



**PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS OF GAUTENG EAST
DISTRICT AS EXPERIENCED BY
SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND PARENTS**

by

FISOKUHLE BERNICE THWALA

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

in the subject

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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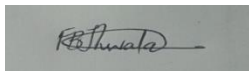
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: Dr Lydia Mbatl

March 2023

DECLARATION

I, *Fisokuhle Bernice Thwala* declare that **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS OF GAUTENG EAST DISTRICT AS EXPERIENCED BY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND PARENTS** is my original work, based on my personal study and/or research. I have acknowledged all material and sources used in the preparation of this study. I have not submitted substantially the same final version of any material as another student. Neither the studies, nor substantial parts of it, have been previously submitted for assessment in this or any other institution.



Student's signature

2023/03/09

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to:

 *My late grandparents, Delive Elizabeth and Samathi William Jhwala.*

 *My late mother, Sibongile Margaret Jhwala.*

 *My late uncle, Pretty Solomon Jhwala.*

 *My lovely daughter, Nqobile Busisiwe Jhwala.*

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I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to the completion of this study:

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- ✚ My Supervisor Dr Mbaty Lydia, Dr. L as I fondly called her. From the bottom of my heart, I genuinely want to take a moment to thank you for all the support and guidance you've provided me with. I nearly gave up, but you held my hand and kept me going. It was a privilege to work under your leadership. You model determination, positive encouragement and understanding in a remarkable fashion.
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MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL!

ABSTRACT

The significance of Parental Involvement (PI) in the education of all children irrespective of their learning disabilities/abilities is crucial to enhance their scholastic performance, extra-curricular, skills development, promotion of positive behavior, consistent school attendance and minimization of school drop-out. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to establish the lived experiences of the principals and parents with learners in Special Schools (SS) with regards to PI. The objective was to perceive their lived experiences to explore affordances and constrains to PI in supporting learners in special schools with a view to forwarding recommendations to enhance PI.

Qualitative methodology was used to generate data, and phenomenology was used as the research design. The sample comprised of ten (10) participants comprising of five (5) special school principals, and five (5) parents of learners attending SS in the East District of Gauteng, South Africa. The data collection tools were semi-structured individual face-to-face interviews that were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Related literature has lauded PI as an excellent technique for the promotion of learners' achievements, but schools continue to battle with how to effectively involve parents. The findings of the research study revealed contextual factors that contribute to the limitation of parental involvement in the SS of Gauteng East. These factors included socio-economic status, low level of parental education, stigmatization of children enrolled in SS, lack of knowledge and skills, absence of implementing legal policies frameworks on PI and lack of support to parents who are inactive, uninvolved and unreachable. The study, grounded in Epstein's Six Types of Support to Parental Involvement, established there is a lack of parental involvement with regards to learning at home, volunteering, two-way communication and cooperative decision making.

The study however, also revealed that the school principals and the schools' occupational therapists facilitated PI by collaborating with the community through career development and through PI with regards to parenting utilizing support specialists such as the occupational therapist, nurses, class assistance and the School Based Support Team (SBST) within the schools.

Participants reported that there is a need to implement the constructs of Epstein's models of PI to influence the lives of learners holistically, while respecting and embracing that individuals have multiple learning developments in an inclusive setting. This study

investigated PI through supportive environments by exploring principals and parents' lived experiences with their children's educational programmes, and views about the obstacles that could prevent them from participating. This will assist with identifying the advancements that will promote effective PI.

KEY TERMS: Parental involvement, Epstein Framework of Six Types of Involvement
Special Schools, Principals, Parents, Individual Support/Educational Plans, Educators.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DBST	District Based Support Team
DoE	Department of Education
EPSEN	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs
GE	Gauteng East
IDEA	Individual Disability Educational Act
IEP	Individual Educational Plan
IEO	Inequality of Educational Opportunity
ISP	Individual Support Plan
IPA	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
LSE	Learner Support Educator
NAO	National Audit office
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OT	Occupational Therapist
PA	Parents
PI	Parental Involvement
POPIA	Protection of Personal Information Act
PR	Principals
SA	South Africa
SASA	South African Schools Act
SBST	School Based Support Team

SIAS	Screening Identification Assessment and Support
SMT	School Management Team
SS	Special School(s)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNISA	University of South Africa
WHO	World Health Organisation

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CHAPTER ONE

PURPOSE, AIM AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Historically, black learners in South Africa were not admitted and catered for in well-resourced special schools. During Apartheid, special schools were arranged based on two segregation criteria: race and disability Department of Education (DoE, 2001). After the abolishment of Apartheid in South Africa in 1994, the new political era enabled all individuals, regardless of race to benefit from equal educational opportunities (Ngubane, 2019), through a restructuring of the education system towards inclusive education.

The South African government issued a policy framework, Education White Paper 6 – Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training Systems Department of Education (DoE, 2001) to deal with the disparities of the education system. Engelbrecht and Muthukrishna (2019:108) indicated that Education White Paper 6 proposed the conversion of the entire educational system to an inclusive one, so that regardless of their learning support requirements, all learners may access education and training. Furthermore, the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) (2014) policy was set out to implement the main elements of the inclusive education system. The Department of Education (DoE, 2014) considered that this policy would improve special schools by giving clarity on the children that should be accepted to a certain special school and how their educational requirements should be met.

Special Schools (SS) are prepared to provide specialised educational programmes to learners requiring admission. High-intensity educational support is offered, either on a full-time or part-time basis (DoE, 2014). The policy on SIAS (DoE, 2014) proposed that parents/caregivers should be considered equal collaborators in the identification and evaluation procedures involving their children at all times. The involvement of parents in the SIAS process takes place when a learner applies for admission or is referred from a mainstream or full-service school to a SS. It is asserted that parents need to have full information, preferably in their native language so that they can make informed choices.

Their involvement in the SIAS procedure is not by choice because it is mandatory (DoE, 2014). Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) attested that an attempt to prevent drop-out, exclusion and learner breakdown depends on parental involvement.

DoE (2007) asserted that SS had a role to include community members and parents in school activities and services. The DoE (2001) stipulated that parents of disabled children or learners at risk should be empowered with information, counselling and skills to enable them to support their children. SS mostly deal with the Individual Educational Program (IEP) which is defined by the Individual Disability Educational Act (IDEA) as a formal written record for each child who has been identified as having a disability and a specific learning need (Fransisco, Hartman & Wang, 2020).

Fransisco et al., (2020:7) indicated that this document (National Council for Special Education, (NCSE), 2014) contained relevant details regarding the child's history, talents, educational requirements, required accommodations, and goals and objectives to be met. These have to be developed and evaluated by educators in conjunction with parents, students, and with other stakeholders who are involved in the educational development of their child. The most salient characteristics of special education were individualised instructions that Kauffman, Hallahan, Pullen and Bader (2018:22) contend that without them, special education simply wouldn't exist.

Alkahtani and Kheirallah (2016: 45) asserted that IEPs foster family members and educational personnel to have a well-informed dialogue and unanimously decide on the learner's learning priorities that should be met. This is also attested by Kurth, Love and Pirtle (2020) who posit that the Individual with Disability Improvement Act (IDEA: 2004) stipulated that parents should be the component of educational placement and other decisions as obligatory individuals of the Inequality of Educational Opportunity (IEO) team, the IEP procedure, and additional elements deliberated in IEP conversions.

Bariroh (2018: 97) contends that in order to get the greatest results for any educational process, cooperation between the school and the parents is essential. Buchori (2006) whose cited by Bariroh (2018) also eluded that education will fail without parents' participation. Parental Involvement in SS is crucial for effective academic attainments/ skills development, enhances students' confidence, school attendance and ensures a strong support structure. Moreover, research over the years and currently (Okeke, 2014, Đurišić, & Bunijevac, 2017, Maluleke 2014, Garcia & Thornton, 2014, Ntekane 2018, Avnet, Makara, Larwin, & Erickson (2019) highlighted the PI paradigm as a contributing factor to positive scholastic achievements.

In their review, Boonk, Gijsselaers, Ritzen, and Brand-Gruwel (2018:8), PI is divided into two categories. The first category is home-based involvement, which emphasises on the activities parents engage in at home to further their children's learning such as communicating, guidance and monitoring school related activities. The second category is school-based involvement, which includes how involved parents were at school, such as ministering parent-teacher meetings and other school events.

It has been demonstrated that students who have their families remain involved in their education surpass those individuals who do not (Odongo, 2018). Special education promotes inclusive education around the globe and the need for PI in the education of all students (Afolabi, 2014). Strong parent-school connections are categorically acknowledged as a critical element of a student's education in the literature, particularly for children with special needs (Koch, 2020). Jigyel, Miller, Mavropoulou and Berman (2019: 1) cites Epstein (2010) who opined the effectiveness of PI in inclusion was essentially developed and maintained through communication and collaboration between the home and the school formulating constructive roles in the formation of a solid functioning relationship between parents and teachers.

The South African School Act 84 of 1996 encourages parents to take active participation in the schooling of their children. The scope and nature of the roles and powers of parents in school governance have changed as an outcome of the democratization of the educational system, and the move toward self-governance in schools has given parents more authority to oversee the school's operations within the confines of the law, where parents' role and responsibilities falls within this sphere of the law (Maboe, 2005). A recommendation from a study conducted by Aman, Akram, Mas'udah, Saud & Manj, (2019) found that PI is crucial for learners' academic performances when they noted that the government, especially the district education office, and local NGOs needed to conduct awareness-raising initiatives on the value of PI in children's education, which will result in outstanding academic development. South Africa's Department of Education (DoE, 2005) recognised absence of parental acknowledgement and involvement as an area of concern that should be emphasised by all educational role players (Lombard, 2007).

The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) supported the notion that inclusive education was based on the principles of social justice and provided every student with equal access to quality education. In the middle to late 1900s, special education started to garner attention in

China, Thailand, and Turkey in reaction to the acknowledgment of human rights (Hauwadhanasuk, Karnas & Zhuang, 2019). As a way to accommodate the special education programs that children with disabilities require, the governments of these nations reinforced public policies that support development.

According to Kritzer (2012) cited by Hauwadhanasuk, et. al., (2019) noted that prior to the enactment of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975 special education in China was relatively comparable to special education in the United States. The Individuals with Disability Education Act entitled every affected child in the United States, from early childhood until young adulthood, everyone has access to a free, suitable public education through inclusive education and special education services (Lipkin & Okamoto, 2015). Magnússon (2019) noted that the UNESCO Salamanca Statement was one of the most important international policies in the field of special education.

A lack of special education law, inadequate facilities, inadequate financing, and a dearth of competent teachers were all noted by Adoyo and Odeny, (2015); Chitiyo and Chitiyo (2017); Donohue and Bornman (2014) in Chitiyo and Muwana (2018) as challenges in the development of special education in Zambia and Zimbabwe. Furthermore, Chitiyo and Muwana (2018: 76) indicated that Zambia and Zimbabwe were endeavouring to further strengthen special education services and had as of late embraced unique programs and policies that put a priority on educating children with disabilities in an inclusive setting.

The study thus explored the lived experiences of school principals and parents with regards to PI in the SS of Gauteng East District after learners' admission and placement. The findings from the "Explored opportunities and difficulties in parent-school collaborations in SS" by Sedibe and Fourie (2018) reported parents' feelings of disconnection from the schools are caused by deficient teacher information on family conditions, lacking open doors for association among families, and restricted school correspondence.

The study aimed to explore Parental Involvement (PI) in SS through the lens of Epstein's Framework. Epstein's school-family association hypothesis illustrates and recommends that the parties involved collaborate to impact children's development and education (Newchurch, 2017). There was also limited literature available related to PI in SS of the East District in Gauteng, South Africa.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Successful parental inclusion requires explicit actions towards recognising the obstacles that inhibit effective PI, followed by the redesign of services and allocation of resources to overcome these obstacles (Al-Dababneh, 2018). However, some parents are not honoring a vigorous hands-on approach to their children's education. They do not communicate with the school either physically or telephonically with regards to their children's developmental progress. Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) attests that an attempt to prevent drop-out, exclusion and learning breakdown depends on parental involvement. Regarding proposed PI in the policies such as White Paper 6, there are few avenues that develop or empower parents about their roles (DoE, 2014). LaRocque, Kleiman and Darling (2001) cited Salleh and Rosli (2019) who supplied data indicating that most of the parents are unaware of their rights to participate in school activities and have poor parenting abilities.

In the policy implementation strategy for 2015-2019 as stipulated in the DoE (2014), there are no PI programmes in place for parents of learners admitted or placed in special schools. In spite of the arrangement among policy makers, specialists, and analysts about the worth of PI, expanding and further developing this contribution is still difficult to achieve (Marcschall and Shah, 2020). Available policies such as EWP 6 (2001), DoE (2005; 2007), SIAS (2014) that provide guidelines and roles to schools and parents are not effectively implemented and majority of parents are not familiar with them. Schools keep on battling with planning and implementing solid PI programs that connect to student performances (Sheldom, 2005), and there is still a lack of evidence demonstrating what works and what doesn't (Marcschall & Shah, 2020). Research on PI has been carried out in normal school contexts (Cheng & Chen, 2018; Wulandary & Herlisa, 2018; Ntekane, 2018; Fuller, 2017). There is limited research in the South African studies focusing on parental involvement in Special Schools. The consequences of the limited research from South Africa may lead to children in Special schools experiencing further exclusion and impediments related to their rights to quality educational experiences.

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to provide critical partnership that the school principals and parents might need to implement in their endeavors towards supporting their learners who experience learning disabilities. This study may also help parents to understand the impact they have on when they are actively interested in their children's education. Furthermore, the study

explored the implementation of PI in SS through the lens of the Epstein's Model of Framework.

Thwala, Ntinda, and Hlanze (2015: 208) indicate that the education and training sector policy states nothing about training the parents of children with special needs. Designed policies mandated parents should be active in the education of their children; nonetheless, practical implementation of these policies did/do not exist. Parental support to learners with learning disabilities should be encouraged to reduce their possibilities of exiting out of school (Oghadho & Ajowi, 2013). In their study, the authors also concluded that parental support was critical in the retention rate of learners with learning disabilities. Through this study, the researcher intended to find ways to assist parents of children in SS within the Gauteng East (GE) District to become constantly involved in the educational development of their children.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the lived experiences of school principals and parents of children in SS regarding PI in the Gauteng East District?

1.4.1 Sub-questions

- What are the challenges confronting the principals of SS and parents to foster PI through regularly home-school partnership?
- What attempts do school principals and parents make to foster an involved approach in the educational developmental of children?
- What guidelines can be practically utilised by the principals of SS and parents to support the development and implementation of a systemic approach to PI?

1.5 THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to explore the lived experiences of school principals and parents of children in SS regarding PI in Gauteng's East District.

