever parents are called, they do not respond. The school conducted research to establish what was preventing parents from partaking in their children's education. The results were shocking, realising that most of the families in the village are child headed because the children are either orphans or their parents do not sleep at home due to work.

Question three: Are there structures on which the parents serve?

Response:

Yes. Parents serve in the SGB and also in the school nutrition programme (NSNP).

Question four: What encourages parents to attend SGB meetings?

Response:

Parents are encouraged by the fact that during parents meetings they are given their children's results. As mentioned earlier their attendance is very poor even when they have to fetch their children's results. Only a handful will show up which results in educators having to keep results for three terms at the end of the year.

Question five: How do educators handle visiting parents at school?

Response:

Parents are well taken care of when they visit the school. They are attended to very quickly. All their concerns are addressed, explanation is given where necessary.

**(d) Interview four: Principal of school D**

The school is situated in a rural area not very far from town. Although the area is rural, it has basic services such as water and electricity as well as tarred roads. The school caters for two villages, one big village and a small nearby village which does not have a secondary school of its own. The learners have to travel or walk daily from that small village to school. According to the principal, the department used to offer the learners help with transport but it

does not do so at this time. The learners arrive at school late due these transport challenges. The principal is a male who travels to school every day from the nearby location.

Question one: How would you describe parental involvement at your school?

Response:

Parent involvement at this school is not satisfactory. The parents are not cooperative. When a parent's meeting is called by the SGB, the attendance is very poor. Those who come, arrive very late, which impacts negatively on the SGB's time management. The poor involvement is so bad that sometimes it can take the school four meetings before they can elect the SGB. The only meeting that they attend in better numbers is when the school is looking for food handlers.

Question two: What is the policy on parental involvement?

Response:

Parents are called once per quarter to be updated on the progress of their children through giving those reports for the term. It is during these meetings that the pass requirements for all grades are explained to them. Parents also get the opportunity to meet the subject educators. In addition to these meetings, special meetings are held with parents of Grade 12 learners. These parents are advised on the different methods of supporting their children who are faced with a challenge of getting good marks in all the subjects at the end of the year. Some of the advises that are given are that there should be a reduction of house chores, buying the learners study guides which will simplify the textbook content, paying for them to attend extra classes that are organised by the school or by the circuit, monitoring their work at home and ensuring that they do study at home.

Question three: Are there structures on which parents serve?

Response:

Yes. Parents serve as SGB members either as executive or additional members. They serve in the disciplinary committee which is ensuring that learners follow the school's code of conduct. They are members of the finance committee and the procurement committee. They also serve in the school's nutritional committee which handles food provided to learners by the department. They help with fundraising by looking for donations on behalf of the school. Parents form part of extracurricular activities of the school by accompanying learners to educational and sports tours.

Question four: What encourages parents to attend School governing body meetings?

Response:

Parents are encouraged by receiving invitations to the meetings in time. The school ensures that letters are given to the learners in time so that they can give them to their parents. These letters will be having an agenda showing the issues that are going to be discussed on that day. The parents then have the opportunity to prepare themselves. Meetings that are held during the weekend and not during the week also encourage them because they do not have to absent themselves from work. They are also encouraged by the fact that the SGB gives them report about the monies that they pay to the school e.g. for security and fence. They are also happy to form part of the decisions that are taken regarding any development at the school.

Question five: How do educators handle visiting parents at school?

Response:

As mentioned earlier, there is poor parental involvement at this school. As a result, when educators see a parent visiting the school, they appreciate it. Their appreciation is shown by treating the parent with respect, attending to them quickly and giving them privacy where necessary. Educators also give advice to parents regarding the support that they can give to their children as far as schoolwork is concerned.

#### **4.4 Interview with educators.**

##### **4.4.1 Educators of school A**

(a) Educator one

Question one: Discuss what is like being an educator in a public school of the Kgakotlou circuit.

Response:

I am very unhappy; I wish I could fast track my years so that I can go for pension quickly. I am patiently waiting for my time to go on pension. I'm even thinking of going for an early retirement.

Question two: What is the policy of the school on parental involvement?

Response:

I do not know the policy on parental involvement at this school. The principal will know about it, I only know that when there is going to be a meeting, the office gives us letters to give to the learners so that they can give the letter to the parents.

Question three: How often do you communicate with parents about the education of children?

Response:

We communicate with the parents when there is a need e.g. when a learner does not come to school and we want to find out his/her whereabouts. Sometimes learners absent themselves and do not send a message to school regarding the absence. Parents are also called for meetings once per quarter to discuss the learner's progress.

Question four: How do you rate communication channel between the school and parents?

Response:

The communication channel is good because parents do attend the meetings, which show that they did get the letters.

Question five: How is absenteeism tackled at your school?

Response:

Normal absenteeism, that is, for a day or two is tackled by the class teacher who will ensure that the absenteeism does not follow a particular pattern e.g. a learner is absent every Monday or every Friday. Serious absenteeism that is, a week upwards is tackled by the office. This is where the parents of such learners will be called to discuss the matter.

Educator two

Question one: Discuss what it is like being an educator in a public school of the Kgakotlou circuit.

Response:

I have no problem in being an educator in the Kgakotlou circuit, I like it. I have taught in this circuit for many years and I enjoy it. My only worry is the type learners that we have. They do not take their schoolwork seriously and when they fail the department blames the teachers.

Question two: What is the school policy on parental involvement?

Response:

Parents meetings are called by the SGB once every quarter.

Question three: How often do you communicate with parents about the education of their learners?

Response:

We communicate with them during parent meetings when discussing the progress of their children. We also communicate when there is an emergency such as when their children got sick at school.

Question four: How do you rate the communication channel between the school and parents?

Response:

The communication is good. This can be seen by the number of parents who usually attend meetings, it is satisfactory.

Question five: How is absenteeism tackled at the school?

Response:

The school does not have a problem of absenteeism. The learners who are absent from school usually have valid reasons and they send messages to their class teachers informing them about the reasons behind their absence.

#### **4. 4. 2 Interview with educators of school B**

(a) Educator one

Question one: Discuss what it is like being an educator in the Kgakotlou circuit.

Response:

I personally do not see any difference between teaching in a public school in the rural area and public school in an urban area. The only challenge in the rural schools is the lack of resources. If the department could give resources to these rural schools the situation would be the same.

Question two: What is the school policy on parental involvement?

Response:

The policy requires that parents should take their responsibility by providing for their children and being fully involved in their education.

Question three: How do you often communicate with parents about the education of their children?

Response:

We communicate when there is a parents meeting and during emergencies.

Question four: How do you rate the communication channel between the school and parents?

Response:

The response by parents indicates that they did receive the message about the parents meeting. I would say the communication is good.

Question five: How is absenteeism tackled at your school?

The learner who absents him/herself regularly is sent home to go and call the parents so that they can come and explain the learner's whereabouts.

(b) Educator two

Question one: Discuss what it is like being an educator in the Kgakotlou circuit

Response:

I like working here because it is close to where I stay. I do not have to travel a long distance and this saves me some money.

Question two: What is the school policy on parental involvement?

I do not know about the policy, all I know is that parents are called by the SGB for parents meetings once in every term to come and fetch their children's progress reports.

Question three: How often do you communicate with parents about the education of their children?

Response:

We communicate every time the parents visit the school and through letters and phones if there are some information that we want to share with them.

Question four: How do you rate communication channel between parents and the school?

Response:

The communication is good, that is why the school is better as far as parent participation is concerned. The attendance shows that the messages were successfully delivered.

Question five: How is absenteeism tackled at your school?

Response:

Every class teacher deals with absenteeism in his/her class for those learners who are not regularly absent in her own way. Regular absenteeism is reported to the office for further attention.