1.5.1 Sub-aims

- To discover the challenges confronting principals of SS and parents to foster PI through regularly home-school partnership.
- To explore the attempts that SS principals and parents make to foster an involved approach for the educational benefits of children.

- To delve into the practical guideline that can be used to support the development and implementation of a systemic approach to PI in the SS of Gauteng's East District.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Research methodology and design indicates how the research outcomes were acquired in accordance with achieving the study's objectives (Sileyew, 2019). The researcher used a research design to respond to the research inquiries and methodology as a strategy to implement the formulated plan. These concepts are closely related, however, differ in characteristics.

Durrheim (2006) asserts that a research design is a strategic framework for action that presents a connection that links the research questions and the execution or implantation of research. A research methodology refers to the practical "how". A research design ensures results that are genuine and trustworthy and address the goals and objectives of the research (Jansen & Warren, 2020). There are three commonly used research methodologies, namely: qualitative, quantitative and the mixed method.

To address the key study objectives, the study employed qualitative research to engender comprehensive data about PI in the SS of Gauteng East (GE) District as experienced by school principals and parents. Silva (2017: 2) declares that the qualitative method seeks to comprehend the world as it is experienced by people or groups from what they believe and how they act, rather than by measuring it. Qualitative data is regarded by Mohajan (2018) as a form of social activity that places an emphasis on how individuals interpret and analyse their experiences in order to understand social reality.

Creswell (2009) also pointed out that qualitative research aims to study and comprehend persons or categories ascribed to social or human issues. The qualitative methodology was utilised in this study because of its strength, which is the capacity to present intricate textual accounts of how participants experience a specific research problem (Maree, 2016). This methodology was the most suitable to explain and make sense of the systematic examination of occurrences from the perspective of the individual or population being examined in order to produce new ideas and hypotheses (Mohajan, 2018).

1.6.1 The Phenomenological Research Design

The Phenomenological Research Design is viewed by Delve and Limpaecher, (2022) as a descriptive strategy that strive to understand and explore the essential elements of

phenomenon. As for Creswell (2009) this research design consists of strategies and protocols for research that encompasses the progression from general hypotheses to specific techniques for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Majid (2018:1) note that the research design uses evidence-based methods, procedures, and recommendations that provide the instruments and framework for conducting the study. The research design also aids the researcher in obtaining the research results and conclusions (Sileyew, 2019).

Neubauer, Witkop and Varpio (2019) regard phenomenology as a type of qualitative study that concentrates on the research of individuals lived experiences across the globe. Gill (2020) defines phenomenology as the study of phenomena that appear in our consciousness, or how we experience these phenomena. Qutoshi (2018) further asserts that phenomenology increases our ability to see clearly, to express our opinions, to understand the world more broadly, and to analyse life events more deeply.

The main objective of the study was to explore the lived experiences of school principals and parents regarding PI in SS in the GE District and sought to make meaning of those experiences in order to examine PI for future parents in SS through increased comprehension utilising Epstein's model. Neubauer et al. (2019) mentions that phenomenology can answer research questions of the study as we learn from the experiences of others. Williams (2021) indicates that to frame the qualitative phenomenological research methodology was to uncover "what experiences are like." The Phenomenological research approach relies on the participants' own perspective to provide insight into motivation (Burklow, 2018).

1.6.2 Population and Sampling

Rahi (2017) defines population as all individuals that one desires to comprehend and sampling as the method of selecting segments of the population for examination. Gentles, Charles, Ploeg and Mckibbon (2015:1775) also define sampling in qualitative research as the selection of specific data sources from which data is gained to achieve the research objectives. In this regard, the researcher's specific data sources were the school principals and the parents of the learners attending special school because of their capabilities and potential to respond to the research questions.

Sampling is influenced by the qualities of the location e.g., access, time, the vulnerability of participants, and various types of stakeholders (Moser & Korstjen, 2018). Sampling was used to identify the setting and participants who would take part in the study (Ngozwana, 2018).

1.6.2.1 Population

The population for this proposed study comprises the school principals and parents of the learners' attending SS within the Gauteng East District in South Africa.

1.6.2.2 Sampling

Moser and Korstjen (2018) assert that qualitative researcher's samples participants deliberately, which consequently enabled the researcher to plan sampling prior and object to purposive sampling. Purposeful sampling is defined by Crossman (2018) as a non-probability sample chosen in accordance with the population's traits and the study's goal. The researcher chose participants according to the need of the study (Creswell, 2014).

1.6.2.2.1 School Principals

Gauteng East comprises of eight SS which are categorised to accommodate students who require moderate and high-intensive support to meet the needs of their diverse intelligences. The researcher consulted the principals of the eight schools and requested each principal to volunteer and take part in the study. The criterion applied by the researcher was in the following order: the longest serving principal, followed by the second longest serving principal, followed by the third longest serving principal, the fourth, and so on.

1.6.2.2.2 Parents of enrolled SS pupils

When drawing the sample from the population of the parents of children attending SS within the Gauteng East District, the researcher employed the following criterion: the parents of the students enrolled the longest at the eight schools serving children with learning disabilities. The researcher approached the eight schools to access the parents of the longest enrolled students. The researcher acquired the records from the school principals. The parents with the longest enrolled students were approached first to take part in the study, followed by the second longest enrolled student, and so on.

According to Starks and Trinidad (2007:1375), the number of participants who can offer in-depth narratives of their experience of the phenomena in order to identify its essential components dictates the magnitude of the sample in phenomenological investigations. Thus, the sample size was established once data saturation was reached. The study purposively sampled five parents from the selected SS.

1.6.3 Instrumental and data collection techniques

Research instruments and data collection techniques are tools used to collect, measure, and analyse data related to the study. The primary aim of the study was to gather the experiences

of the school principals and parents of children attending SS. There are five main ways to collect data for a qualitative study: observations, interviews, questionnaires, document reviews, and the use of audio-visual resources (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

The data gathering approaches applied in this research consisted of semi-structured, face-to-face interviews. Joyce Epstein's "Six Typology of Parental Involvement" was also adopted as the study's instrument and the instrument was designed using this framework. Semi-structured interviews were considered by the researcher as suitable for exploring the experiences, voices and emotions of informants regarding sensitive issues and enabling the probing of data with clarity.

1.6.3.1 Semi-structured individual interviews

A semi-structured interview consists of a dialogue between the researcher and the participant(s) that is supplemented by follow-up questions, probes, and comments and led by a flexible interview procedure (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2018). As highlighted by Cohen and Crabtree (2006) the researcher appears competent and well-prepared during the interview when the questions are planned in advance. The researcher used an interview guide which offers flexibility within a guiding framework (Creswell, 2009, Wishkoski, 2020). The interviews took place at the sampled SS after informed consent from the school principals and parents were obtained. Each semi-structured interview session with individuals lasted for approximately 45 minutes, and a tape recorder was used to capture the conversations.

1.7 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

According to Brown and Kudyaba (2014), data analysis is the procedure of reviewing, purifying, converting, and modelling data with the purpose of ascertaining relevant information, informing inclusions and promotes decision-making. Oral recordings were used to document the information that was gathered throughout the interviews. The oral recordings were converted into text before data analysis. The information included a verbatim summary of the experiences of the participants.

The data collected were analysed using the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The researcher reviewed all the transcribed accounts to obtain a sense of the overall discussion in order to generate ideas on its significance for further analysis. Struebert and Carpenter (2011:85) refer to this as naïve reading. The researcher recorded the initial reactions of the text.

The methodological interpretations of Van Manen (Streubert and Carpenter, 2011) were originally employed to conduct the inquiry by examining the phenomena of PI of children attending SS of the Gauteng East District. The researcher initiated the procedure of investigation by utilising her own encounters as the starting point for the investigation method. She also utilised bracketing (epoché) to reflect on and limit her bias.

1.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS

According to Golafshani (2003), reliability and validity should be “conceptualised as trustworthiness, rigor and quality in a qualitative paradigm.” In general, constructivists depend on trustworthiness (i.e., credibility, transferability, dependability conformability), and authenticity (i.e. justices, increases knowledge, encourages action), to ensure rigor (Creswell and Miller, 2000). It is beyond the purview of this research to discuss the veracity of these diverse techniques (see Lincoln and Guba (1985). Lincoln and Guba describe a series of approaches that can be utilised to conduct qualitative research that achieves the requirements they outline. The researcher presents the techniques employed to ensure trustworthiness in Table 1.1 below:

Table 1.1: *Techniques for establishing trustworthiness* (Adapted from Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Technique	Techniques employed in the study
Prolonged engagement	The researcher engaged with the participants for a period of at least two months collecting data, and closed data collection on achievement of data saturation.
Triangulation	To verify the data, two data collection sources were employed. Individual interviews with school principals was triangulated with the interviews done with the parents of children attending SS.
Member-checking	Continuous, formal or informal checking of data with interviewees was carried out during and at the end of an interview. The purpose of the exercise was to test interpretations.

Thick description	Descriptive, relevant data was accessed and used to present a vicarious experience for readers; the participants' verbatim quotes are used to represent their experiences.
Purposive sampling	Purposive sampling using extreme exposure to the phenomenon of interest was applied to select the participants.
Audit trail	Interview guides, notes, and raw data recordings and transcripts were retained.

1.9 RESEARCH ETHICS

This research was guided by the four philosophical principles as identified by Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter (2006:67-68):

- **Autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons**

To uphold the confidentiality of both the respondents and the institution in this research study, the names of participants were withheld and inferences to the participants will be avoided.

- **Non-maleficence**

The researcher made certain that no harm befalls the participants by understanding that non-maleficence is rooted in the moral intent to abstain from harming or imposing risk of harm.

- **Beneficence**

The benefits of this research provided clear accounts to the participants in the participant information sheet.

- **Justice**

Justice was upheld by using fair and respondent selection processes. Secondly, on the basis of the results of this research study, the participants were able to profit from the findings of the research as on acquiring the level of multimodal digital abilities for online learning, interventions and procedures were proposed. Participants were issued with an information sheet and an informed consent sheet which acted as a disclaimer, prior to the commencement

of the data collection. The information sheet outlined the details of the research to the participants which can be seen below, Salkind (2016):

- The purpose of the research.
- Information about the researcher.
- The length of time the researcher will be participating in the research.
- An offer to withdraw from the study at any moment and for any cause.
- Potential advantages to both the researcher and society.
- Guarantee that the findings will be kept strictly confidential.
- How the researcher can obtain a copy of the findings.
- How to contact the researcher if the participant has any queries.

The study was presented to the Unisa College of Education Ethical Review Committee for approval. The researcher obtained permission to conduct the study from the Basic Education Department and acquired ethical clearance and permission from the university. Due to the nature of this study, it did not carry any adverse risks to the participants, except a ± 45 -minute time dedication. The participants' names were not recorded anywhere and no one, apart from the researcher knew about their involvement in this study. Furthermore, the structure of the interview schedule (Appendix D) allowed that participants were not identifiable by their responses. Pseudonyms were used to differentiate between the participants. The data that had been recorded and transcribed was stored in a personal password-protected computer that remained with the researcher and will be discarded five years after the study has been completed.

1.10 LIMITATION AND DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

1.10.1 Limitations

The researcher being an outsider limited what was revealed in the study and hampered the research results. Another limitation was that the study was limited to five SS located only in the Ekurhuleni Gauteng East District. The study collected data from the schools' principals, the parents, but not teachers who might be valuable in promoting academic success through interactions with their students' parents. The participation of the study was not compulsory

which cannot be overlooked due to non-voluntary participants who might have rendered rich data.

1.10. 2 Delimitations

Acknowledging the limitations identified in this proposed study, the rigour and trustworthiness of the research process ensured the collection of rich descriptions and sound interpretations of data.

1.11 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

1.11.1 Parent

A parent can be a legal, caregiver/guardian who is responsible and supporting all learners' areas of development and education, both formally and informally.

1.11.2 Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is when parents are active participants empowered by the schools to endorse educational endeavours of their children at home and school.

1.11.3 Gauteng East District

A conglomerate serving local educational institutions in Ekurhuleni East district of South Africa's Gauteng.

1.11.4 Special Schools

Special schools are schools equipped to provide specialised education programme to cater for learners with high-intensive support needs.

1.11.5 Inclusive Education

Inclusive education refers to the realisation of individual's civil rights regardless of their developmental flaws in all spheres of life.

1.11.6 Individual Educational Plan

A document unanimously drawn up collaboratively by relevant stakeholders that contains prepared instructions that a student's needs to master.

1.12 CHAPTER OUTLINE

1.12.1 CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

This chapter focused on the introduction and context of the research topic, "**Parental Involvement in Special Schools of Gauteng East District as experienced by school**

principals and teachers.” The statement of the problem, research questions, aims and objectives, research design and methodology, data analysis and the definition of concepts are contained in this chapter. Ethical measures and a brief conceptual framework were also noted in this chapter.

1.12.2 CHAPTER 2: The Conceptual Framework

The researcher looked through a variety of sources that gave descriptions, summaries, and assessments of the works under consideration in accordance with the researchers' goals. Relevant sources included articles, journals, theses, books, as well as policy documents. This chapter focused on the conceptual framework that framed the study based on the notion of Parental Involvement in Special Schools of GE District.

1.12.3 CHAPTER 3: Research Methodology and Design

This chapter presented the methods and procedures that were used in this study, comprising of a description of the sample, research instruments, data analysis and quality criteria.

1.12.4 CHAPTER FOUR: Findings

This chapter reported the data analysis results and presented the findings emerging from the data generated in relation to the researcher's aims and objectives of the study.

1.12.5 CHAPTER FIVE: Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter presented the summary of the research findings, the conclusion drawn and recommendations for further studies.

1.13 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This study has outlined the focus and overview within which the experiences of school principals and parents of children attending SS of GE District to be examined. In this study, an introduction was given followed by the description of the statement of the problem. The rationale of the study, conceptual model, research problems, aims and objectives, research design and methodology, as well as data collection and aspects pertaining to ethical measures were documented in this research study. The definitions of terms and a chapter outline were included to give the overview of the structured and conceptualised research inquiry.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This literature review addresses the concept of Special Schools followed by a global view and South Africa's historical overview of PI in special schools. The aim of this literature review was to explore the main role of PI in the education of children admitted and placed in SS. Related research is included with the critical analysis of the methodologies used, the population and sample used, as well as the findings. This enabled the researcher to present

the conceptual framework narratively and graphically in order to make evident the links existing between concepts arrived at, as a literature viewpoint for the research study (Shikalepo, 2020).