#### 4. 4. 3 Interview with educators of school C

(a) Educator one

Question one: Discuss what is like being an educator in the Kgakotlou circuit.

Response:

There is no problem working in this circuit, but there are challenges. In order for the children to be successfully taught, all stakeholders must be involved, parents being one of the stakeholders. The parents of our learners are not involved in the education of their children. When you have to meet the parents of a learner for some reasons, they never come no matter how many times you send the message.

Question two: What is the school policy on parental involvement?

Response:

The policy is that parents must be fully involved in the education of their children, but we have a problem because our learner's parents do not stay with them. The children stay with their grannies that cannot even help them with homework. They are old and cannot come when they are called to school.

Question three: How often do you communicate with parents about the education of their children?

Response:

The aim is to do it very often, but they are not available. If they are called, only ten per cent of them respond positively. We really have a serious problem, because some of the matters cannot be solved without them.

Question four: How do you rate the communication channel between the school and the parents?

Response:

I would not say the communication is good, because attendance is very poor. We are not sure if the parents receive the invitations or not.

Question five: How do you tackle absenteeism at this school?

Response:

We check how often the learners absent themselves and if it is too much we call the parents even though they do not respond.

(b) Educator two

Question one: Discuss what it is like being an educator in the Kgakotlou circuit.

Response:

I feel fine working in the Kgakotlou circuit. My wish is that the department could provide the schools with the necessary resources especially human resources. Educators are overloaded with work because when an educator retires or resigns the department takes a very long time to replace the educator. The remaining educators share the workload among themselves which is too heavy for them.

Question two: What is the policy on parental involvement at your school?

Response:

The policy requires that parents be involved in the education of their children financially, spiritually and socially. They need to support their children in all those mentioned areas for the children to grow holistically.

Question three: How often do you communicate with the parents about the education of their children?

Response:

We communicate when we want to call the parents to school to help with his/her child or when we want to inform them about matters pertaining to their children's education.

Question four: How do you rate the communication between the school and parents?

Response:

The communication is not there because it does not exist at this school. When we call them they do not respond, and this is really troubling for us as educators.

Question five: How is absenteeism tackled at this school?

Response:

Learners who absent themselves from school for more than five days without reason are sent home to call their parents. Those who are absent for fourteen days without a valid reason are withdrawn from the school.

#### **4. 4. 4 Interview with educators of school D**

##### **(a) Educator one**

Question one: How it is like being an educator in the Kgakotlou circuit?

Response:

I am humbled to teach in this circuit because firstly it is closer to where I stay. Secondly, in my opinion, this circuit makes all educators feel at home.

Question two: What is the policy on parental involvement at this school?

Response:

The policy is governed by the SASA. The guidelines were followed when drawing the school policy. Parents are given their roles i.e. support educators, help the school with discipline amongst other things.

Question three: How often do you communicate with parents about the education of their children?

Response:

Communication is regular. Parents are also contacted in case of emergencies and some are available while others are not.

Question four: How do you rate the communication channel between the school and the parents?

Response:

The rating can be seven out of ten. Most parents are available. Parents who serve in the SGB are always seen at school.

Question five: How do you tackle absenteeism at this school?

Response:

There is no policy regarding absenteeism at the moment. The school has decided to draw one up realising how absenteeism was becoming a problem. There are a lot of average learners who seems to be living alone even at home and who are absent on a regular basis.

**(b) Educator two**

Question one: Discuss what it is like being an educator in the Kgakotlou circuit.

Response:

There is no difference nowadays when you teach at public school or at a private school. The reason is that public schools are also given resources such as computers which make the work of educators bearable. I feel good working in a public school of Kgakotlou circuit.

Question two: What is the policy of the school on parental involvement?

Response:

Parents are involved through fundraising functions, and finance committee. The policy also states that parents are free to visit the school at any time they want to understand something concerning their child's schoolwork.

Question three: How often do you communicate with parents?

Response:

We communicate during quarterly meetings. Emergencies are addressed through telephones and emails.

Question four: How will you rate communication channels at your school?

Response:

The communication channel is perfect. Learners are given letters to give to parents and they do exactly that.

Question five: How is absenteeism tackled at your school?

Response:

There is no major problem regarding absenteeism at this school. If the child is absent for three days, the matter is reported to the office which will call the parents.

#### **4.5 Interview with parents**

##### **4.5.1 Interview with parents of school A**

A group interview was conducted with parents at this school. The reason was that the SGB chairperson who was supposed to be interviewed alone was with other parents who became interested and asked to also form part of the interview. There were four parents, including the SGB chairperson.

Question one. How do you support your child with learning at home?

Response:

All of them said that they help their children with home works of subjects that they can understand e.g. Sepedi. One parent mentioned that she cannot help her children because she cannot read or write but would like to support them where possible.

Question two: How do you view the parent's job at home?

Response:

All of them said that they enjoy helping their children but the only problem is that the homework that learners bring home to be helped with is very difficult. Most of it is written in English and they don't understand English.

Question three. How do you view parent's job at school?

Response:

The parent's job at school is easy as long as there is cooperation between teachers and parents. All parents agreed that they enjoy working at school.

Question four: What are the duties of the SGB?

Response:

This was answered by the SGB chairperson alone. She said that the SGB is responsible for the maintenance of school property, cleaning of the yard, mediating between parents and the school, as well as organising parents meetings to discuss the progress of the school.

Question five: How often do you get a financial report from the school? Who gives it to you?

Response:

They all said that it was given once per term. The treasurer was the person who gave the financial report.

Question six: How often do you visit the school?

Response:

All of them said that they are at school every day because they are the food handlers of the school. They cook for learners and also see to it that the place where they cook is clean.

Question seven: How many educational trips did the school undertake so far?

Response:

All of them remembered that trips were undertaken, but they could not remember how many. They said it could be four times so far this year.

#### **4. 5. 2 Interview with the chairperson of school B**

Question one: How do you support your child with learning at home?

Response:

I help my child with home works and projects. I buy project material and help with assembling of the project if required.

Question two: How do you view the parent's job at home?

Response:

Parent's job at home is difficult because parents have to explain to the learners things that they do not understand themselves.

Question three: How do you view the parent's job at school?

Response:

The parent's job at school is easy for as long as they work together with the teachers of the school. Teachers are trained to help parents with information regarding the role that they need to play in the education of their children.

Question four: What are the duties of the SGB?

Response:

The SGB maintains the buildings of the school. They help with cleaning of the school yard, fundraising, procurement and most especially organising parent's meetings.

Question five: How often do you get financial report? Who gives it to you?

Response:

Parents meetings are called once per term and the treasurer is the one who will give the financial report.

Question six: How often do you visit the school?

Response:

I visit the school when they ask me to do so and during meetings of both the SGB and the parents.

Question seven: How many educational trips has the school undertaken thus far?

Response:

Several trips were undertaken but I cannot remember how many.

#### **4. 5. 3 Interview with parents of school C**

Question one: How do you support your child with learning at home?

Response:

By helping the child with homework where possible.

Question two: How do you view the parent's job at home?

Response:

I like helping my child with homework especially with Sepedi home work.

Question three: How do you view the parent's job at school?

Response:

With the help of teachers, my job is to ensure that my child is successful at school.

Question four: What are the duties of the SGB?

Response:

The SGB attends to the problems raised by the parents and organises meetings.

Question five: How often do you get a financial report? Who gives it to you?

Response:

We get a financial report once every quarter. The report is given by the treasurer.

Question six: How often do you visit the school?

Response:

We visit the school only during parent meetings or whenever the school asks you to come.

Question seven: How many education trips has the school undertaken?

Response:

Twice if I still remember well. The school does not organise trips because parents fail to pay for transport.

#### **4. 5. 4 Interview with parents of school D**

Question one: How do you support your child with learning at home?

Response:

I help them with home works if they need my help. I also buy them the study guides which will help to simplify their work.

Question two: How do you view parent involvement in schools?

Response:

It is a process of helping my child to get a better future so I fully support it.

Question three: How do you view parental involvement at school?

Response:

Parental involvement should be practised at school with the help of teachers in order to teach the learners morals and responsibility so that they can become responsible adults.

Question four: What are the duties of the SGB?

Response:

The SGB is responsible for fundraising, purchasing of school equipments, taking care of the school s extracurricular activities.

Question five: How often do you get a financial report and who gives it to you?

Response:

A report is given once every quarter by the treasurer.

Question six: How often do you visit the school?

Response:

When there are parents meetings.

Question seven: How many trips has your school undertaken so far?

Response:

They did not undertake any trip this previous year. The trip was organised but failed because the learners did not pay the required transport fee.

## **4. 6 Data interpretation**

### **4. 6. 1 SMT's view on parental involvement**

#### **(a) Management of parental involvement**

The above findings reveal that parental involvement is not effectively managed at schools. The SMTs and the principals do not have clear policies on parental involvement. None of the participants that were interviewed could give information on how they manage the process and this is a clear indication that little is done in order to encourage parents to participate in their children's education as required by SASA. The researcher agrees with Hendrick and Weissman (2011:164) that parents have a responsibility to help their children acquire the ability to survive away from home.

#### **(b) Structures on which the parents serve**

The results show that there are very few structures on which the parents serve and this makes them less inclined to be part of the school life. Only three structures were mentioned: fundraising, finance and the SGB. The popular structure on which parents serve is the SGB. The researcher thinks that schools must come up with more structures that will need parents to serve in.

**(c) Attendance of meetings**

The findings reveal that schools are doing better in this area as they try several methods to encourage attendance even though it is still very difficult in some places. Parents of learners of school C still need a lot of encouragement to attend. If only 10% of the parents attend a meeting, it means that a lot must still be done regarding awareness.

**(d) Handling of visiting parents in schools**

Educators generally treat visiting parents with respect. This shows that educators have already realised the importance of the partnership between parents and themselves if they are to improve the progress of the children. Schools are doing very well as far as the treatment of parents is concerned.

**4. 6. 2 Educators view on parental involvement**

**(a) Management of parental involvement in schools**

The researcher has established that educators do not really know how parental involvement is managed at their schools. During the interviews, some educators said that they do not know the policy on parental involvement and that only the school principal did. The researcher is of the view that parental involvement should be practised by all. When the activities on parental involvement are arranged, all the stakeholders (including the learners) should take part.

**(b) Communication with parents**

Communication between parents and schools usually is through a letter which is given to the learners to give to their parents. The researcher thinks that schools could also make use of messages through cell phones because it is quick and enables the school to know if the message is delivered or not. This is not possible with a letter as the school cannot trace the receipt thereof.

**(c) Absenteeism in schools**

The findings show that the only method used by schools to control absenteeism is calling the parent. The researcher agrees that there is no way that the teachers can control absenteeism without help from parents. The partnership between parents and schools cannot be over emphasised.

### **4. 6. 3 Parents' view of parental involvement**

#### **(a) Support in the home environment**

Almost all the parents interviewed agreed that they help their children with homework and projects at home. This is an indication that parents are gradually becoming aware of their responsibility, and this will really help schools. In addition, this encourages learners to work harder because they see their parent's showing interest in their work.

#### **(b) Parents job at home and at school**

It has already been mentioned that parents help with homework at home. They must also help at school i.e. when they come to school, the school can offer them something to do that will help the learners. For example, they can work in the garden and share the profits with the school. Schools need to initiate projects that will involve parents and encourage them to visit the school regularly.

#### **(c) Duties of the SGB**

From the interviews conducted, it is evident that the duties of the SGB included organising meetings, fundraising, and ensuring the cleaning of the yard and cooking of the learner's food. In addition to this, the SGB is responsible for reporting to parents on matters such as school finances and projects. The SGB is also responsible for accompanying learners to sporting activities. All these duties are in line with the requirements of SASA.

## **4. 7 Data analysis**

### **4. 7. 1 Analysis of interviews with the SMT and teachers**

As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this study (1.3), the research problem was formulated to investigate how rural schools of the Kgakotlou circuit manage parental involvement and define what parental involvement is, and what mechanisms can be introduced in order to improve the current state of parental involvement in the secondary schools of the Kgakotlou circuit.

The findings from the investigation revealed that the management of parental involvement in the secondary schools is still a challenge. Parental involvement is not effectively managed at these schools because the schools do not have clear policies on parental involvement. None of the schools included in the study had an official policy on parental involvement.

**(a) School policies**

The researcher is of the opinion that the SMTs and teachers should be work shopped on how to include parental involvement activities when drawing up school policies. Parental involvement is one of the key aspects of school management as it has an influence on the culture of teaching and learning. The Kgakotlou secondary schools are characterised by a poor culture of teaching and learning and this is seen by the poor school attendance of learners, high dropout rate, poor school results, and poor state of buildings, facilities and resources. A poor culture of teaching and learning in a school refers to a school situation where proper teaching and learning has broken down (Van Deventer & Kruger; 2003:4).

The management of parental involvement activities would help schools to change this poor culture into a sound one. Van Deventer and Kruger (2003:4) list the following common characteristics in schools with sound cultures of teaching and learning:

- Positive schools climate
- Sound classroom environments
- Sound home-school relations
- Effective leadership
- Management and administration
- Neat buildings and facilities
- Availability of resources
- High professional standards among educators
- Healthy relationships between all role players
- Order and discipline
- Effective instructional leadership
- Strong sense of purpose

Schools should be encouraged to include clear policies on the management of parental involvement activities in their school policies. In all four schools studied, meetings are only called once per quarter and this is not enough. Parents should regularly be called to school to see what their children are doing.

**(b) Structures or committees on which parents serve**

The findings revealed that parents serve on only four structures, the SGB, NSNP, fundraising committee and finance committee. This is not enough to involve parents. These structures require a small number of members and so can only involve a handful of parents. Another

area where parents are involved is when their children are pregnant. In these instances they come to school and wait with their child in case there is an emergency. This is done when the learners is in her sixth month and continues until she gives birth.

Parents are required by SASA to serve as SGB members. The period for SGB membership is three years and after this, elections must be held in Kgakotlou. When meetings for elections are called, parents do not show up. Meetings are sometimes postponed two or three times before the new SGB can be elected. By way of comparison, when they are called to serve on the NSNP, they came in large numbers. The result is that some parents serve on the SGB for two or three terms and this can become monotonous. The researcher thinks that schools should create more structures that can involve parents. Schools can for example involve parents on their disciplinary committee, in extracurricular activities, or even use knowledgeable parents as substitute teachers when a teacher is absent. They can also serve on the admission committee, safety committee, health committee or cultural committee.

**(c) Attendance of meetings**

The research results show a generally poor attendance of meeting and that schools are trying several methods to encourage parental involvement in this regard. Some of the strategies used are to send the invitations out in sufficient time and to hold the meeting on the weekend. Letters seem to be the most common method of inviting parents to school.

The researcher thinks that, in order to encourage attendance, other means of communication such as cell phones should be used. When parents come to a meeting, they must be attended to on time, that is, the SGB must be time conscious. If they are not quickly attended to, the next time a meeting is called, they will not come in large numbers. The principals must use their mother tongue when addressing parents as many do not understand English. They can also be asked to attend with their children. Parents will attend in this case because they would not want to disappoint their children.

The poor attendance of meetings is aggravated by issues such as absent parents (who work and leave children alone or with grandparents), illness (such as HIV), or socio-economic factors (such as the lack of money for transport). Schools should know the type of parents their learners have so that they can know what to expect when parents meetings are called.