Legal regulatory policies such as, White Paper 6, Department of Education (2001, 2005, 2007, & 2010), Individual Disabilities Education Act (2004), Screening Identification Assessment and Support (2014), United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (1994, 2009) which paved sufficient development of Special Schools (SS) and Special Schools Resource Centres (SSRC) are discussed. The historical perspective of PI is unpacked, including a comparison between global research and South African research. This literature review builds a foundation to conceptualise research data (Buthelezi, 2020), and locate the study to form its context to provide insight into previous works. Although a great emphasis in educational research has been given to schools, but relatively few researchers have shown any interest in the parental involvement in SS (Fylling & Sanduin, 2006).

Family-school partnerships have been the subject of numerous cosmopolitan studies, yet limited research has been conducted regarding the involvement of families in SS and possible barriers that may hinder them from getting involved in partnering with their child's school (Lombard, 2007). In accordance with custom, teachers wait to start their careers in education until they have completed formal technical professional training or equivalent work experience; in contrast, parents have no opportunity to get such formal training (Phasha, Shah & Ijaz, 2021).

For many years the voices of parents have been mute, and their participation has been minimal (KZN DoE, 2010). The skills and knowledge associated with PI, especially for learners with learning impairments, are lost or under-utilised (Singh & Banerjee, 2019).

Florian and Sretenov (2021:15) affirm that parents need opportunities to educate themselves on what is legally mandated, what alternatives are available, and what opportunities are offered in settings that promote and enable their active participation in the education of their children. This study explored the experiences of PI in SS from the experiences of school principals and parents.

2.2 A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON SPECIAL SCHOOLS

After World War II and the Civil Rights Movement, parents began establishing advocacy groups to aid in raising awareness of the educational requirements of children with

disabilities to the forefront (Seder, 2015). There has been international consensus over the past 25 years that all children, including those with learning difficulties, have an equal right to receive a formal education both individually and/or in a group setting. In the United States, the first formal attempts to offer specialized instruction of any kind to students with disabilities began in the nineteenth century (Kauffman et al, 2018) and was directed by the Rehabilitation Act, Public Law No.93-127, 87 Stat, 375 of 1973 which was regarded as the first known legislation addressing special education and individuals with handicaps (Francisco et al, 2020).

The Individual Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a United States federal statute that supports special education and associated accounts for children and youth with disabilities (Lipkin & Okamoto, 2015). This federal law was formerly known as the Education of Handicapped Children Act, passed in 1975. This law guarantees each individual with disabilities a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) (Burke, 2013). According to IDEA, each child with a disability should have an Individual Education Program (IEP) which provides necessary related services, accommodation, and modifications. In 2004, IDEA was again reauthorized and became the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA). The current role of SS, as stipulated by Merrigan and Senior (2021) is a provision of a tailored-made, individualised educational programme for pupils with a diverse and increasingly complicated spectrum of SS requirements.

The premier conference on special education was the "World Conference of Education for Special Needs," which was convoked and designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO) in the Salamanca Statement, which highlighted that educational institutions must meet every pupil's requirements in order to accomplish the aim of "Education for All" (Rossa, 2017). Donohue and Bornman (2014) posit that the Education for All (EFA) initiative, initially proposed by the international community in 1990, signalled a worldwide movement toward ensuring that all children, youth, and adults have access to adequate basic education (UNESCO, 1990).

The Salamanca Statement, issued in 1994 as a consequence of a UNESCO World Conference on Special Needs Education, was the first worldwide document to advocate for the acknowledgment of inclusive education. Inclusive education for children in SS was highlighted in multiple notable worldwide declarations, such as the World Declaration for

Education for All (United Nations, 2008), the UNESCO Salamanca Statement, the Framework for Action (1994) and the Dakar Framework for Action (2000).

Specific legislations were put in place by many countries, such as Nigeria, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. According to the African Child Policy Forum, Nigeria became the primary country in sub-Saharan Africa to have a comprehensive special education policy incorporated into its national education policy as early as 1988 (Tesemma, 2011).

Malawi adopted the Handicapped Persons Act in 1972, which contained provision to enhance the nation's provision of care, support, and education for people with disabilities. The 1996 Children's Statute in Uganda makes special consideration for the rights of children with disabilities and ensured them equitable access to educational opportunities.

Policies such as the Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC) and Universal Primary Education (UPE) favoured families of disabled persons in Uganda (Moyi, 2012). The National Policy on Education of Zambia (1996), *Educating our Future*, declares education a right for every person in Zambia. The recommendations suggested in the report by the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS), and the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) in 1997, led to the creation of the White Paper Six on Special Needs Education: *Building an Inclusive Education and Training System*. Naicker (2018) pointed out that in the developing world of inclusive education; South Africa was the sole state that had introduced Educational White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education. The study of Chimhenga (2014) established that parents had adverse outlook regarding the implementation of IE for children with learning disabilities in the elementary schools in Zimbabwe.

South Africa intended to address the imbalances and inequities in the education sector, whose perspective had been substantially preserved in the remnants of the Apartheid regime, after attaining democracy in 1994 (Koch, 2020). In the outlook of White Paper 6 (WP6), accepting that all children have learning requirements, recognising the diversity of learning capabilities and needs, and acknowledging that all children can learn with appropriate support are all components of inclusive education (Murungi, 2015).

The SIAS policy is targeted at ameliorating the access to high-quality education for vulnerable and removing barriers to learning for those who face them, such as students in regular and SS classes. This policy reinforces the execution of the main principles of Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2014:3). Paseka and Schwab (2020: 254) see inclusive

education as a reaction to the Human Rights Movement's demand for equal rights for all individuals in all spheres of public life, regardless of gender, colour, socioeconomic background, or handicap.

Most countries have embraced inclusive education and are evidently committed to bring about inclusion of disadvantaged children on every level at best. This is proven in the legislations they formulated and reauthorized for improvements, which emphasises quality, equitable, inclusive and lifelong education for all individuals. For instance, Hauwadhanasuk, Karnas and Zhuang (2019) noted that in China, Thailand and Turkey in the mid-to-late 1900s, special education gained attention to respond to the recognition of human rights. They also noted that the governments of these countries have enhanced public regulations to foster and develop the needs of special education services for children with disabilities (Hauwadhanasuk et. al., 2019:29).

2.3 SPECIAL SCHOOLS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

Special Schools (SS) occupy a unique and distinctive position in the educational system, offering specialist support to children with a spectrum of intricate, severe and profound learning obstacles (O'Connor Bones, Bates, Finlay & Campbell, 2022). The beginning of the new political era in 1994 resulted in all individuals, regardless of race, should benefit from equal educational opportunities (Ngubane, 2019). These opportunities included giving children with learning disabilities the privilege of receiving education. One of the strategies to strengthen SS noted by Education White Paper (EWP 6) is an evaluation that will be determined by the available resources within the system, and how the current resources and capabilities may be strengthened and modified to help create a system that is inclusive (DoE, 2005).

2.3.1 The role of Special Schools in Inclusive Education

By accepting the inclusion approach, the DoE (2001:7) recognising that the learners who are most susceptible to impediment to learning and exclusion in South Africa (SA) are those who have historically been referred 'learners with special educational needs; i.e., learners with disabilities and impairments'. Special schools played a major factor in reversing the tendency of educational exclusion during a time when children with disabilities were typically viewed as being uneducable (Lassig, Poed, Mann, Saggars, Carrington & Mavropoulou, 2022). White Paper 6 (WP6) stipulated an inclusive paradigm as a mechanism that manages the multiple needs of all learners in a singular educational system (Adele, 2017). The over

hauling of the process of identifying, evaluation and enrolment of learners in SS, and its substitution by one that acknowledges the crucial part played by all stakeholders (teachers, learners, district officials and parents) serve as a key strategy and lever to establishing an inclusive approach (DoE, 2001). Involving parents and the community members in the school activities and services is determined by the SA DoE (2007:2) as one of the principles underpinning an inclusive education system.

Inclusive Education (IE) is considered as a child right policy measure and a crucial component of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) as the global initiative to guarantee that all children have access to high-quality education (Florian & Sretenov, 2021). There is a worldwide consensus, directed by the United Nations, to support inclusive educational models and to pinpoint obstacles to all children's learning and development (Dube, Ncube, Mapuvire, Ndlovu, Ncube & Mlothswa, 2021). A study by Merrigan and Senior (2021:14) illustrates that one of the major obstacles to recognizing the beneficial effects that SS may have in an inclusive educational system is the public perception and misunderstanding of the value and purpose of SS.

Dube et al, (2021) regard stigma as one of the fundamental reasons that makes it challenging for people to receive education. Mantey (2020:35) stated that parents of children with disabilities must be involved in and supportive of inclusive education programs at all stages of the educational process in order for them to be implemented successfully. This is also attested to by Paseka and Schwab (2020) who regard parents' attitude towards school programmes and putting inclusive education in practice as a key element to promote inclusion. Inclusion pledges to eradicate inequality within academic settings by promoting inclusive classrooms teachings in accessible educational settings with sufficient assistance (Ydo, 2020).

A special school functioning is governed by laws and regulations which holds an essential role in ensuring the execution of an inclusive education system (DoE, 2014).

According to the DoE (2014), Special Schools are guided by the following guidelines that aim to assist them to deliver quality education and support:

- Screening Identifying Assessment and Support (SIAS).
- Guidelines for Inclusive Teaching and Learning 2010.
- Guidelines for Responding to Learners Diversity in the Classroom through Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, 2011.

However, there are no precise regulations or laws that can be relied on to characterise PI in SS (NCSE, 2009). A study conducted by (Chimhenga, 2014; Mpofu, 2004) revealed that there were no obligatory policies and legislations for the emergent of inclusive education in elementary schools for children with disabilities of Zimbabwe. Eskay, Eskay and Uma (2012:899) also indicated the absence of legal mandates in Nigeria which constitutes denying parents their legal right to due process, and as a result, they are unable to file litigation against any sort of segregation against their children in terms of enrolment, initial screening, comprehensive assessment, subsequent placement, personalised instructions and service delivery.

While Zimbabwe has embraced inclusive education, its inclusive education is not governed by an explicit policy, which leaves stakeholders, particularly parents and teachers, unclear about what outcomes to anticipate from inclusive education and what part they should play in advancing the relatively new practice in the country's educational system (Magumise, 2017). Mutasa, Goronga, and Gatsi (2013) noted that in Zimbabwe, the most common kind of PI is participation in doing work for the school and attending meetings. Under collaboration with parents/caregivers in the DoE (2010:17) it is stated that effective arrangements were made for involved parents in all facets of their children's school existence and alternatives that had to be made. The researcher thus explored the effective arrangements made by SS in GE District to involve parents in the schooling endeavours of their children.

2.3.2 Special Schools as Resource Centres

The description of the Special Schools as Resource Centres (SSRC) function in Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education: Creating an Inclusive Education and Training System raises the possibility of a fundamental overhaul of the current framework and a shift in perspective (DoE, 2005). Special Schools will be strengthened to function as resource centres in order , to offer specific knowledge and assistance critically professional support in curriculum, assessment and instruction to neighbouring schools, especially full-service schools (DoE, 2014, 2001:9). Special schools identified as SSRC, must function under the auspices of the District Based Support Team (DBST), and provide support to other schools (DoE, 2014).

According to the National Council for Special Education (2019) the amount of students' medical, behavioural, and care demands exceeds what ordinary schools are able to sustain. Resource centres are special education facilities within some mainstream schools where

children with disabilities may obtain specialised teaching and additional resources to facilitate their learning (Banks & Zuurmond, 2015). The South African DoE (2001: 29) stipulates that SS and its settings will be converted into resource centres and incorporated into district support teams in order to offer specialised professional guidance in curriculum, assessment and teaching to neighbouring schools, especially full-service schools. Bank and Zuurmond (2015) also indicate a clear, distinct observation of all observed schools that are not equipped to cater for students with disabilities in terms of physical accessibility (ramps or toilet facilities).

Services, such as educational resources for students with disabilities; transportation; speech, physical and occupational therapy; counselling for students, school staff and parents; and medical aid should be available and located within the school or community for the effectiveness of SS and inclusive education. The specialists and the schools include families to execute a collaborative, all-encompassing approach to services that can satisfy the complex and varied needs of vulnerable children (Florian & Sretenov, 2021). The provision of education coupled with particular therapies and support, normally unavailable in the conventional school setting, is indicative of the integrated knowledge in education and allied health competence that certain children need on a regular, if not daily basis (O'Connor Bones, et. al, 2022).

2.3.3 Resources in SS

The following resources serve as crucial aspects in the process of education and growth of children with disabilities in SS:

2.3.3.1 Infrastructure

It cannot be denied that SS should fulfil the facilities and infrastructure according to the needs of children at the school. Infrastructure is reckoned by Kapur (2019) as comprehensive and consists of a number of aspects such as, playgrounds, library and toilet facilities, laboratories, computer centres, technology, machinery, tools and equipment that serve as important elements of ensuring a suitable and pleasant learning environment for students.

The field of educational infrastructure draws on many regulations, beginning at the architectural design and ergonomics; and proceeding to education policies and pedagogy (Barrett, Treves, Shmis, Ambasz & Ustinova, 2018). The DoE (2007) concurs with the abovementioned authors indicating that architects with experience in constructing buildings structures for people with physical limitations are consulted when developing or remodelling

SS. Infrastructure is essential to social functioning because it has a direct influence on social wellbeing, revenue, education and health (Agarwal & Steela, 2016). A complete physical accessibility, including ramps and spaces for the manoeuvrability of all students, including blocks, classroom space, play areas and hotels, where applicable, must be provided according to prescribed accessibility requirements (DoE, 2007).

Toilets and basins in schools should be modified to cater for learners with physical disabilities and who are of short stature. Agarwal and Steela (2016) touched on the important aspect “electricity,” which they regard as an essential service for people with disabilities; it also powers life support equipment and devices that provide mobility, community and independence.

2.3.3.2 Funding

Learning Teaching Support Material (LTSM) funding comprises of learning and teaching materials that offer quality education that optimise learners’ multiple learning developments. A provision for individual learners' costs by province varies widely: from R11.000 per annum in Gauteng; to R23 000 in Free State; and R28 000 in the Western Cape (DoE, 2001). In the context of the present sluggish growth rate of the South African economy at the moment and relatively large slice of the budget that is allotted to education in nominal substantial portions, it is extremely improbable that additional public funding in real terms will be given to the sector over the upcoming years (DoE, 2001).

There are fundraising activities that the school in conjunction with the School Governing Body (SGB) propose and implement for the shortfalls the school might experience. These fundraising activities enhance parent-teacher involvement whereby both parties support the school for the interest of the learner. Each year the school together with the SGB conducts the Annual General Meeting to address parents about the schools’ budget, from fundraising activities to funding donors, and DoE fund provision records. SS must comply with all regulations and laws relating to financial matters, including keeping track all donations made to the schools (DoE, 2007).