**(d) Difference between public and private school**

The question on the difference between public and private schools was directed to educators. Educators in the three schools indicated that they are happy to work at a public school,

especially in the Kgakotlou circuit. Their only concern was that the learners in the Kgakotlou circuit do not take their schoolwork seriously, and that when they fail the department blames the teachers.

The researcher is also an educator in the Kgakotlou circuit and she shares this view. Although she is happy to work in the circuit, she is concerned about the rate at which teachers are blamed for poor academic results. Teaching learners who behave inappropriately and do not take schoolwork seriously is very difficult, especially when you know that you are the one who is going to carry the blame. This is one of the reasons why the researcher decided to investigate ways to increase the participation of parents in the learning process of their children.

The results of the investigation revealed that the parents who want to participate in their children's education need a lot of guidance from schools, because they do not know how to go about it. Schools must therefore come up with more strategies for parental involvement and this will improve discipline in these schools. No teacher mentioned that he or she liked working in a private school and one teacher said she was unhappy and wanted to retire. The researcher concludes that many teachers prefer to work in public schools despite the fact that private schools have a high level of discipline.

The researcher also thinks that the poor academic achievement of learners could be caused by the fact that they get free education. This is because learners do not have to pay for anything and so do not value anything. They get free books, food and transport sometimes. During the apartheid era, parents paid school fees and had to buy books; this encouraged learners to study hard.

**(e) Absenteeism**

The question of absenteeism was addressed to teachers and the answers showed that all three schools had a similar method of handling absenteeism. Absenteeism for one or two days is handled by the class teacher, but longer periods are reported to the office. In these cases parents are called in to come and explain the learner's whereabouts. At one school however the rate of absenteeism was low.

The researcher, thinks that the schools should not allow learners to be absent for a period of more than fourteen days because the departmental policy on attendance registers states that when a learner is absent for more than fourteen days, he or she should be withdrawn, unless there are valid reasons for the absence. The schools should inquire about the learner's

absence well before fourteen days have lapsed. The learner must provide the school with evidence for every absence, and must always notify the school through the class teacher about his or her absence.

## **4. 8 Analysis of interviews with parents**

### **4. 8. 1 Support of learners by parents at home**

Parents at the four secondary schools mentioned that they support their children by helping them with homework in subjects that they can understand. One parent said that she cannot help her children because she cannot read or write, but that she would like to support them where possible.

The researcher deduced that language and illiteracy are barriers that prevent parents from supporting their children. Parents can often only help children with Sepedi homework because it is their mother tongue; all the other subjects are difficult because the parents often do not understand English. The situation is worse for those who cannot read or write. In order to overcome these barriers, parents can ask knowledgeable neighbours to possibly assist their children.

### **4. 8. 2 Parents' job at home and at school**

All the parents interviewed said that they would enjoy their job at school if the homework was not so difficult. English is the language of teaching and it is hard for them to understand. This makes it difficult for parents to fulfil their task in this regard. Parents with such challenges may ask for assistance from knowledgeable neighbours such as retired teachers.

Parents at the four schools said that their job at school was easy as long as could they work together with the teachers. They said that they enjoyed working at school, but needed the teachers to guide them. The role of teachers in managing parental involvement activities cannot be overemphasised. Parents regard teachers as their guide and look to them for leadership. On this basis, the researcher thinks that the department should equip teachers with the knowledge to manage parental involvement activities at their schools.

### **4. 8. 3 Duties of the SGB**

The participants at all four schools mentioned that the SGB is responsible for maintaining the school buildings, cleaning the school yard, fund raising, procurement and the organisation of parents meetings. In one school, it was mentioned that the SGB takes care of extra curricula activities. It became apparent that these are the only functions that the parents know about. Parents did not know that the SGB forms part of the disciplinary committee, that it decides on the religious observance of the school, on the school uniform, code of conduct, and that it speaks on behalf of parents. The principal, on behalf of the department, has the responsibility to guide the members of the SGB in their duties.

### **4. 8. 4 Financial report**

The researcher wanted to know how often parents received the financial report from the SGB, and also who gave this to the parents. All the participants said that they received the report once every quarter from the treasurer of the SGB.

The researcher agrees that the financial report should be given once every quarter by the treasurer. The report is delivered in a well-attended parents meeting. The treasurer is responsible to give the report, but he or she does not do it alone. Before the financial report is read to parents, it forms part of the school's financial audit and is interrogated by the SGB. The SGB members, together with the finance officer of the school, help the treasurer to answer questions asked by parents. The finance officer is an educator but does not form part of the SGB. He or she is appointed by the principal to record all transactions that are made at school. These include filling in claim forms, writing cheques and recording in the cash books.

### **4. 8. 5 Visit to school**

At school A, the participants said that they visit the school every day since they are the school's food handlers. The chairperson of the SGB is also one of the food handlers. At the other three schools, the parents said they visit the school only during parents meetings or when they are called by the school.

It seems that parents visit the school only when they are forced by circumstances to do so. Otherwise, they do not visit the schools as they do not see the importance thereof. This is another reason why the researcher decided to conduct this research; she wanted to create awareness on the importance of parental involvement. If parents know the importance of partnering with teachers, things such as discipline problems will improve.

#### **4. 8. 6 Educational trips**

The researcher wanted to know how many trips were undertaken by schools, but none of the parents interviewed could remember. School A was not sure but said about four times, school B could not remember, school C said twice and school D said none had taken place during the previous year. The trip that was organised failed because learners could not pay the required transportation fee.

From the responses, it was clear that educational trips did not take place because of a lack of money. The Kgakotlou schools cater for low-income families who survive mostly by state grants or domestic employment. The money that is given to schools for norms and standards is not enough to finance educational trips, and as a result learners must pay for themselves when a trip is undertaken. Most of the trips fail because the learners cannot raise the money required for transport.

#### **4. 9 Conclusion**

The above discussion indicates that schools cannot function properly without the cooperation from parents. The SMTs experience challenges when coming up with strategies for parental involvement since they are the ones who must initiate it. The findings revealed that parents are willing to be involved in the education of their children, but that they do not know how to do this. They need teachers to guide and support them.

The SMTs are responsible for managing activities that will encourage parent participation, thus they should include parental involvement in their planning. Different strategies must be devised in order to encourage parents to participate in school activities. Parents may be asked to prepare food for visitors during sporting activities or to accompany learners to educational excursions. They could also be asked to serve as substitute teachers in cases where a teacher is absent or on leave. This could be done by parents who are knowledgeable about school matters. These are examples of activities that schools can use to encourage parental involvement.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY OF THE STUDY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

The previous chapter focused on the findings of the research. It gave a discussion of how the collected data was analysed and interpreted. This chapter will focus on conclusions drawn from the analysed data and provide recommendations formulated for SMTs, educators and parents on how to encourage parental involvement in their schools. It is hoped that these conclusions and recommendations may be helpful for all stakeholders in the education system who wish to encourage parental involvement in rural schools, and especially in those located in the Kgakotlou circuit.

#### **5.2 Literature review**

The concept of was fully discussed in Chapter Two where it was demonstrated that parental involvement is one of the most important aspects of school management. The literature review outlined the history of parental involvement in education before, during and after the apartheid era. It also described its benefits as well as barriers to achieving it. A historical perspective was given showing its development from the pre-democratic era until now. From the literature on the history of parental involvement, the following conclusions were drawn:

- Parental involvement was important during the pre-democratic era. Although there was no formal education, children learnt by imitating their parents which meant that parents were solely responsible for their children's education. Old members of the community taught the children skills such as knitting, cooking, etc.
- The apartheid era was characterised by Bantu education. Its main characteristic was white supremacy. During this era, education was inaccessible to blacks and this resulted in unequal opportunities for blacks and whites. Parental involvement was practised on a larger scale at this time because every parent was responsible for the education of his/her own child. Parents had to pay school fees for their children, buy textbooks, uniforms and pay in to building funds. There were a lot of school dropouts because of low socio-economic conditions.
- After the apartheid era, that is the democratic period, the South African education system was reformed. Acts such as the South African Schools Act were passed and

this made parental involvement compulsory. Parents are required to see to it that a child attends school until the ninth grade. More opportunities for parental involvement were created, for example, the feeding scheme at schools gives parents an opportunity to serve as food handlers and to cook for learners.

The conclusions drawn from the literature on the benefits of parental involvement show that it does not only benefit the schools, but also the learners themselves.

Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:14-15) state that children experience the following when their families are involved in their education:

### **5.2.1 Improved academic achievement**

Research has shown that children are more successful when their parents are involved in school activities and encourage education and learning at home, regardless of their educational background or social class. The researcher shares this view and believes that the academic achievement of learners improves when their parents participate in their education.

### **5.2.2 Improved attitudes to learning**

When parents show an interest in their children's education and cherish high expectations for their performance, they encourage positive attitudes that are the keys to high achievement. A positive attitude to learning goes hand-in-hand with good behaviour and is responsible for encouraging hard work which is a pre-requisite for high levels of performance.

### **5.2.3 Increased drop-out rates**

When parents of learners are involved in their education, the chances of them dropping out are greatly reduced. Learners whose parents participate in their education attend school regularly. Good attendance results in learners not missing lessons, and leads to improved performance.

The researcher shares the same view of Banks and Banks (2010:419) who state that parent involvement programs should be conceptualised broadly enough to include grandparents and other family members. This is because in some families, grandparents or siblings play the role of a parent because of the death of the biological parents.

## **5.3 Limitations of the study**

The main limitation of the study was time. The researcher had to conduct interviews after school so that the normal running of the school was not disturbed. Secondly, the study was

limited by a lack of knowledge among parents and teachers which resulted in the teachers being reluctant to participate in the study. Only after a thorough explanation by the researcher, they did participate and afterwards were happy to have participated. Another factor was the high rate of not-so-well educated parents.

The researcher is a fulltime teacher who had to attend to work-related matters as well as research matters; this was sometimes difficult.

#### **5.4 Discussion of the research questions**

The aim of establishing why there is a need to manage parental involvement in the Kgakotlou circuit was achieved through the literature review in Chapter Two and the results of the research findings presented in Chapter Four. The literature review also fully defined the concept of parental involvement and demonstrated that it is one of the most important aspects of school management. Parental involvement plays a most important role in creating the positive culture of teaching and learning that is essential for high academic achievement. It is therefore important for SMTs to have the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively manage this in their schools.

The researcher also wanted to establish how the Kgakotlou schools manage the concept of parental involvement in their schools. The research problem, outlined in the 1.3 is affected by the bad behaviour that is shown by the learners in the Kgakotlou schools. The learners behave badly both in the classroom and on the school premises. The two categories of behaviour which should be observed in class were defined by Evertson and Emmer (2009:145-146) as an involvement in learning activities and student compliance with classroom rules and procedures. Student conduct is indicated by behaviours such as good attention during presentations and discussions, and satisfactory progress in individual work and other assignments. Student compliance with classroom rules and procedures is indicated by the ability of the student to follow the rules that have been communicated to the class. The secondary school learners of the Kgakotlou show a deviation in both categories and there is little involvement in learning activities and little compliance with classroom rules and procedures.

It is on this basis that the researcher decided to investigate how Kgakotlou schools manage parental involvement activities in order to improve discipline in their schools. The qualitative research approach followed was described in Chapter Three (3.2.2). Data was collected in face-to-face situations by interacting with the SMTs, teachers and parents of learners.

Interviews were held with the participants who were chosen purposefully because they were information rich on the concept of parental involvement. Based on the findings (presented in 4.3), recommendations on the strategies that can be used to encourage parent participation are outlined in Section 5.6.

## **5.5 Conclusions**

The conclusions drawn from the literature study and the findings of this research are discussed below.

### **5.5.1 Conclusions from the literature study**

The literature review outlined the history of parental involvement in education before, during and after the apartheid era (see 2.2.1-2.2.3), and also the benefits of (see 2.3) and barriers to parental involvement (see 2.4). During the pre-apartheid era, parental involvement was mainly practised informally in situations where children learnt by imitating their parents. Old members of the community were responsible for teaching children basic life skills. During the apartheid era, parental involvement was practised on a larger scale because education was the responsibility of parents. Parents had to pay school fees, buy textbooks and uniforms, and pay for the building fund. The result was that education was not accessible to everybody and was only for the rich.

The democratic period brought changes in the education system of the country. Laws were passed which allowed free and compulsory education for all and gave parents the power to participate in their children's education. Parents are obliged to ensure compulsory education for their children until the ninth grade. This period has made parents aware of their rights and responsibilities as outlined in the South African Schools Act.

Shea and Bauer (2012:236) mention that students benefit from parent and family involvement through enhanced academic performance and test scores, better school attendance, fewer placements in special education, increased positive attitudes, better behaviour, higher graduation rates, and increased enrolment in post-secondary education.

### **5.5.2 Conclusion from interviews with members of the school management teams**

Although parents and educators saw the importance of parental involvement in schools, they mentioned that it was difficult for schools to actively practise parental involvement because

its management is challenging. The SMTs are responsible for organising activities that will encourage parental involvement.

The interviews with the SMTs revealed that parents are involved in their children's education mainly through attending parents meetings and by being members of the SGB. It was clear that more activities that involve parents must be organised as this will benefit the schools. The school benefits suggested by Shea and Bauer (2012:236) include improved teacher morale, higher ratings of teachers by parents, more support from families, higher student achievement, and an enhanced reputation in the community.

All the interviewees thought the same about obstacles to parental involvement. Parents agreed that they wanted to help their children with schoolwork, but said that they did not know how; some were illiterate and could not read or write. A few parents said that they knew how to help their children with homework because they went to school but that they did not finish school. They also did not know how to approach certain school subjects and topics in the different grades. This view is shared by Epstein (2011:565) who states that although parents know how to help their children because of their own school experiences, most of them say they do not know how to approach the school subjects and topics across the grades.

The researcher concludes that parental involvement in schools is practised, but on a very small scale. In all the schools visited, the activities that encouraged parental involvement included volunteering through cleaning of the school yard, attendance of parents meetings organised by the SGB, and being members thereof. The other activity involved supporting a pregnant learner by accompanying her to school from the sixth month of her pregnancy. This decision was taken after the schools in the rural areas were greatly affected by teenage pregnancy. This situation is worsening and even primary schools are affected by teenage pregnancy. Some of the learners become mothers before they even reach high school. Such learners have a problem because the girl must take care of a child when she is a child herself. The learner is still dependent on her parents; she does not even have an identity document, but she is a mother. These learners attend school every day as they have the right to education according to SASA. The parents are very cooperative regarding this matter because they do not want their children to be left behind in their studies.

Another area where parents are involved is in the school feeding scheme. The department has offered rural schools a programme called the National Schools Nutrition Programme (NSNP). In it food is delivered to schools and they must organise for people to cook it. Usually it is the

parents who do this. Parents attend meetings where cooks are selected in large numbers but not when academic issues are discussed.

The SMTs should organise more activities that will involve parents and such activities should accommodate both literate and illiterate parents because they are both important in parental involvement. Some schools do not have a policy of parental involvement but said that they call meetings once a month to update parents on the progress of their children. They are also involved in different committees such as the disciplinary committee, finance committee, SGB, and disciplinary committee.

SMT respondents said that they encourage parents to visit the schools by organising refreshments, providing a good reception and by giving them regular reports on the development of the school. Educators are encouraged to respect visiting parents, by amongst other things, not making them wait and giving them advice where necessary.