2.3.3.3 Teaching and Support Staff

Learners requiring high support needs should be under the care of professionals (teaching/non-teaching) that possess characteristics that employ patience, pastoral care, communication skills, collaboration, professionalism, flexibility and love. UWA (2018) regard trustworthiness as one of the attributes teachers in SS should have, in order to

constantly build on the trust and respect of parents as well as learners. The DoE (2007) outlined that all staff in SS must undergo a rigorous screening to determine their appropriateness for working with children with special needs. Adequate knowledge of the different types of disabilities and specific needs of learners should be enhanced through on-going quality training.

The DoE (2001) emphasises the need for extensive training of teachers so that they may acquire skills to teach learners with disabilities. All staff should also acquire in-depth knowledge towards the philosophy of inclusive education, the application of enacted legislations and the management procedures of students with disabilities. Staffing (pre-service and in-service) training about learners with disabilities is vital in SS for the benefit of the learners.

Teachers and support staff in SS must be able to wear multiple caps to ameliorate the education of learners with disabilities. All teaching staff should hold a qualification, at least an undergraduate degree or a diploma which includes training on inclusive education (DoE, 2007). Teachers who are employed to the school without an official accreditation in SS or inclusive education must undertake such training immediately. Appointed teachers may enrol in universities which offer qualification courses on special education and inclusive education programmes.

Article 8 of Law No. 4 of 2005 stipulates that teachers must possess academic credentials, proficiencies, and a teaching certificate, be in good bodily and mental health, and be capable of realizing the objectives of national education (Simorangkir, 2021). Vuran and Olcay Gul (2012) believed that the successful use of suitable teaching and assessment techniques was crucial for the achievement of individuals with developmental disabilities. Adaptability and differentiation of the curriculum knowledge was one of the key strategies to foster meaningful teaching and learning for learners with disabilities. The SS could produce educational resources in braille and make them accessible via a lending system to other schools in the district (DoE, 2001).

SS offer LTSM material that teachers use to accommodate multiple specific needs of learners. The DoE (2014: 21) highlights the access to a range of support services mentioned previously, including a nurse, as services that are required by SS who have a higher level of needs.

2.3.3.4 Transportation

According to the DoE (2007:18) SS the following must be catered to for transportation purposes:

- SS must provide transport to and from school, for all students who require it in order to be able to access education.
- Daily transportation should be offered for students who reside a maximum of forty kilometres away from the school, while those who reside more than an hour's drive away from school should be accommodated in residences within the school throughout the five school days.
- All vehicles used for transportation must comply with the highest safety requirements, be consistently maintained, and be inspected by the school leadership on a regular basis.
- All vehicles must be appropriately licenced and be driven by licenced drivers.
- All vehicles must provide easy access to all learners, including those with physical disabilities.
- Schools should cater for learners' transportation to attend special events at school.
- To improve learner safety, learners who use transportation to school must have adult support and supervision. All those involved must be trained in first aid and in dealing with the particular needs of students who are being transported.

2.3.4 Admission at Special Schools

The initial education of learners with disabilities was in SS due to the denial of educational opportunities children with disabilities experienced (De Souza, 2021). According to the DoE (2001: 9), accessibility to education was extremely difficult for students with disabilities. It was discovered that students with disabilities were educationally misplaced, thus the inclusive enrolment of learners to SS was approved using the national policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS), DoE (2014). This policy has stipulated that learners requiring high support needs may be admitted to SS. The DoE (2007:21) indicates that principals of SS should manage the amount of admitted learners to provide the professional staff sufficient time to assist schools, teachers and learners. The DoE (2007: 7) provides the following criteria for Quality Education and Support in SS admission:

- Every SS needs to devote careful consideration to the particular needs of children so that it can effectively and efficiently accommodate for with the available material and human resources.
- SS consist of limited space therefore it can only admit assessed learners who are in need of high levels of support.
- Admission to a SS should be regarded as the last resort for a learner, where support in the areas of specialisation suits the learners’ needs.
- The learners must undergo a screening and assessment process using the National Strategy for Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support as the baseline tool, before being considered for placement.
- The DBST must acknowledge and approve all admissions.
- No learner with extremely high assistance requirements may be denied admission due to the severity of those needs.

2.3.4.1 Admission procedure at Special Schools

The Republic of South Africa RSA (2020) provides a clear and detailed admission procedure to learners with disabilities attending SS in the Gauteng province in the following manner:

- The SIAS policy offers standardized process support to all students who need it in order to increase their involvement and participation in inclusion in school . A step in this process is SS admittance.

The admission to a SS occurs in two ways.

Table 2.1: *The admission procedure of learners with disabilities to SS in the Gauteng Province, according to the RSA (2020):*

Parents request admission to a SS from the onset	Learners start in an ordinary school
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A student is born with a disability that requires significant levels of support at school e.g., a severe physical disability, deafness, blindness, autism with high support needs, a profound intellectual impairment etc. ○ In order to submit the necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The teacher determines the learners ‘challenges and works with the School Based Support Team (SBST) to support the learners. ○ The DBST performs further official examinations to validate a disability and assistance needs if the SBST

<p>medical/diagnostic results, parents collaborate with the District Based Support Team (DBST).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provincial legislation (DBE 123b form, SIAS) formalizes placement in the relevant SS. 	<p>support is ineffective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The parents collaborate with the DBST to supply the required documentation. ○ Provincial legislation (DBE 123b form, SIAS) formalizes placement in the relevant SS.
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Based on the data from the Educational Management Information System (EMIS) (RSA, 2020), the following is the distribution of SS learner enrolment across all provincial departments of education.

Table 2.2: *Special Schools enrolment across all provinces.*

Provinces	No of Special Schools	No of Learners in Special Schools	% of Learners in Special Schools	% of Total No of Special Schools in Province	Per Learner Expenditure
Eastern Cape	41	6 483	0.28%	10.79%	13 746
Free State	19	3 127	0.40%	5.00%	22 627
Gauteng	96	25 451	1.62%	25.26%	11 049
KwaZulu-Natal	58	7 631	0.28%	15.26%	21 254
Mpumalanga	15	2 692	0.29%	3.95%	17 839
Northern Cape	8	1 392	0.68%	2.11%	15 749
Northern Province	19	4 250	0.23%	5.00%	16 609
North West	42	4 364	0.46%	11.05%	13 015
Western Cape	82	9 213	0.96%	21.58%	28 635
Totals	380	64 603	0.52%	100.00%	17 838

It is evident from the above data that Gauteng consists of a higher number of SS as well as the number of learners enrolled at the SS. The National Audit Office (NAO), DoE (2019) reported that in England, between January 2014 and January 2018, the number of children in SS and alternative provision increased by 20.2%. According to this report, the probability of the reason for this growth includes greater PI in decisions about the choice of school and the capacity of children with high needs in mainstream schools. The survey by Deng, Poon-Mcbrayer and Farnsworth, (2001:293) reported that 5.164 million persons with disabilities were estimated to exist in China amid its population of approximately 1.1 billion, with

debilitating disorders finding to affect about 5% of the population comprising of visual, hearing and speech impairments, physical disabilities, mental retardation, psychiatric disabilities and multiple disabilities.

2.3.5 Classifications of Disabilities in Special Schools

The Gauteng East region is where the researcher aims to generate data from, which consists of eight SS that accommodate specific needs that learners manifest. SS in the Gauteng East District accommodates learners who require high support needs: nature and frequency.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) (2001:228) defined a disability as an umbrella concept for impairments, functions, limitations and engagement restrictions. The last twenty years of democratic governance in South Africa (SA) recorded notable changes that addresses disabilities (KZN DoE, 2016). The Constitution of the Republic of SA 1996 adopted outlaws of discrimination on the basis of disability and guarantees the right to equality for persons with disabilities. Some students manifest severe difficulties due to the nature of their disability and some students manifest physical, sensory or mental impairments at birth while others may develop a disability after birth, that substantially hinders their daily functioning as their peers without a disability. Disabilities in the SS of Gauteng East District can be classified as follows:

- Physical disability- the limitation of physical functioning such as, walking, climbing, running, lifting, etc.
- Intellectual disability (severe, profound and mild to moderate intelligence) - limitation in cognitive functioning and skills adaptations.
- Hearing disability- comprises of partial hearing loss, deaf-blind (both hearing and visual impairment) and deafness.
- Visual disability- constitutes low vision and total blindness.
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) - affects communication, social relations and play behaviour.
- Cerebral Palsy- affects movement, posture, speech and hand functioning disability due to brain damage.
- Learning disability- comprises of specific learning disabilities (reading, writing and arithmetic), and the ability to interpret visual and auditory stimuli.

2.4 SOUTH AFRICAN LEGISLATIONS AND POLICIES IN CONTEXT

The legislations and policies in context noted below explicate the home-school involvement in the education of children. The aim is to outline the context that links parental and community involvement in the application of an inclusive education system in the SS of South Africa. The modification of education in SS in South Africa has massively been shaped by the motion towards resource centres to combat segregation and discrimination exemption. Consequently, it is within this context that home-school involvement and partnership should be re-organised.

2.4.1 The Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) of South Africa

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) maintains that every individual has the right to a basic education and environment that is beneficial. This enunciates that, for this research study, parents should certain that their children acquire the right to basic education in an environment that caters for their learning development.

2.4.2 The South African School Act 84 of 1996

The Republic of South Africa's educational system is covered by this statute. According to this statute, parents are obligated to make sure that every student for whom they are responsible attends school. A parent is defined by this act as: (a) the learner's parent or guardian; (b) the person lawfully granted custody of a learner; or (c) the individual who agrees to carry out the duties of a person described in (a) and (b) with regard to the learners' education at school. This act also subjects nominated members of the governing body to comprise a member or members with children enrolled at the school. Through this act, it is evident that parents must be involved in the education of their children.

2.4.3 The Education White Paper 6

In this paper, it was made clear that SS will be strengthened rather than abolished (DoE, 2001). This paper acknowledges that learning transpires in formal and informal contexts and structures, as well as at home and in the community (DoE, 2001:6). Restructuring of teaching methods, curriculum and the environment are key concepts in this paper to cater for the needs of all learning. Moreover, (DoE, 2001:21) affirms that a place and role of SS in an inclusive education system is major, and greater awareness must be taken into consideration to raise the overall quality of education that SS provide.

The development of an inclusive society will depend on public acceptance of inclusion and public understanding of these issues. Special attention will be given to mobilizing community

support for the conversion to an inclusive society of SS to resource centres (DoE, 2001). This policy regards the home (families) and community as significant elements in supporting and strengthening SS.

2.4.4 Guidelines to Ensure Quality Education and Support in Special Schools and Resource Centres

These guidelines support the notion that parents have a particular role to promote inclusive education in SS. They must provide educational guidance and support, psychological and emotional well-being, and support to families of learners at the school as a support structure (DoE, 2007). Individual assistance programs for students should place a strong emphasis on learning techniques for cognitive growth and academic performance (DoE, 2007). Schools must engage with the community to certain that students are equipped for reintegration into the community (DoE, 2007). These guidelines place an emphasis on the elements of parent and community involvement.

2.4.5 The National Policy on Screening, Identifying, Assessment and Support (SIAS)

This policy outlines the roles of parents/caregivers in the Screening, Assessment, Identifying, and Support (SIAS) process and affirms that parents should have the freedom to contact teachers to inquire about their child's development (DoE, 2014). Its aim is to increase underprivileged students' access to high-quality education and those who encounter learning obstacles. It doesn't compromise the role of parents in its process as it articulates that parent's roles are compulsory.

The DoE (2008) justifies that this document provided a strategic policy framework for SIAS of all students in the school system who encounter obstacles to learning and development, including those who are presently enrolled at SS. The strategy on SIAS coordinates with other education department programs that seek to support school managers, teachers, districts, and parents. Moreover, the strategy also authorises parents and teachers to collaboratively formulate learners individual support plans/ programmes.

2.5 THE IMPACT OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

In the past, parents have always taken an active role in their children's education. Before the idea of schools, they were in charge of providing for the education of their children. From birth, parents teach their children informally by helping them stand up, sit down, converse, and instil good morals and household values. PI is defined by Singh and Banerjee (2019:305) as having consciousness of and involvement in schoolwork, comprehending the relationship

between parental abilities and student academic achievements as well as dedication to regularly sharing information with the school concerning student's development.

The South African School Act (SASA) 84 of 1996 and its amendments include legislation on the concept of PI in education which emphasises that parents play a significant impact in the educational experiences of their children (Gibbs, Sahin, Mapatwana, 2012). It is through this act that the formation of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) was acknowledged in order to establish parents to take actively participate in their children's academic growth (Mathebula, 2017; McKenzie, Shanda & Aldersey, 2021).

In a three-year cycle, parents of children in the school were elected by parents to partake in the SGB to serve the needs of all learners at the school. Involving parents in the education of their children is one of the most effective measures in bettering learner's educational performances (Adele, 2017). This is also attested by Okeke (2014:2) who anticipates that although the participation of parents in governance and leadership in school is paramount, it is the parental academic involvement in their children's schooling that appears to be more efficient. Caño, Cape, Cardosa, Miot, Pitogo and Quinio (2016) assert that deficiency in PI greatly affected the educational development and accomplishment of student's performance. Jaiswal (2017) further eluded that parent's practices remain very beneficial in promoting positive achievement and effective outcomes.

Jaiswal (2017) asserted that in the present educational policy climate, parents not only play an essential role in developing connections between communities and schools but also play a decision-making role. The author further defined PI as every encounter a parent has with their child or at school that fosters the development of the child. In this regard, Ceka and Murati (2016:61) mentioned that when parents involve themselves, they usually connect and operate in accordance with their own parental attitudes, which are communicated through the indication of shared discretion and by means of exchanging information regarding the children's capabilities, and their overall educational capacity which navigates them in the direction of succeeding over the learning education as an intricate process.

According to the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) (2016: 7), triumphant PI in the child's education entails active, on-going involvement of a parent in the education of his or her child. One facet of PI that has a large impact on student's achievement is parental expectations. Students accomplish more when their parents anticipate more (Caño et al, 2016). Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) attests to Fan attempt to prevent drop-out,

exclusion and learner breakdown depends on PI. The IDEA includes PI as one of the fundamental principles and firmly believes that parents should participate in the educational process (Avent, Makara, Larwin & Erickson, 2019). Delgado (2019) points out that PI is essential for student development and offers benefits such as: a decrease in absenteeism and academic performance increases and helps improve student behaviour in the classroom or school.

Without PI, (students with disabilities are in peril to receive insufficient and inappropriate services (Burke, 2013). Adele (2017) indicates that research relating to the involvement of parents of learners who experience learning disabilities is exceptionally restricted. Phasha, et. al., (2021: 189) discovered that parents were 85% shareholders in their children's development, so they require training to improve their knowledge, skills, and competencies on both the natural (developmental) and nurturing (educational) aspects of children's lives, pedagogical strategies, assessment and evaluation mechanisms, the whole child approach in an inclusive environment, technology and its use, research and evidence-based practices on parents participation, and more.

Parents are a fundamental component in the partnership-based approach and should be included in the decision makings concerning their child's education, so that they may assist reinforcing the lessons/skills taught in school and at home (Agrawal, Barrio, Kressler, Hsiao and Shankland, 2019). Parents are consulted during the identification process and provide consent throughout the process of the learner's learning development. Any decision regarding a child requires the informed consent from parents. The IDEA guarantees parents' informed consent (before any evaluations or services) is provided by the student's parents. They must be informed and provide consent in writing before the school can proceed with any interventions. By involving themselves in their children's educational life, parents exhibit that schooling is valuable of investment and commitment (NECT, 2016).

Barriers such as, lack of time, knowledge, and financial status have created the necessity to consider potential solutions to empower parents to become more actively involved in their children's educational development (Newman, Northcutt, Farmer & Black, 2019). The absence of pre-service and in-service education regarding home-school partnerships is seen by Epstein (2005) as one of the reasons why family and community partnerships programming is not thoroughly developed at all school levels. Oranga, Obuba, Sore and Bornnet (2022:414) maintains that the lack of knowledge and skills, truancy of legal/policy

framework on PI, and the lack of open lines of communication between parents and school personnel were barriers that hampered PI in education. Epstein (2002) further argues that there is a misunderstanding as to who is responsible for taking the first initiative between the school and parents.

The researcher aims to gather comprehensive data through the experiences of the school principals and parents of SS in the GE District on the measures taken to accommodate a holistic involvement of the school-home.

2.5.1 Parental Involvement in Individual Support/Educational Plans (ISP/IEP)

In inclusive education, students with learning disabilities may access the curriculum through adapted or individual plans (MacKichan & Harkins, 2013). The involvement and participation of parents is necessary in the process of establishing an Individual Education Programme (IEP) that facilitates PI for several parents of children with learning difficulties (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). The IDEA (1994) regard individualised education as a requirement for every child with a disability who has been contemplated eligible to receive an IEP. Chitiyo and Dzenga (2021) asserted that the IEP specifies the child's development functioning, the services, accommodations and modifications that need to be constructed based on the students' individuality. Each IEP should comprise of detailed information about the student's current level of academics and functional performance ranging from long-term goals to short-term objectives that serve as interventions to assist the student's progress on the support provided (Kovač-Cerović, Javanović & Pavlović-Babić, 2016).

In SS parents and teachers must collaborate to make certain that children with disabilities receive suitable services which primarily include collaboration through IEP meetings (Burke, 2013). The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004) which is a European act in Ireland, alluded that IEPs should be designed and revised by educators collaborating with parents, students, and, if required, other people concerned in the education of the child development in Ireland (NCSE, 2014). This role is also reiterated by Underwood (2010:18) who posits that parents of children with IEPs are anticipated to take part in the formulation and monitoring of the plan, as well as meeting to establish the plan.

This role is often overlooked, as Goldman and Burke (2017) report that, regardless the legal requirement, parent involvement at IEP sessions is minimal. Dragoo (2017) argues that parents are important stakeholders when IEPs are formulated and regard their role as to regularly meeting with the teachers, psychologists, or other designed advocates to discuss,

design and review the students' development. According to Chitiyo and Dzenga (2021: 56), under the IDEA, the IEP is one of the six pillars that serve as the foundation for providing education to students with disabilities.

In Macao, IEPs were compulsory for students with learning disabilities both in regular and special schools in the public or private-subsidised sectors (Correia, Teixeira & Forlin, 2021). Special education legislations in the United States (US), Kuwait, South Korea and Turkey utilised IEPs to create each student's educational objectives in order to reflect to the distinctive learning and behavioural features of children with disabilities (Ochoa, Erden, Alhajeri, Hurley, Lee, Ogle & Wang, 2017). IEPs in Turkey, South Korea and the US direct the inclusion of transitional goals in the IEP. Moreover, the US and Turkey considered the IEP as binding obligations between parents and school.

2.5.2 Models of Parental Involvement

In order to comprehend PI in the education of children in SS and to develop a superior application of it in pair research and practice zones numerous PI models have been developed. Epstein's and Hoover-Dempsey models of PI are the two utmost recognised and were broadly employed by many scholars. All these models had sufficient roles in the participation of parents of children with disabilities in SS. However, this study furnished information on the five models to follow and will incorporate one of the models to frame this research study.

2.5.2.1 Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model

The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model of parental involvement asserts that family involvement is a process that commences with the families' decision-makings about being involved and this culminates with the students' outcome (Whitaker, 2018). The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model of PI proposed three massive sources of participation inspiration (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2007). According to Green et al, (2007), the first is parents' motivational beliefs pertaining to involvement, including parental role formation and parental self-efficacy for assisting the child to flourish in school.

Hoover-Dempsey (1995) in Hoover-Dempsey and Jones (1997) identifies parents' role construction as a crucial factor affecting parents' fundamental choices regarding their participation in their children's education. Fortunately, the South African School Act 84 1996 endorsed the involvement of parents in the education of their children, including decision-making. Hoover-Dempsey and Jones (1997) conceded that a notion of personal effectiveness

or assisting children advance in school refer to parent's beliefs that they can, through their personal conducts, exert a positive impact over their children's educational development.

The second is parents' impressions of invitations to involvement, consisting generic invitations from the school, and more particular requests from teachers and children. Green et al, (2007:533) asserts that invitations were manifested in terms of creating a positive and receptive school climate, school applications that ensured that parents were fully updated about student achievement, school needs, and school events. They are also represented in school policies that conveyed respect for and responsiveness to parental queries and suggestions.

The third source is personal life context components that impact parents' perceptions of the types and timing of involvement that appears feasible, such as parental involvements skills and knowledge, as well as time and energy for involvement. Green et al, (2007:534) maintain that skills and knowledge were amalgamated in the model because they configure a set of personal resources that theoretically impacted parents' decisions about varied involvement opportunities in a similar manner. Involvement opportunities should be created by the schools for parents to volunteer offering their knowledge suitable skills suitable to assist children. For instance, a parent who has a skill in sport (soccer) may volunteer to train/coach learners.

Invitations can stipulate a flexible time frame that will enable parents to make meaningful arrangements, for example, working parents can request a leave day from work to attend an invite to school. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) assert that the model encourages parental involvement by having an impact on children's learning and development through mechanisms like modelling, reinforcement, and instruction, as mediated by the parent's use of developmentally appropriate activities and connections between those activities and the standards set by the school.

2.5.2.2 Appleton and Minchon Model

The SIAS (2014) policy outlines that parents and caregivers should be given the tools they need to know how to maximize their child's potential (DoE, 2014). The Empowerment Model was reiterated by Appleton and Minchon (1991) who contended that understanding disabilities were influenced by the recognition of families as social systems in Mutasa, Goronga and Gatsi, (2013).

Empowerment involves a strength-based approach, viewing individuals as having the capacity the obligation to function independently, but needing access to opportunities and

resources in the educational setting to manifest those (Moran, Gibbs & Mernin, 2017). Mutasa et al, (2013) regard empowerment as the main premise of this model. The expectations are that professionals should recognise the distinct strengths and needs of families and integrate them into evaluation and intervention techniques.

For all families to have an impact on and continue to have an impact on their children's education, schools must take the lead in developing effective programs and engaging in cooperation that includes and empowers all families (Epstein & Sandler, 2002). Xaba's (2015) main recommendation was an advocacy that began with empowering all parties involved, particularly parents with regards to the fundamentals of PI. He proposed an approach that aimed to empower parents, schools and the community through school-based and cluster-based forums using measures that recognised the power of *zenzele* (do it yourself), and for schools and parents to initiate programs that enhance PI, and *masakhane* (doing it for ourselves together) for school districts and the communities to advocate PI on the principle that viewed parents as parents of all children and children as the children of all parents. This principle can combat the stigma parents of children with disabilities face.

2.5.2.3 Grolnick and Slowiaczek Model

The behavioural, personal and cognitive-intellectual elements are regarded by Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) as PI components. The behavioural component consists of parent's manner/conduct towards school. Parents' positive attitude and constant participation in school may trigger learner's interest in their schooling. Students adopt a mastery goal orientation to learning, where they are more likely to seek out difficult tasks, persevere through academic challenges, and experience pleasure in their schoolwork when parents demonstrate an interest in their children's education by being engaged (Gonzalez_DeHass, Willems, & Doan Holbein, 2005). Parents can overtly model the importance of school through his/her behavior by attending and participating in open houses at school (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994).

The personal component fosters parents' personal involvement which includes the child's effective experience demonstrating the parent's concern for the school and has the benefit of interactions with them at school (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994: 238). The third component of involvement-intellectual/cognitive which entails exposure for the child to cognitive stimulating activities and aids such as books (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). These authors indicate that exposure to cognitive stimulating aids would presumably improve the

partnership between home and school and aid the child in developing skills necessary for learning. The child may develop an enthusiasm to reading at school when he/she reads at home. These multidimensional components were Grolnick and Slowiaczek study's first goal that constituted of the prior three-dimensional model that supported the notion that parents can exhibit their involvement in several methods.

2.5.2.4 Lueder's Model

Lueder (2000) cited by Mutasa et al, (2013) based his model of parent-school interaction on the theory that there is a major issue with parental support for education because enormous numbers of parents, whom he identifies "missing parents", were not involved in education at home. He suggested a "self-renewing partnership model" of PI grounded by what he refers to as "energy in," which extends the traditional duties of families supporting schools, and "energy out," which entails families supporting schools Lueder (2000:2) regarded his self-renewing partnership model as a comprehensive method for designing and implementing partnership between the families, school, and community. The objective of forming home-school-community partnership is to construct "learning opportunities" where families, communities and school in conjunction furnish the utmost possible educational opportunities and atmospheres for the children (Lueder, 2000:5).

2.5.2.5 Epstein's Model

The overlapping spheres of influence paradigm acknowledges that the home, school, and community are the three main contexts in which children learn and develop and that they may be drawn together or pulled apart (Spamer, 2017; Driessen, 2019). When teachers or parents adhere to the perspective of the realms of home and schools are divided in order to emphasize parental and teacher specialization and distinct responsibilities However, when teachers and parents emphasize their shared responsibilities, their efforts bring the impacts of family and school closer together, strengthening the bond between parents and schools and developing family-like homes and classrooms.

Van Diermen (2019) asserts that to formulate effective PI, the three spheres should hold dual responsibilities. Ralejoe (2021:3) believes that each of these three spheres need to be completely developed because the larger the sphere and the more they overlap, the more benefits there are for learners. The author also stated that, each of these parties in the model should be equipped with the necessary skills and resources to engage meaningfully in the education of individuals, and fulfill their shared roles optimally. Moreover, overlapping

spheres of influence contend that students perform better in schools when they are supported at home, school and by family (Epstein, 2001). Epstein also presents the typology of effective PI which comprises of six types of domains namely: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community.

The Epstein framework consists of six significant components that are easily comprehensive and applicable as it categorises PI into elements that makes it facile for school managers/educators to assess their performance in relation to those components. This model fosters and promotes PI in educational activities, especially for learners in SS. Epstein's model makes it clear that we are all impacted by the level of education in our communities, whether we are parents of our own children or not (Smithson, n.d). It highlights that the six components can only be triumphant when all stakeholders utilise this framework to facilitate PI. This framework is responsive; it demonstrates and emphasises what is already occurring in schools enabling them to be in cognisance so that they facilitate PI to a greater or lesser extent (Goodall, 2022). Ideally, this framework conglomerates all the aspects that the other models have.

2.6 RELATED RESEARCH IN PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND SPECIAL SCHOOLS

A 2018 interpretative paradigm-based qualitative study was carried out to investigate the perspectives of educators on non-involvement and its implications for learners' experiences and performances (Munje & Mncube, 2018). Data was gathered using individual and focus group interviews which included 3 principals and 12 teachers as participants. Epstein's model of family-school-community partnership structured the study to advocate real coordination amongst the parties involved.

The results revealed that educators' perspectives concerning non-involvement did not take into consideration the contextual restrictions that restrict involvement, further alienating parents. The study also revealed the gap that existed between policy and practice in terms of school-parent relationships.

Lithuanian research on PI in the teaching of children with mental disorders through IEP revealed that PI is contracted by some limits rooted in the complexity of the relationship. Separate groups of respondents and research participants took part in the experimental data. Non-structured interviews through the pilot study were utilised to describe the distinctive features of parental involvement in the child's education process in a SS. The research results

demonstrated that IEP enabled all participants to develop shared knowledge of the aims, develop mutual cognition, the actualisation of internal resources, the formulation of new institutional cultures, the legitimacy of parental expectations, and exposure to parents and educators to novel issues (Ruškus & Gerulaitis, 2010).

A qualitative design study conducted by Hove (2014) titled “The Effectiveness of Special Schools in the Teaching of Children with Learning Disabilities in South Africa” utilised interviews as a mode of generating data. A set of five questions broadened around the need for SS to demonstrate both efficacy and responsiveness to the needs of students with learning difficulties were posed to six purposely selected teachers from SS. The study aimed to address the research question: "How responsive are SS to the needs of children with learning disabilities?" According to the study's findings, SS are more successful in terms of student outcomes. Morale and self-esteem are considerably greater in SS environments for both students and educators. The results of the study were presented in the form of instructive vignettes.

Individual interviews, focus group interviews, observations as well as document analysis were utilised by (Ngwenya, 1996) to investigate the nature of PI in rural residential SS and the extent of PI, the area in which parents took part in, as well as how the school supported them and the students. The parent population of the school formed the primary sampling which comprised of 84 parents out of a possible 91. The study’s finding from the residential school that serve primary school children with physical disabilities between the ages of five to seventeen years revealed that parents are involved in structures created by the school, namely: a parent-teacher association, parent groups in the communities, and learner adoption schemes. However, the study also demonstrated that parents are not equal partners in a lot of critical areas. Time, distance, work commitments, family community and financial constrains were identified as hindering factors to effective PI participation.

PI in the education of their children with disabilities, the core of primary schools of Bahir Dar City Administration in Ethiopia was conducted by Gedfie and Negassa in 2018. These authors used a qualitative case study design to uncover the research objectives. Six parents of children with disabilities and two educators were selected through purposive sampling. Data was generated and analysed utilising a semi-structured interview guide thematically based on Epstein’s (2001) framework of PI with six dimensions. The findings of the study demonstrated that parents of children with disabilities are more adept at parenting practices

that aid the education of their children. Nevertheless, parents' communication with educators and principals was perceived as limited. They did not frequently go to the schools and engage with school educators and head on their children's educational development.