### **5. 5. 3 Conclusions from interviews with the educators**

The interviews with teachers revealed that teachers need parents to be involved in their children's education and are very concerned about the lack thereof. This lack of parental involvement frustrates them to the extent that they have developed a negative attitude towards it. The teachers described how difficult it is to meet some parents when they really need them. When parents are invited to school, often only a handful respond. It was clear that the teachers had very little knowledge regarding parental involvement, and that they needed and wanted more information about it. Teachers need to realise the importance of interacting and building relationships with their learners' parents and the community in general.

When teachers were asked about communication between the learners' homes and the school, all of them said that they communicate through letters. These letters are sent home with the learners and seemingly there is no mechanism to ensure the receipt of that letter. The researcher noted that communication between the parents and school was not hundred per cent effective because the letters that are used are given to the learners themselves. Some of them forget to give them to their parents and some just do not want them to visit the school. Poor communication between parents and schools was seen as a contributing factor towards the lack of parent involvement in schools.

Other matters relating to communication between schools and parents included the number of meetings which are held with parents. When educators were asked how often they call

meetings with parents, they said once every term. The researcher is of the opinion that this is not enough. In order to practise parental involvement effectively, schools and parents must communicate on a regular basis. This view is shared by Shea and Bauer (2012:241) who state that communication is key for all parent-family collaboration activities. The conclusion made regarding the availability of school policies on parental involvement was that schools do not have proper policies in place for practising parental involvement and this contributes to the non-participation by parents.

As mentioned in the previous chapters, the Kgakotlou schools are affected by learner absenteeism. According to the educators, this absenteeism is caused by factors such as the prevalence of child-headed families, absent parents, having to walk long distances to school and general socio-economic conditions. Although the department has tried to help by offering learners transport, and through the feeding scheme, the problem persists because of the other factors mentioned. The teachers said it is difficult to tackle absenteeism because it requires the participation of the parents. The parents of such learners are asked to come to school through letters but many times they do not show up. The researcher concludes that other means of communication such as the use of telephones or emails could be used by schools. This view is shared by Evertson and Emmer (2013:199) who mention that sometimes a telephone call or an email to the parent can have a marked effect on a student's behaviour because it signals to the child that accountability for behaviour extends beyond the classroom.

#### **5. 5. 4 Conclusions from interviews with parents**

The researcher's conclusion from interviews with parents is that parents are willing to be involved in the education of their children as long as teachers are willing to direct them. They have many fears, sometimes because they are not educated, and therefore are not sure as to how they can help at school. When they were asked how they support their children with learning at home, they said they can help with Sepedi homework because they understand the language, but that other subjects are taught in English and this is hard for them. Some said they do not have enough time to help their children since they come back late from work, but that they help where possible.

When parents were asked if they knew the duties of the SGB, they said they know that the SGB calls the parent meetings, controls the school's finances, and takes care of the school's buildings. The researcher concludes that parents need more information regarding the duties of the SGB because they did not know that, for example, the SGB is supposed to do

fundraising for the school, help draw up the code of conduct, help maintain discipline, and help decide on the school uniform. This lack of information causes a reluctance towards parents being members of the SGB. Some schools need to call three meetings before there are sufficient participants to hold elections for the SGB and this frustrates the management of the school.

One of the duties of the SGB is to control the finances of the school and report regularly to the parents. The responses from parents revealed that the financial report is given to the parents once per school term by the treasurer. According to the researcher, once per term is not enough; finance reports must be given to parents on a regular basis to avoid misunderstandings.

Parents were also questioned about how often they visit the school and many of them said they only visit the school when they are specifically requested to do so. They said the reason for not visiting schools regularly is because some teachers make them feel inferior. The researcher concludes that teachers play a role in discouraging parents from visiting schools. If they can treat parents with the respect that they deserve, and give them a warm welcome when they visit the school, parents would be more involved in school activities.

## **5. 6 Recommendations**

### **5. 6. 1 Recommendations for school management teams**

As mentioned earlier, the interviews with SMTs showed that although schools are practising parental involvement, it is not well managed as its management is challenging. It is on this basis that the researcher recommends that the principal, as the head of the school, should take a decisive role in creating a management culture that is characterised by parental involvement. The school must have a plan for parental involvement which is designed according to its unique characteristics. This should be carefully planned and consider the barriers to parental involvement that are experienced by schools. The researcher suggests that schools devise a plan that will cater for their own individual circumstances. While devising the plan, the SMT should consider the plans that were devised by other authors.

Below is an example of such a plan devised by Botha, Kruger, Pretorius, Van Niekerk, Van der Merwe and Van Zyl (2006:241). The plan contains seven essential characteristics which have to be applied. The steps for the plan are:

#### **(a) Devising a strategic plan for parent involvement**

The school's heads of department, senior members of staff, and parents should sit together and devise a strategy for making parent involvement at school practicable. At this meeting, information documents, regulations and circulars should be used to identify areas in the school, where parents can be involved. For each of the identified areas in the school, a committee can be constituted consisting of staff and parents. A central committee can be constituted and members of the SMT can serve in the committee to ensure effective co-ordination of the committee.

#### **(b) Creating an inviting school climate**

The school should convey warmth and sincerity so that parents can feel welcome and comfortable when they visit the school. The school can create an inviting climate by encouraging correct conduct and a positive attitude on the part of the staff. An inviting reception area for parents can also be created.

#### **(c) Parent and teacher instruction in elements of parental involvement**

Knowledgeable parents and teachers can conduct parent and teacher training. The aims of parent instruction include enhancing the quality of the guidance parents give their children at home, forming parent groups and incorporating and organising parents as partners with the school. Conferences can be called by the family or the teacher to share knowledge and information, resolve conflicts and problems together and set goals for the child which can be reinforced at home and at school (Browne and Gordon, 2009:172).

#### **(d) Communication between the school and home**

Successful communication is an important part of any parent involvement plan. Parents and teachers can communicate with one another through informal conversations, an exchange of correspondences, telephone conversations, circulars, parent evenings, home visits or school newspapers. The SMTs should ensure that schools have the necessary resources for easy communication.

#### **(e) Class and parents committees**

The school should organise class parents committees which are restricted to parents of a particular class or classes in a particular grade. This will mean that only a few parents will participate. If parents participate at class level, they will be able to be involved on a larger scale as time goes on.

#### **(f) Opportunities for contact**

Schools should create opportunities such as parents evening and open days, and schedule appointments with specific parents. These opportunities should be used to emphasise the importance of parental involvement. The principal should ensure that all the planned activities for parental involvement are practised by all the stake holders.

#### **(g) Drawing up an annual programme**

All the projects, meetings, activities and contact opportunities that have been agreed upon, should be scheduled in an annual programme. These activities should all fit in easily with the academic and instructional programme of the school. The annual programme should be given to both parents and teachers so that they can always see when the activities start and what is expected of them.

If principals can implement the above mentioned plan in their schools, parental involvement will improve, resulting in improved discipline in their schools. Improved discipline will lead to improved academic achievement.

### **5. 6. 2 Recommendations for educators**

The researcher recommends that because educators are often more knowledgeable than parents, they should guide parents regarding their involvement in schools. As stated earlier, parents do not know how to be involved but with guidance from teachers they can help. Teachers on the other hand, should be called for workshops on parent involvement, which should be organised by the department. The department should include parental involvement in education in the curriculum for student teachers at universities and colleges.

Teachers should also avoid contacting parents only when there is bad news as this makes them reluctant to visit schools on other occasions. Parents should be invited to schools sometimes to be told about their children's achievements, or to see their children performing either in sport or cultural celebrations. Teachers must also refrain from making parents feel uncomfortable when visiting the school, because this negative experience discourages parents from making an effort to participate in school activities.