Moreover, fewer parents of children with disabilities were provided with learning support for their children at home; and most parents were hindered by factors such as, time pressure, misperception and skills deficit. Results indicated that the level of parents directly involved in the decision-making process was minor, although their indirect involvement was better through the Parent-Student-Teacher Association. Ultimately, parents of children with disabilities in the study's area made no effort to participate at all in volunteering and community activities to support their children's schooling. The study recommended that schools, NGOs, and other relevant stakeholders arrange workshops, conferences, and provide consistent training for parents of children with disabilities to stimulate their involvement in parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community to promote their children's education, as well as fulfilling their multifaceted roles.

A qualitative research design based on an open-ended interview was applied to obtain the 'real world experiences' of parents of thirteen children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) attending three schools located in the three regions (urban, semi-urban and rural) in Bhutan (Jigyel, Miller, Mavropoulou, & Berman, 2019). Individual interviews were conducted with twenty six parents who were purposively sampled according to the following criteria: (a) having a child with a disability enrolled in one of the three schools; (b) having a child with a disability attending full inclusion schools (full placement in the regular classroom), partial inclusion (a combination of placement in the regular classroom and in a SEN unit); (c) proficient in either Dzongkha or the English language. Manual thematic coding and Leximancer text mining software was utilised to analyse data.

Epstein's (1987) six types of PI activities in education framed this study. The implications of the study which aimed to exploration of parents' experiences and perceptions of their involvement in supporting their children both in school and at home increased this awareness that schools need to acknowledge the regulations and to pro-actively involve parents, establish education programs and support groups to be implemented to strengthen PI in the educational development of children with SEN in Bhutan.

The above research studies hold a quantity of familiar elements with the current study. All the researchers utilised a qualitative method to uncover the studies' objectives, they employed targeted unsystematically sampling techniques, and employed interviews as the data collection tool. Thematic data analysis was used to qualitatively analyse the data in some of the studies.

The main objective of the abovementioned studies was to determine the nature of PI using the framework of the six dimensions by Epstein which is similar to the current study. However, the studies differed in some aspects from the current study. Some of the previous research settings involved teachers, while the current study is primarily focused on the school principals and the parents' experiences. The sample sizes of the studies involved a small group which is also similar with the current study's number of participants and sampling techniques, as well as the research approach. However, some of the studies utilised larger groups. One study investigated PI in rural residential special schools, whilst this current study explores PI in the urban residential of special schools. However, similar to these earlier studies, the primary objective of this study was to gain a deeper comprehension of PI in the Special Schools of the Gauteng East District.

2.7 THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A model identifying six types of PI framed the upcoming analysis of SS and how parents and school principals should practice a dual responsibility to promote the educational success of children. Epstein's school-family partnership theory indicates and recommends that the parties involved must cooperate in order to have an impact on children's development and education. (Newchurch, 2017). The author further opined that Epstein's theory was not intended to produce effective students, but rather to give them the skills necessary to advance on their own capabilities. Epstein's model of PI has been designed to provide a clear picture in parental mechanisms that could promote scholastic advantages for students.

Boonk, Gijsselaers, Ritzen, Brand-Gruwel (2018) consider the contrast between home-based and school-based dimensions as an important ingredient between PI and academic achievement. This view is supported by Bronfenbrenner (1994) who alluded in his ecological system theory that children's behaviour is influenced by their interaction with their surrounding contexts such as, the home and school, as well as the interaction between those contexts.

Education is regarded by Epstein and Boone (2022) as a joint obligation of the family, school, and community, and these guidelines instruct each school to work with all families of children to encourage student achievement, behaviour, and other indications of success in school. It is asserted by Epstein (2005) that when schools, families, and the community work collaboratively to support children' academic achievement, they are emphasising the value of an education that teaches students that their success is dependent on the success of not solely their school and family, but also on their community. This model may enable schools to host/initiate PI campaigns to develop the awareness in parents and the community to build reciprocal relationships for the benefit of all stakeholders, especially the learners.

Oates (2017) concurs with the above statement and posited that schools must formulate well-organised, goal-orientated and advantageous collaborative initiatives to develop powerful PI in communities. This model enhances the input from families, which will assist special schools to handle and overcome obstacles and to conduct outreach scholastic and intrapersonal programs (Oates, 2017). This model can gear and facilitate PI in SS, affording parents an opportunity to constantly collaborate and support their children's development, be it academic, sports or skill development.

Epstein (2005) wrote about school, families, and communities working together to promote students' academic success. This assertion applies to collaborative measures from the school, families and community to enhance students' skills development which may be attained from SS. This is because the purpose of collaboration is to encourage students to pursue their careers in the field of the skill they acquired for future employment.

The model below, conceptualised by Joyce Epstein and colleagues, breaks down the idea of PI into six different types:

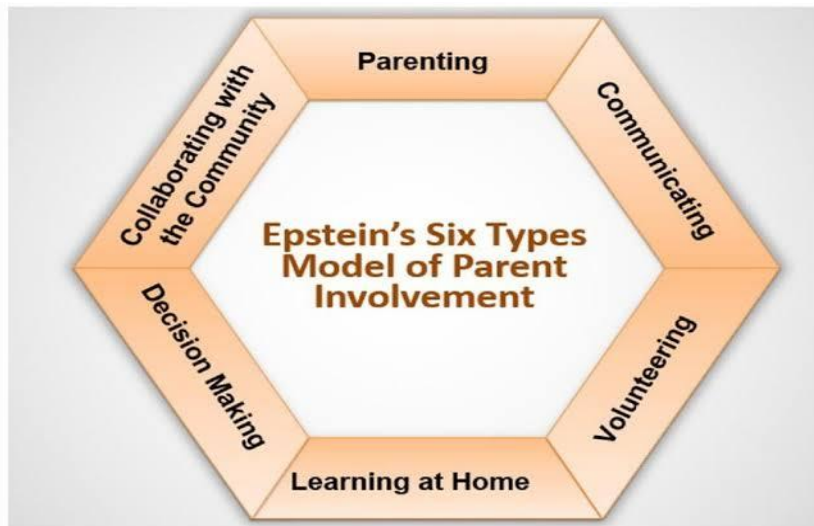


Figure 2.1 (above): Epstein's Six Types Model of PI, Source: Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sander and Simon (1997).

Bailey (2017:14) aligned the above model of involvement with three main realms of influence including: parents, school and the community. Bailey (2017:16) further favours that when all three spheres are working together collaboratively, they may influence a student's progress and have favourable effects on the parent, the school, and the neighbourhood simultaneously. This model increases the awareness of the nature of the family-school interaction and advocate for the contribution that families may make to fostering children's growth and learning (Ihmeideh, AlFlasi, Al-Maadadi, Coughlin & Al-Thani, 2020). The model constitutes six typology types that suggest effective PI programs focusing on:

Type 1: Parenting - parenting activities enables families to better comprehend their children's growth and development. Schools that collaborate in partnership with parents' supply information to families about their children's health and safety, supervision, nutrition, discipline, culture, linguistics, supervision, and other parenting skills (Epstein et al, 2002). According to Shah (2019), PI takes many elements into consideration which includes good parenting in the home, provision of a secure and stable environment, cognitive stimulation, parent-child engagements, and suitable models of constructive social and educational values. In the olden days, values were instilled by storytelling which included fables that guided children's morals and a way to conduct themselves into being good citizens. Offering parent education courses, literacy training, and resources to help families with health and other services would aid families in creating home environments that are suitable for nurturing children (Oates, 2017:36).

Type 2: *Communication* - most schools communicate with families on educational initiatives and children' development. Communication avenues include memos, notices, phone calls, newsletters, report cards, conferences, emails, social platforms, and open-house calls. The most frequently used channel developed by the schools and parents for effective communication is the school diary, whereby teachers and parents note their concerns and acknowledge this with receipt in signature. The school diary is encouraged to be monitored daily by both parties.

Leenders, deJong, Monfrance and Haelermans (2019) confirms that efficient communication between teachers and families provides the two parties with a greater grasp of mutual expectations and the needs of the children. Edward (2018:55) investigated “communication between home and school for parents of children with chronic illness,” and found that effective communication between parents and the school is essential for precise data about the nature and extent of the impact the illness has on students’ educational experiences. The researcher will explore the communication avenues utilised by the schools to engage with parents as well as its consistency.

Type 3: *Volunteering* - this type of involvement recognises the value of families, their skills, and the need to encourage the effectiveness of educational curricula and student achievement. Parents, family members, community organisations such as SAPS, health workers, social workers, and SANCO may volunteer at the schools to enrich the development of students (Epstein et al, 2002). Jezierski and Wall (2018) state that effective involvement includes volunteering at the school, taking on the duty of forming close relationships with the teachers and serving as the child's advocate. This is supported by Epstein (2001) who regards volunteering in his model as a step forward in supporting the school’s goals and children’s learning. Volunteering should also be understood by parents that it is not compensated by any funds.

Type 4: *Learning at home* - teachers may advise parents on how to monitor, support, and engage with their children on educational experiences that are coordinated within the classroom curriculum This particular type of involvement provides guidance to families on how to assist students with their homework at home. (Epstein et al, 2002). This will promote cohesion and enhances cooperation whereby the school-home will use one voice, avoiding confusion for the child. Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) highlights that PI of students

commenced at home with the parents providing secure and healthy atmospheres, meaningful educational experiences, support and positive attitudes about school.

Learning at home by Epstein's model sustains that teachers can guide parents on the activities coordinated within the classroom curriculum. This piqued the researcher's interest as to how parents are guided to coordinate the skills acquired from school at home. The researcher aims to explore the experiences of the schools' principals and parents on curriculum dissemination for effective support at home.

Type 5: *Decision-making*- enables and includes families in decision-making at every school. A stronger collaboration with parents who are involved in their children's education fosters on-going leadership and opportunity to advance family-school development. Families' opinions are heard on crucial school decisions thanks to family representation on School Councils, School Improvement Teams, and numerous committees as well as in PTA, PTO, or other parent organizations.

Merely including parents in IEP meetings is insufficient; parent and student information and involvement must be essential to special education, decision making, and the rights guaranteed to parents under IDEA must be upheld.

Type 6: *Collaborating with community*- schools collaborate with governmental agencies, corporations, faith-based organisations, cultural association, senior citizens, and other groups in the community that have an interest in and responsibility for the education and development of students (Epstein & Sanders, 2000). Identifying resources and services from the community will be beneficial to strengthen school functionality. A school learning community works with a variety of stakeholders to promote student's educational opportunities and experiences (Epstein & Salina, 2004). This is attested by Sander's (2002:47) case study which revealed four aspects that support the school's ability to develop and maintain community involvement. The researcher has listed the factors below:

- (a) High commitment to learning: community partners that share a common ground to support student's achievements.
- (b) Principal support for community involvement: provides successful collaboration by creating opportunities for community involvement.
- (c) A positive welcoming school atmosphere: receptive and appreciative of community involvement through a school atmosphere that is welcoming and provides positive acknowledgements.

- (d) Two-way communication: an emphasis to the importance of honest, dual communication catering for a preferred or suitable method of communication.

Willemse, Thompson, Vanderlinde and Mutton (2018: 255) concluded that the call for supporting teachers' development is engaging with families. This still applies currently. This is because without a sound collaboration with parents, schools cannot provide children all the assistance they need to succeed (Epstein, 2002). Jigyel et al (2018) regard inclusive education, by its component as preferable to special education, such as the Identification of Special Education Needs Disabilities (SEND) and the setting up of IEPs. Epstein (2010) in Jigyel et al (2018) indicates that to enable effective PI in inclusion, it is essential to develop and maintain communication and cooperation between the schools. Teachers involved in the children's education play crucial roles in the developing a strong working relationship between parents and teachers.

Merrigan and Senior (2021) maintain that providing a personalised educational plan for each student with variety of demands that are increasing complex range of needs is one of the current roles SS offers. This is the responsibility of the principals in SS who should adhere to the regulations and policies with regards to curriculum management, SA DoE (2014). The schools' principals should also ensure programmes offered at the school align to the National Curriculum Statement by facilitating curriculum differentiation that offer simplified versions, special editions or lower grade levels of texts, where needed (SA DoE, 2014).

2.8 CURRICULUM OFFERINGS IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS

According to the Republic of South Africa (RSA) (2020), most SS present a variety of curriculum in order to include as many learners as possible. For example, at a school for the deaf, some students may follow the regular CAPS curriculum, while others who are deaf but also have intellectual challenges follow the differentiated CAPS curriculum for severe intellectual disability. Currently the following four curriculums are implemented:

- Ordinary CAPS: the learners complete the National Senior Certificate;
- Technical Occupational Curriculum: learners with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities and not coping with ordinary CAPS due to deafness, blindness, physical disability or specific learning disabilities. The curriculum is a 4-year programme (equal to Grade 6-9) starting in the year the learner turns fifteen years old. Most schools who receive learners turning fourteen implement the Grade 5 section of the D-CAPS to ensure that learners are on a Grade 6 level in year one of attending school;

- Differentiated CAPS for learners with severe intellectual disabilities: this also includes learners with autism who have high support needs. This 14-year curriculum concludes on a Grade 5/6 level, and;
- Learning programmes for learners with profound intellectual disabilities: goes to a pre-Grade R/Grade R level.

There is evidence from the NCSE (2009) study that SS offer students with access to relevant curriculum with a focus on the development of life skills. Such life skills may include cooking, baking, needle work, hairstyling, plumbing, carpentry, music and more. These skills can serve as a means of poverty alleviation and enable learners to have a bright successful future. Supporting SS and inclusive schools enables the individuals who have disabilities to not only enhance their quality of life, but also enables them opportunities to acquire the skills to support themselves through productive work (Ochoa et al, 2017).

2.9 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter is a fundamental aspect of this research study and was composed from the main objectives of a literature review. Oates, (2017:46) noted that schools that are dedicated to establish bridges to great relationships and adjacent the communication gap between educators and families facilitates positive educational experiences. The importance of PI is far-reaching and the rewards are enormous that they are absurd to be disregarded. The conceptual framework that underpins this research study was discussed in detail, as well as the policies/legislations and their effects on SS. Chapter three focuses on the research methodology and design.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter address the research methods that were applied in this study and the formulated research processes. This chapter presents the research paradigm, research methods, and research design that were applied. Maree, (2007), mentions that the study design contributes in providing the direction to be applied when generating and analysing data. This chapter also explains the ethical considerations of the research, the selection of participants, the analysis of data, and the methods of collecting data. The qualitative research structure guided this research study and was grounded in the interpretative paradigm. The qualitative research methodology was applied in this study because it clarifies and explores personal and shared social proceedings, ideas, opinions, and insights (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

Schumacher and McMillian (2014:28) delineate a research design as the procedures for conducting a study and indicate the plan: how the study was designed, what happened to the subject, and what data gathering procedures were employed. They further noted the purpose of a research design as a strategy for producing empirical data that will be employed to respond to the research questions. Sileyew (2019:2) alluded that the primary objective of the research design aims to offer a suitable framework for a study. Thakur (2021:2) further maintained that the research design is the overarching strategy used by a researcher to logically and coherently combine the distinct components of the study to ensure the efficacy of addressing the research problem being studied. Grounded theory, ethnographic, narrative research, historical, case study, and phenomenology are all types of qualitative research designs.

The researcher used a qualitative approach that resulted in obtaining the rich, authentic, and most credible data from the participant's responses to the research question. In doing so, the researcher conducted direct face-to-face interviews with the participants to comprehend their perspectives on their daily lived experiences with the phenomenon, in this case, PI in the SS of GE District as experienced by the school principals and parents of the learners attending the school.

3.2 PHILOSOPHICAL PARADIGM

Creswell (2014) considers a paradigm as a link to epistemology, ontology, and research methodology.

A paradigm is also denoted by Johannesson and Perjons (2014) as a collection of commonly held beliefs and suppositions among a research community regarding ontological, epistemological, and methodology-related issues. Paradigm (represents the researchers' global ideas and principles about their conceptions of the universe, and how they function within the globe Kamal, 2019). This is reiterated by Kuvunja and Kuyini (2017:26) who posits that paradigm defines the researchers' philosophical orientation and comprises the knowledge that derived from the data that is generated based on personal encounters. The research paradigm for this study consisted of the following components: ontology, epistemology, and interpretivism qualitative methodology.

3.2.1. Ontological Grounding

This is the first branch, or the "study of being," which focuses on what is present in the universe and can be learned by humans (Moon & Blackman, 2014). Ontology is the philosophical study that examines the nature of being or reality, of being or becoming, as well as the categories of objects that exist and their relationships (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:27). Reality ontology is associated to the existence of a sole distinct reality that can be exposed, apprehended and experienced (Ugwu, Ekere & Onoh, 2021). Nominalism relates to subjective interpretations of the world which are based on the personal 'lens' through which humans are viewing phenomena. The importance of PI has existed for numerous years. This study views PI as a subject phenomenon based on individual experiences.

3.2.2 Epistemological Grounding

The second branch is epistemology, the "study of knowledge," and is concerned with all the facets of the reliability, scope and techniques of knowledge acquisition. Constructionist epistemology believes truth or meaning emerges from inside and without of the engagement with the realities in the world (Moon & Blackman, 2014). Kivunja and Kuyini (2017:27) noted that epistemology focuses on the nature of human understanding and knowledge, as well as any limitations that a researcher or knower can have that prevent them from extending, broadening, and deepening their understanding in the field of research.

The answer for "how we know the truth" or "what counts as knowledge" may be drawn from sources of knowledge (Ugwu, Ekere & Onoh, 2021). Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) indicated four sources of knowledge by Slavin (1984) whereby the authoritative knowledge is

appropriate as the researcher relied on (data obtained from knowledgeable sources parents), books (literature), and leaders in organisations (school principals).

3.2.3 Methodology

The research methodology is the method through which the researcher needs to conduct the research and outlines the path through which the problems and objectives of the study can be established to present results from the data obtained (Sileyew, 2019). It comprises the theoretical analyses of the body of procedures and guidelines related to the field of knowledge and encompass concepts such as paradigms, theoretical models, expressions, and quantitative or qualitative methodologies. As for Ryan (2018:9) interpretivism contends that truth and knowledge are based on individual, cultural and historical contexts in light of lived experiences and interpretations of those contexts. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017:28) noted that the methodology articulated the systematic procedure' logical sequence and flow followed when directing research project to acquire knowledge about the research predicament. The researcher used the qualitative methodology as a means of applying an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon of interest.

3.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

The qualitative research approach is a technique of investigation where the researcher builds a complex, comprehensive picture, examines language, provides in-depth participant experiences, and performs the study in a natural context (Creswell, 2015). In this study, the researcher employed a qualitative research approach to generate data in a precise and sincere manner. Aspers and Corte (2019), McMillan and Schumacher, (2010), and Kumar (2011) opined that qualitative researchers analyse things in their natural setting, seeking to make sense of subjective experiences or interpret occurrences in terms of the significance that individuals assign to them. The understanding of qualitative research presented above is consistent with this study's goal, namely, to examine the lived experiences of SS principals and parents of the learners attending the school in the context of PI. The researcher is mainly interested in the participants' lived experiences and this approach values people's lived experiences (Tomaszewski, Zarestky, and Gonzalez, 2020).

The study aimed to determine whether parents of children with learning disabilities in SS can be supported through consistent active PI to gain confidence and be empowered to have a voice, attend, engage, and assist their children in school. The qualitative approach was favoured for this study as a result of its strength, which is the capacity to provide complex,

detailed elucidation of how participants experience a given research issue (Maree, 2016). Ideally, the supposition for this study is that the qualitative approach can furnish detailed subjective interpretation to attain the objectives of the research. Taherdoost (2022:54) affirms that the qualitative approach aims to address societal, scientific and practical issues, and involves naturalistic and interpretative approaches.

This research study was carried out in a natural environment that afforded the researcher with information regarding the "human" aspect of an affair that frequently contradicts behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions, lived experiences, and the relationships of the participants. In this study, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were employed to generate data from purposely selected participants. McMillan and Schumacher (2014:354) designed the nine key characteristics of qualitative research which the researcher applied to this study.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Creswell (2009), research designs are the strategies and processes for the study that encompasses the preferences from broad hypotheses to specific methods for gathering and analysing data. Sileyew (2019) contends that the research design contemplates to supply an appropriate framework for a study and plans to answer the research questions (McCombes, 2019). It is reiterated by Thakur (2021) that the research design is the comprehensive strategy utilized to execute research that elucidate a succinct and cogent procedure to channel established research questions through the collection, interpretation, analysis, and discussion of data. Consequently, it is the substance that binds the components of research together. (Akhtar, 2016) and demonstrates the understanding of executing the study (Creswell, 2014).

3.4.1 Phenomenological Research Design

As a qualitative research design, phenomenology was first conceptualized and hypothesised by Husserl (1931) as a technique to comprehend the setting in which people (research participants') life experiences occur and the significance of those experiences (Alase, 2017). A type of qualitative research known as phenomenology focuses on the investigation of a person's actual experiences in their environment (Neubauer, Witkop & Varpio, 2019; Flood, 2010). As described by Creswell (2013), a phenomenological study is a method with an assortment of perspectives that is centred on depiction, getting, understanding, and the rebuilding of implications passed on to social connections.

The researcher aimed to interrelate with the participants to gain their lived experiences regarding PI. In the human sphere, Lester (1999:1) translates phenomenological study into

gathering 'deep' information and perspectives through qualitative methods such as interviews and discussions and representing it from the perspectives of the research participants. In order to comprehend the meaning that participants attribute to a given occurrence, phenomenology studies describe and analyse participants' lived experiences related to that event (Schumacher & McMillian, 2014).

This was attested by Creswell (2013) who alluded that the participants 'lived experiences' are what help to guide qualitative approaches in making sense of their research analysis.

Neubauer, Witkop, and Varpoi (2019:90) contend that understanding the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin this approach is fundamental for successfully carrying out phenomenological research. This process looks at the experiences of every participant and perceives that these encounters have a connection with the phenomenon. In this study, the phenomenon experienced by individuals was the nature of PI of children with disabilities in SS of GE District. Phenomenological approaches are good at surfacing deep issues and understanding the participants' voices (Schumacher & McMillian, 2014).

3.5 RESEARCH METHODS

Research methodology relates to the pragmatic "how" of any given piece of research, precisely about how a researcher systematically develops a study to assure accurate and trustworthy outcomes that address the goals and objectives of the research (Jansen, 2020). Sileyew (2019:1) noted that research methodology demonstrates the process by which researchers formulate their issues and objectives in order to deliver their findings based on the information accumulated throughout the study period. Rajesekar, Philominathan, and Chinnathambi (2013:5) also indicated that the procedures a researcher go about during their work of describing, clarifying, and forecasting the phenomena are research methodology which is a study of methods through which knowledge is gained. The qualitative and quantitative approaches are the principal approaches used in this research study.

3.5.1 Individual Semi-structured Face-to-face Interviews

An interviewer who designs questions and controls the discourse is present during a research interview. The interviewee then answers to the questions. Interviews are a suitable method for gathering data given that they allow the researcher to discover more about the ideas, thoughts, experiences, and feelings of the participants in-depth. This qualitative study utilized individual semi-structured face-to-face interviews. The researcher had the opportunity to gather open-ended data, analyse participants' opinions and ideas regarding PI,

and delve deeply into personal experiences through semi-structured interviews (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

Ryan, Coughlan & Cronin (2009) posit that one-on-one interviews are social interaction, and the connection between the interviewer and interviewee cannot be overemphasised when facilitating the process to be successful (Ryan, Coughlan & Cronin, 2009). The setting (special schools) was quiet and private and was chosen by the participants which enabled them to feel safe and comfortable. The SS where the interviews were held had suitable ventilation, well-sanitized furniture, and enough spacing. One-on-one interviews are a valuable procedure of obtaining insight into participants' acumen, understanding, and experiences of a certain phenomenon and can contribute to in collection of comprehensive data (Ryan et al., 2009). They offered the researcher the opportunity to decipher non-verbal gestures through the observation of body language, facial expressions, and eye contact (Ryan et al., 2009).

The participants had an interview schedule that consisted of open-ended questions that are based on Epstein's typology of PI. The interview schedule consisted of interview questions that aligned with the research questions (see Appendix F & G). Elhami and Khoshnevisan (2022:1) cited Brinkman and Kvale, (2005) who opined that open ended questions empower the interviewer to collect related data from the interviewees in details with personal feelings, emotions, ideas, and less-self-censorship. A schedule guide was developed in advance and questions were compiled considering the framework that underpinned this study. The framework that underpins this study is in collaboration which is concerned with enhancing PI in the SS of Gauteng East district, since the aim of this phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of the principals of SS and parents with regards to PI. This is to ensure that identified obstacles confronting the principals and parents to facilitate PI are mitigated and recommendations and implementations of the proposed framework can be made to promote efficient PI.

Fox (2006) reiterated this view when saying that individual interviews are valuable to administer precise information about the significance of an event, scenario, or social context to each participant in a setting. They are appropriate when the subject under discussion is delicate and when the respondent may be reluctant to discuss about certain aspects of their experiences in front of others. The individual interviews were carried out inside the school premises with the school principals and parents. The interviews took about \pm 45 minutes with

each participant (principals and parents). The researcher recorded the interview with full consent from all participants so that the researcher can transcribe and analyse the findings without missing the information that has been provided by the participants.

3.6 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The research process is a series of stages that the researcher follows to guarantee that every aspect of a study is complete to a high degree. Arthur and Hancock (2009:5) maintained that the research process is a systematic and focused investigation that intends to increase to the body of knowledge and is carried out in stages. The researcher followed the research protocol which included getting permission from the Unisa Ethics Committee, the Gauteng Department of Education, GE SS principals, and parents of the learners attending the school.

3.6.1 Ethical Clearance and Permission

Ethical approval was sought and accorded by the University of South Africa (UNISA) CEDU REC committee after the evaluation of the ethical soundness of the researcher's application. The Gauteng Department of Education granted the researcher authorisation to carry out research in the selected SS after they evaluated the prescribed completed forms. This enabled the researcher to request approval from the school principals and parents of the learners attending the school.

3.6.2 Gaining Access

The researcher went through an extensive process before beginning the study. This includes developing a research protocol, preparing participation information sheets and consent forms, and reviewing and receiving approval from relevant scientific and ethical committees (Manohar, MacMillan, Steiner & Arora, 2018). Upon receiving approval from the Unisa Ethics Committee and the Gauteng Department of Education, a letter was forwarded to the school principal of each of the five schools requesting permission to conduct individual face-to-face interviews with them and the selected individual parents at the school. The School Governing Bodies (SGB) were consulted and informed about the study.

Permission was obtained from the SGB, principals, and the parents of the learners attending the school, and the researcher engaged with the participants whereby voluntary participation in this research was facilitated. Kadam (2017) reckons that the informed consent process empowers participants to make rational and informed decisions about their participation. The researcher obtained written consent from the school principals and parents before commencing the research study. The voluntary expression of consent by the suitable subject

and the proper presentation of information disclosure about the research were crucial and indispensable elements of the informed consent process (Manti & Licari, 2018).

The field site was easily accessible to the researcher due to its proximity and the researcher was proficient with the languages spoken at the schools. English and isiZulu were predominantly used/spoken by the participants. The informed consent was clarified to the participants in their native languages. A distinct reference to the voluntary nature and the confidentiality agreement of the research was given.

Prior to participation, the participants were furnished with sufficient information about the nature of the study, the purpose of the study, the nature of their involvement and participation in the study, as well as the potential benefits of the study. Parveen and Showkat (2017) further maintained that the researcher must disclose all the potential risks related with the research study to the participants and emphasise all the adverse and positive facets of the research during the consent process. Throughout the whole study process all research activities were upheld with scholarly integrity, excellence, social responsibility, and ethical behaviour (Unisa, 2016).

3.6.3 Population and Sampling

All the individuals or objects that are being studied collectively are referred to as the population, whereas the process of choosing a subset of the population for the research is known as sampling. Shukla (2020) defined population as a collection of all the units which possess variable qualities under study, and for which findings of the research can be generated. Sampling is the process of selecting a sample from a population (Shukla, 2020). In this study, the population consisted of school principals who manage special schools and the parents of the children enrolled at the schools that have experience and expertise regarding PI and can answer research questions (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). This population is relevant because it includes participants who are conscious and experienced about their involvement in the learners' educational context.

The total number of SSs available in the GE District is eight, and the total number of parents in the district is \pm 3000. The purposive population of this study comprised five school principals and five parents. SS often have fewer learners, and a lower student-teacher ratio per the category of the handicap (NCSE, 2019). In qualitative research, criterion sampling is a sort of purposive sampling approach that entails deciding on participants based on certain criteria or qualities related to the study questions or aims. The inclusion criteria utilized

consisted of the traits participants gained to be legibly included in the study. The researcher seeks individuals who have knowledge and investigates situations that fulfil that criterion (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Patton (2001:238); Shaheen and Pradhan (2019) regard criterion sampling as the selection of participants who meet the pre-determined criteria of importance. Participants in this study are chosen based on their expertise and experience with the subject matter, and hence their capacity to provide information.

Criterion sampling's purpose is to select and enrol participants who are most likely to produce rich and meaningful data on the study issues. The researcher purposefully chose individuals who met specified criteria, such as serving as school principals and parents of learners in the chosen SS, as well as their lived experiences of PI within the school.