When parents visit the school, teachers must use the mother tongue to communicate with them, because most parents cannot speak English. Using the mother tongue will encourage participation in the sense that parents will understand clearly what is expected of them, and how they can take part in their children's schoolwork. Teachers must avoid making parents

wait for long periods before they are attended to. This makes parents irritated and not want to visit the school again. The concerns raised by parents about their children must not be ignored by teachers.

Educators should not regard parent involvement as interference but as a genuine concern for the child's education. They must allow the practises of parental involvement activities to take place smoothly and take them as one of the methods of increasing the learners' achievement. The researcher also recommends that educators should visit their learners' homes, especially the homes of learners who are not coping with schoolwork, in order to understand their background.

The researcher agrees with Epstein (2011:234) who says that homework is the only serious communication between the school and parents and children. It is on this basis that teachers are advised to give their learners homework daily and it encourages parents and children to talk about schoolwork. The homework should be designed in such a way that the child will need assistance from parents. The projects and assignments that are given to children as homework should force parents to get involved e.g. by buying material for the projects and explaining to the child how it can be used, or by looking for information on a particular topic.

In order to manage homework effectively, schools must develop homework policies which should form part of the school policy. The policy should explain the amount of homework that must be given to the children and the days on which it should be given.

The importance of homework should not be ignored while drawing up the school homework policy. The researcher thinks that children who do their homework regularly develop to be very responsible students with a positive attitude towards schoolwork. Such students and their teachers also develop a love for their subjects and their teachers. If students do their homework, disagreements with teachers are greatly reduced.

The researcher suggests that proper homework school policies should be drawn up by schools. From her experience as an educator in a rural school, schools do not have policies on homework. Where there is policy, it is not properly adhered to. She further recommends that challenging homework should be reserved for weekends, because this is sometimes the only time that parents are home. During the week, homework that is given should be work that the child can tackle on his or her own.

A school which has high standards for student work is preferred by parents. Such a school will have a large number of students and this will force the DoE to give the school more

teachers. Schools without an academic program usually have a small enrolment and fewer teachers. This impact negatively on student achievement as the teachers are overloaded with work.

Homework is a way of improving the relationship between the child and the parents. As the parent helps the child with homework, trust is built between them. Moreover, children develop a positive attitude towards schoolwork when they do homework in different subjects.

### **5. 6. 3 Recommendations for parents**

The researcher suggests that as stakeholders, parents should also try to devise strategies to overcome their barriers to parental involvement in the education of their children.

Poverty is one of the main barriers to parental involvement and needs to be confronted by parents. They can do this by creating an income through selling products that they have produced themselves. They can grow vegetables in their gardens, grow fruit trees which will provide fruit which can be sold to generate an income.

The department tried to address poverty in education by saying that children in rural schools must not pay school fees. This decreased the dropout rate which was due to the non-payment of school fees. As the department is offering free education and feeding schemes in these rural areas, the researcher recommends that parents become involved by checking their children's homework, and seeing to it that they do not stay away from school without a good reason. With the little money that they get from selling their products, they can buy their children materials to do school projects.

They can also become involved in making sure that their children have evening meals since the department's nutrition programme allows schools to feed the learner only at 10h00. The researcher also recommends that, where possible, parents must stay with their children and not leave them with their grandparents. Although it is difficult for parents to do so due to socio-economic reasons, they need to make an effort to be involved with their children's schoolwork. Parents must not only be concerned about the learners' year-end reports; they must know what is happening throughout the year. Obviously the child who fails at the end of the year has been failing throughout the terms. If the parent gets involved, the child can possibly pass the year. Children staying with the grandparents are often not disciplined because children take advantage of the physical condition of their grandparents.

The issue of single parenting also contributes to non-participation of parents in the sense that one parent does the work of two parents. This is too demanding for them both financially and emotionally. The researcher recommends that single parents should seek support and guidance from the other adults in the family. The situation is worse in rural areas because many times the single parent is still a learner attending a secondary school. Obviously participating in the child's life is going to require the help of adults in the whole family.

Substance abuse in families also causes the non-participation of parents in their children's education. A parent who is addicted to drugs or alcohol cannot fully provide for the family, and this is one form of non-participation. Such parents do not have time to visit the school when they are needed. The researcher thinks that parents should avoid the misuse of substances if they want to participate in their children's education as this reduces their ability to help their children financially and emotionally. In cases where the parent is already addicted, he or she must consider going to a rehabilitation centre.

Other barriers identified are a lack of transportation and childcare. Many parents work outside home and thus commute to and from work. When they reach home its late, they have to cook, bath the children and prepare for the next day. This leaves them with no time to participate and help the children with homework. If parents have to attend meetings in the evening, they do not have transport to get there and there is no one to look after the small children. In order to accommodate participation in the children's education, such a parent can ask for permission from the employer to visit the school before going to work in the morning. The school can give the parent a 'leave letter' to take to the employer. Alternatively, the parent can talk to the school telephonically and explain his or her situation.

The interviews with parents revealed that there are parents who are willing to participate in education, but do not know ways to do so other than helping with homework. They can help children with homework in some subjects but not in other, for example they can help with mother tongue because they understand the language. All the other subjects are taught in English which they do not understand and so they cannot help the children. The researcher recommends that parents should consult knowledgeable parents in the village so that they can help them with their children. Parents should also notify the school of any changes in the child's life that may affect his or her schoolwork, that is, a death or divorce in the family.

### **5.7 Suggestions for further study**

On the basis of the research findings of this study, the following suggestions for future research are made:

This study was conducted in rural secondary schools of the Kgakotlou circuit, Limpopo province, using a qualitative research design and by conducting interviews with SMTs. A similar investigation could be undertaken on a macro-level, using quantitative research design and a larger sample size. Quantitative designs make use of questionnaires. The sample could consist of educators, parents and learners of secondary schools in the district or province. The questionnaire method would work in the case of those participants who prefer not to talk.

Alternatively, a comparative study could be conducted in the same circuit in which the management of parental involvement between the primary schools and the secondary schools in the circuit are compared. In this study, the attitudes that were examined are those of SMTs, SGBs, educators and teachers towards parental involvement activities. The attitude of learners towards parental involvement was not examined. In future, these attitudes could be compared with those of teachers and parents.

Limpopo province consists of both urban schools and rural schools. A study could be conducted in which the management of parental involvement activities in urban and rural schools can be compared. The results of these findings could be contrasted with those established in this thesis.

### **5.8 Final conclusion**

The previous chapters made it clear that parental involvement is key to the success of learners and should therefore be given more attention than it is presently the case. The school principals, together with their heads of department should play a role in creating opportunities for parental involvement as explained above. They should develop strategies that will encourage parental involvement for the benefit of the school, the parents and the learners.

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## **APPENDICES**

Ethical clearance certificate

Appendix A: (Letter of request to do research)

Appendix B: (Informed consent form for participants)

Appendix C: (Consent letter for parents)

Appendix D: (Interview schedule for school management teams, teachers and parents)

Letter of permission to do research from the Department of Education

Letter of permission from the Circuit Manager of Kgakotlou.

## Research Ethics Clearance Certificate

This is to certify that the application for ethical clearance submitted by

**LM Manamela [05652685]**

for a M Ed study entitled

**The role of parental involvement in improving discipline in secondary schools in  
the Kgakotlou circuit**

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 Dzvimbho  
Executive Dean : CEDU



Dr M Claassens  
CEDU REC (Chairperson)  
[mcdtc@netactive.co.za](mailto:mcdtc@netactive.co.za)

Reference number: 2014 SEPTEMBER /05652685/MC

12 SEPTEMBER 2014

## **APPENDIX A: LETTER OF REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS**

Postnet Suite 59  
Private Bag 9307  
Polokwane  
0700  
24 June 2014

Limpopo Education Department  
Private Bag X9489  
Polokwane  
0700

Sir/Madam

### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO DO RESEARCH.**

I am a student at the University of South Africa (UNIS A) and an educator at Phomolong Secondary School in the Kgakotlou circuit. I am studying towards a Masters of Education degree in Education (Education Management). I am engaged in a research study, in which I am investigating the extent of parental involvement in the education of their children, as envisaged by the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996. My research topic is:

#### **THE ROLE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN IMPROVING DISCIPLINE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF THE KGAKOTLOU CIRCUIT.**

I therefore wish to ask permission to conduct research at Kgakotlou circuit. The research will be conducted with four selected schools in your circuit, that is, Kgakotlou circuit in the Capricorn district. The names of the schools are Phomolong Mothimako, Ngwanalaka and Ramakanyane Secondary Schools. The research project is voluntarily to participants.

The research will be conducted for three months. The ethical clearance is attached for your perusal.

I will greatly appreciate your kind assistance in this matter.

Yours faithfully

Manamela M. L.

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## **APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM.**

Research topic: **THE ROLE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN IMPROVING DISCIPLINE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF THE KGAKOTLOU CIRCUIT.**

Name of researcher: Mrs L. M Manamela

Contact number: 073285555

Address of researcher: Postnet suite 59  
Private Bag X9307

Polokwane

0700

24 June 2014

Limpopo Department of Education

Private Bag x9489

Polokwane

0700

Dear Participant

I am a student at the University of South Africa (UNISA) and an educator at Phomolong Secondary School in the Kgakotlou circuit. I am studying towards a Masters degree in Education (Education Management). I am engaged in a research study, in which I am investigating the extent of parental involvement in the education of their children, as envisaged by the Schools Act 84 of 1996. My research topic is: **THE ROLE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN IMPROVING DISCIPLINE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF THE KGAKOTLOU CIRCUIT.**

I request that you participate in this research study. The interview process will take for 1 hour. Kindly take note of the following:

1. Your involvement in this study is voluntary. You are not obliged to divulge information which is private to you. You are allowed to withdraw from the study at any time.
2. You will not be compensated hi monetary or any other forms in exchange for participating in the research study.
3. I undertake to treat information you provide as confidential. Your name will not be disclosed hi any document including interviewed transcripts and the research report by your

name, surname or by any other information. Your school will be given a pseudo name, and no one except me will be informed of your participation.

4. Every effort will be made to reduce any possible risks that may be encountered during the research,

5. The research findings will be made available to you should you request them.

6. Should you have any queries about the research, now or hi future, you may contact me at the above address.

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## **APPENDIX C: CONSENT LETTER TO PARENTS**

Research topic: The role of parental involvement in improving discipline in secondary schools of the Kgakotlou circuit.

Name of researcher: Masadi Lenny Manamela.

Contact numbers: 1. Home : (015) 296 4067

2. Work : 072 486 5842

3. Cell: 073 285 5554

Adress:

Postnet Suite 59

Private Bag x9307

Polokwane

0700

14 April 2014

Dear parent

I am a student at the University of South Africa (Unisa) and an educator at

Phomolong Secondary School in the Kgakotlou circuit. I am studying towards a Master degree in Education (Education Management).

My research topic is : The role of parental involvement in improving discipline in secondary schools of the Kgakotlou circuit.

I would like to request you to participate in this research study. Kindly take note of the following:

1. Your involvement in this study is voluntary. You are not obliged to divulge information which is private to you. You are allowed to withdraw from the study at any time.
2. I undertake to treat the information you provide as confidential. Your name will not be disclosed in any document including interviewed transcripts and the research report by your name, surname or by any other information. No one except me will be informed of your participation.

3. Every effort will be made to reduce any possible risks that may be encountered during the research.
4. The research findings will be made available to you should you request them.
5. Should you have any queries about the research, now or in future, you may contact me at the above address.

Yours faithfully

M. L Manamela

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## **APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

Name of researcher: Masadi Lenny Manamela.

Contact numbers : (015) 296 4067, 072 486 5842, 073 285 5554

Postnet Suite 59

Private Bag x9307

Polokwane

0700

14 April 2014

Dear Participant

I am a student at the University of South Africa (Unisa) and an educator at Phomolong Secondary School in the Kgakotlou circuit. I am studying towards a Master degree in Education (Education Management).

My research topic is: The role of parental involvement in improving discipline in secondary schools of the Kgakotlou circuit.

I would like to request you to participate in this research study. Kindly take note of the following:

Your involvement in this study is voluntary. You are not obliged to divulge information which is private to you. You are allowed to withdraw from the study at any time.

I undertake to treat the information you provide as confidential. Your name will not be disclosed in any document including interviewed transcripts and the research report by your name, surname or by any other information. No one except me will be informed of your participation.

Every effort will be made to reduce any possible risks that may be encountered during the research.

The research findings will be made available to you should you request them. Should you have any queries about the research, now or in future, you may contact me at the above address.

Yours faithfully

M. L Manamela

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### **Parents**

- How do you support your child with learning in home environment?
- How do you view the parent's job at home towards education?
- How do you view the parent's job at school?
- What are the duties of SGB
- How often do you get a financial report from the school? Who gives you?
- How often do you visit the school?
- How many education trips has the school undertaken so far?

### **Educators**

- Discuss what is like being an educator hi public schools of Kgakotlou Circuit?
- What is the school policy on parent involvement in this school?
- How often do you communicate with parents about the education of their children?
- How do you rate communication channel between the school and parents?
- How is absenteeism tackled in the school?

### **School management team**

- How would you describe parent involvement at your school?
- What is the policy of the school on parent involvement?
- Are there structures on which parents serve?
- What encourages parents to attend the School Governing Body meetings?
- How do educators handle visiting parents at school?

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LIMPOPO

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**DEPARTMENT OF**

**EDUCATION**

*Enquiries: Dr. Makola MC, Tel No: 015 290 9448. E-mail: MakalaMC(S>edu. limpopo.gov.za*

**POSTNET SUITE 59**

**PRIVATE BAG 9307**

**POLOKWANE**

**0700**

**MANAMELA M. L**

**RE: Request for permission to Conduct Research**

1. The above bears reference.
2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct a research has been approved- **TOPIC "THE ROLE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN IMPROVING DISCIPLINE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF THE KGAKOTLOU CIRCIUT "**.
3. The following conditions should be considered
  3. 1 The research should not have any financial implications for Limpopo Department of Education.
  3. 2 Arrangements should be made with both the Circuit Offices and the schools concerned.
  3. 3 The conduct of research should not in any way disrupt the academic programs at the schools.
  3. 4 The research should not be conducted during the time of Examinations especially the fourth term.
  3. 5 During the study, the research ethics should be practiced, in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected).

3. 6 Upon completion of research study, the researcher shall share the final product of the research with the Department.

4. Furthermore, you are expected to produce this letter at Schools/ Offices where you intend conducting your research as an evidence that you are permitted to conduct the research.

5. The department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wishes you success in your investigation.

Best wishes.

Mashaba KM

Acting Head of Department

Date: 2014. 10. 29

**Cnr. 113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X9489,  
POLOKWANE, 0700**

**Tel: 015 290 7600, Fax: 015 297 6920/4220/4494**

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PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

KGAKOTLOU CIRCUIT

**ENQ:** MANGENA M. L

CELL: 082215715

**REGARDING: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

1. The above matter bears reference.
2. Attached please find the letter of permission from the office of HOD for your assistance.
3. The following Schools should please assist in above mentioned issue:
  1. Mothimako High School
  2. Ngwanalaka Secondary
  3. Ramakanyane Secondary and
  4. Phomolong Secondary School

Thanking you in advance

Regards

MANGENA M. L

CIRCUIT MANAGER