Purposive sampling was employed in this qualitative research study for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hagwood, 2015). Purposive sampling is defined by Crossman (2018) as a non-probability sample selected in accordance with the characteristics of the population and the objectives of the study. The researcher selected participants according to the need of the study (Creswell, 2014), and purposive sampling enabled the researcher to guarantee that the sample consisted of experienced participants. The interviews with the principals and parents were conducted at the sampled SS. Participants were selected based on the type of school they served.

The criterion that was used comprised of the number of years/experience the school principals had and parents were selected based on the length of time they have had their children attending the school. According to Palinka, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan and Hoogwoord (2015) the most prominent criterion is the participants' experiences with the phenomenon under study. The school principals and parents were chosen because they have prior experience with the nature of PI in their schools and can be trusted to provide accurate information. Each interview occurred for approximately ± 45 minutes. Questions were adaptably phrased to permit the researcher to circle back to the hazy responses of the participants. The researcher utilized the language of the participants' which was isiZulu and English because the researcher is fluent in both languages and able to rephrase the questions that participants didn't understand. During the interviews, a recorder was used to capture the discussions.

3.6.4 Participants Profiles

3.6.4.1 Parents

Table 3.1: *The biographical information of the parents.*

Participants	Age	Gender	Occupation	Level of Education	Number of Children Enrolled at the school	Number of Years the child/children attended the school	School
Parent 1	34	F	General Worker	Grade 9	4	6	A
Parent 2	46	F	Unemployed	Matric	2	6	B
Parent 3	47	F	Educator	B.Ed	2	13 and 8	C
Parent 4	32	F	Company Manager	1	2	2	D
Parent 5	52	M	Part of the SGB	3	3	3	F

3.6.4.2 Principals

Table 3.2: *Biographical information of the principals.*

Participants	Age	Gender	Level of Education	Number of Years as a School Principal	School
Principal 1	59	F	Honours	12	A
Principal 2	57	F	B. Logopedika & HOD (Speech Therapist & Audiology)	7	B
Principal 3	61	M	PhD	8	C
Principal 4	45	M	M.Ed	14	D
Principal 5	58	M	B.Tech	2	F

3.6.5 Interview Process

Ryan, Coughlan, and Cronin (2009:311) purport that the development of the interview schedule is an essential initial step in the construction of the interview process. An interview

process in a qualitative research design requires an interviewer to coordinate the process of the discussion and ask questions to generate data, and an interviewee responds to the questions. The individual interviews were held at the schools after school hours and took \pm 45 minutes. The researcher visited the schools on the time and date scheduled by the participants. The researcher posed questions and the participants responded in their preferred language. Fortunately, the researcher's home language is isiZulu and participants who responded in Zulu were comprehensively understood. The conversations were captured using an audio recorder.

3.6.6 Treatment of the Data

Reliable and valid data provides meaningful knowledge in a qualitative study. Validity is the precision with which the findings accurately reflect the evidence (Noble & Smith, 2015). These researchers further described reliability as the regularity of the analytical techniques, taking into consideration any potential personal or scientific biases that may have impacted the results. Maluleke (2014) cited Mqulwana (2010) who mentioned that in order to judge qualitative research the following qualities should exist: transferability, credibility, dependability, and conformability. This study applied these qualities to maintain the authenticity, reliability, and accuracy of the research.

3.6.6.1 Transferability

Transferability relies on the degree to which the results may be applied to other environments or groups (Kyngas, Elo & Kaariainen, 2020). According to de Leeuw, Motz, Fyfe, Carvalho, and Goldstone (2021), this concept was more commonly associated with qualitative research which measures the extent to which the efficacy of the intervention might be attained in a different sample and context. Moon, Brewer, Januchowski, Hartley, Adams & Blackman (2016) consider transferability as a statement of whether the research findings can be transferred to different groups or contexts, consisting of theoretical, cultural, and empirical transferability.

The researcher facilitated the transferability judgment through thick descriptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher also stimulated transferability by characterising the research context and attending to the speculations that were the medial of this research study (Mqulwana, 2010:61) in Maluleke (2014). The researchers' responsibility is to provide an explanation of the participants and the study methodology to enable the reader to assess whether the results are applicable to their situation (Kasirye, 2021).

3.6.6.2 Credibility

The researcher selected the context, participants, and approaches to gather data and used continuous engagements to promote the credibility of the qualitative study. Continuous engagement enabled the researcher to acquire more in-depth information from the participants and to identify pertinent characters (Hadi & José Closs, 2016). To establish credibility, researchers must ensure that research participants are identified and described accurately (Kyngas, Elo & Kaariainen, 2020).

3.6.6.3 Dependability

Dependability includes participants' assessments of the study's conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations so that all are supported by the data received from the participants of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability includes the aspects of consistency. The researcher needs to check whether the analysis is performed in accordance with the acknowledged guidelines for that design. (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). As viewed by Kyngas et al, (2020) dependability refers to the consistency of data over time and under different conditions.

3.6.6.4 Conformability

Conformability refers to a description of the researcher's stance in relation to the planning and execution of the study, often known as the epistemology or philosophical viewpoint (Moon, et al., 2016). These authors further stated that to achieve conformability, researchers must demonstrate that the results are connected to the conclusion in a fashion that can be followed and repeated as a procedure. The researcher ensured conformability by establishing data and interpretations of the findings that are generated from the data and are not figments of the inquirer's imagination (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Conformability is regarded by Kyngas et al, (2020) as objectivity is the capacity for two or more disparate parties to concur on the accuracy, application, or relevance of the facts.

3.6.7 Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2009:171), data analysis is gathering open-ended data based on the participants' responses to questions and creating an analysis from that data. Data analysis involves the interpretation of events and the responses of participants. Noble and Smith (2015) considered data analysis as an interactive process, where data are systematically searched and analysed to provide an illuminating description of the phenomena.

Mills (2007:138) persisted that data analysis is undertaken when the researcher wants to summarise and represent data that has been acquired in a dependable, accurate, trustworthy, and in a proper manner. The process of data analysis is to compile or reconstruct the data in a significant or comprehensible fashion, in a way that is transparent, rigorous, and complete, while remaining 'true' to the participants' narratives (Noble & Smith, 2015).

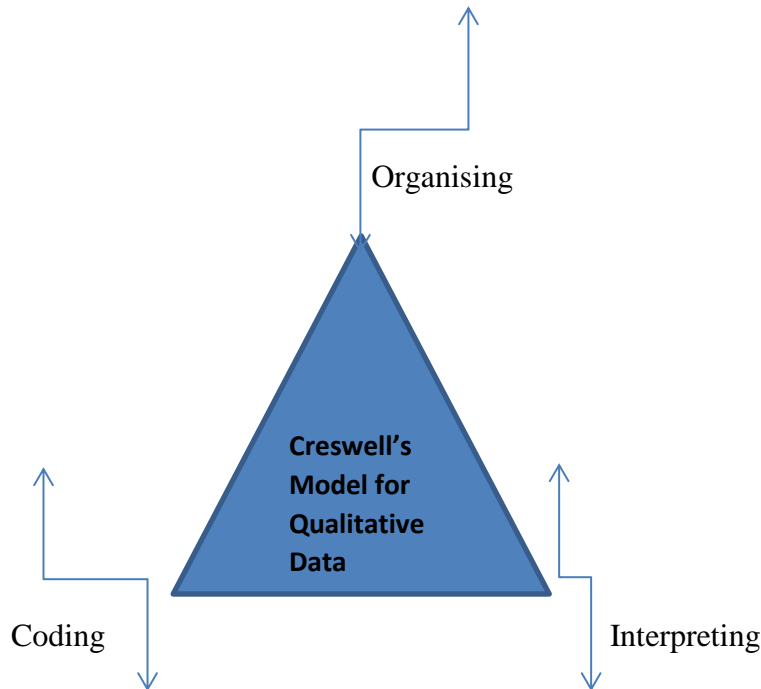
Kawulich, (2004) reckons that analysing qualitative data usually entails the researcher immersing herself in the data to become familiar with it, then looking for patterns and themes, searching for different links between data that helps to grasp what is available, then graphically presenting the information and writing it up. Qualitative data analysis is fundamentally an inductive process of organizing the data into categories and locating patterns or relationships among the categories, most of which stem from the data (Tuswa, 2016).

Inductive analysis motivates and enhances the research to rise above describing what the participants have shared about their experiences to interpretive conceptualization and abstraction (Ravindran, 2019). Narrative analysis as a qualitative data analysis method was used to analyse content from various sources from the interviews of the participants (Bhaita, 2018). It centres on utilizing stories and experiences shared by the participants to address the research questions.

A sound recorder was used to gather information and the responses of the participants were deciphered in preparation for data analysis (Charamba, 2016). According to Ravindran, (2019), the qualitative approach consists of generated data through the sharing of experiences that became fundamental when recorded rather than note-taking. Ravindran (2019:41) shared the characteristics of data analysis in qualitative data analysis that the researcher adopted. The researcher also employed Creswell's (2003) six-step model to analyse the data found through the semi-structured interviews that were conducted. The researcher used the steps as guidelines when analysing the generated data, see Figure 3.1 below:

Step 1: Sort out and prepare the data analysis.

Step 2: Read through all the data.



Step 3: Begin detailed analysis with a coding process.

Step 4: Create a description of the people and/or setting using the coding method. Create themes or categories using code. For each interview and cross-interview, themes were analysed.

Step 5: Determine the presentation of the depiction and themes in the research narratives.

Step 6: Make sense of the data by interpreting it.

Figure 3.1 (above): *Creswell's Six-step Model for Qualitative Data Analysis.*

The researcher was guided by Creswell's six-step model to review the interviews. The researcher also transcribed the interviews, drew up notes, then categorized and organized the data into several sorts based on the data source. Collected data was marked, reflected, examined, and recorded on its total meaning.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics are momentous in qualitative research as the researcher interacts closely and personally with the participants. Ethics enabled the researcher to be more acquainted of the quality assurance when gathering and analysing the data (Maree, 2012). Ethics are the moral

principles that govern a person's behaviour (Parveen & Showkat, 2017). They further reiterated that ethics are standards of conduct that define what is good and bad, as well as what behaviour is acceptable and unacceptable (Parveen & Showkat, 2017). Sarker (2019:1) regarded that ethics protects the vulnerable from exploitation, and guarantees the subject is treated with the utmost respect, dignity, privacy, and fairness.

3.7.1 Autonomy

Autonomy signifies that an individual can make independent choices regarding what to accord to. Barrow, Branna, and Khandhar (2022) advised researchers to ensure that potential participants comprehend that they have a right to decide whether or not to participate in the research study willingly and that declining to participate will have no consequences for them in any way. The researcher will not influence the participants' choices or coerce them in any way. According to Bendowska, Malak, Zok, and Baum (2022), autonomy refers to the freedom of the participants to choose to partake in the research study and the need to obtain informed consent from them. Page (2022) further noted that respect for the rights of the individual's decision is one of the characteristics researchers must have.

To ensure autonomy, the researcher will request authorisation from the Department of Education, the ethics committee, and the participants before collecting data. The researcher was obliged to assure the participants that they will remain anonymous and the use of pseudonyms for direct quotes will be used. The researcher worked to protect the participants' autonomy by fully disclosing all elements surrounding the study, including the study's potential harms and benefits (Barrow et al, 2022).

3.7.2 Non-maleficence

Varkey (2021) and Page (2022) asserted that non-maleficence is the obligation of the researcher to protect the participants' from harm. The researcher will refrain from any act that may cause harm to participants. To ensure non-maleficence, the researcher was obliged to address the participants about the assets and liabilities of the study. Since PI has been considered to enhance the holistic learner's development, data generated could afford the SS with strategies they might use to consistently involve all parents of children with disabilities.

3.7.3 Beneficence

Beauchamp (2008) asserted that the phrase beneficence signifies deeds of personal qualities of leniency, affection, generosity, clarity and promoting the virtue of others. Singh and Ivory (2014) reiterated that it is the liability of the researcher to promote the well-being of their

participants. The requirement of beneficence requires that the researcher maximises any potential benefits of the study and mitigate any harms (Greaney, Sheehy, Heffernan, Murphy, Mhaolrunaigh, Heffernan & Brown, 2012; Pieper & Thomson, 2016; Beauchamp, 2008). Minimising risks means building safety into the protocol and monitoring for adverse events throughout the study (Bitter, Ngabirano, Simon & Taylor, 2020).

The researcher provided the research ethics committee with ample details regarding the benefits and menace involved in the study to determine the suitability of the research study (Greaney et al, 2012). The researcher affirmed beneficence by protecting the participants' privacy by keeping the data in a secured, locked cabinet. The files had an encrypted password on them and were made available only to the research team (Bitter et al, 2020).

3.7.4 Justice

The researcher employed Act No.4 of 2013: Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) which is the constitutional right to privacy by safeguarding personal information. Upholding the right to privacy often involves procedures for anonymity or confidentiality. The researcher used codes and pseudonyms to ensure the participants' privacy. Voluntary participation was advised whereby withdrawal from participation is optional. All participants were treated fairly and with equal respect.

3.8 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter's objective was to outline the research approach applied to address the research topic. The technique, study subjects, data collection, and interview methods were covered in detail, outlining the intricacies of how the study was conducted and who was involved. As a result, Chapter 4 provided the findings analytically and attempted to interpret them considering the primary research objectives of the study. The findings were created because of methodological and design considerations.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the data analysis procedure used during data collection, as well as the themes emerging from the data. It offers a thorough narrative account of the experiences that the SS principals (PR) and parents (PA) of the learners attending SS in the Gauteng East District had about PI. The qualitative interpretive phenomenology analysis was employed to fulfil the study's objectives. Data were attained through in-depth face-to-face interviews and the data was analysed with some degree of interpretation (Shava, Hleza, Shonhima & Mathonsi, 2021). The method employed inductive reasoning whereby the researcher carefully examined and continually compared the facts to produce themes and classifications.

The researcher manually processed the data which allowed the researcher to recognise themes and aided her in locating information relating to the research questions. The researcher reviewed the transcripts and double-checked them for mistakes and consistency after they were all coded (Zhang & Wildermuth, 2005). The use of axial coding was utilised in the study. The investigation represented an effort to better comprehend PI, particularly how it manifested in practice from the experiences of school principals and parents. This knowledge will make it easier to recognise the circumstances that encourage PI and the obstacles that prevent it.

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS

The study focused on the lived experiences of the special school's principals and parents that furnished their lived experiences on PI. The study employed Epstein's Six Typological Model of PI as grounding. The purpose was to comprehend the experiences these participants encountered when forming school-home partnerships to help develop techniques that will empower parents with knowledge regarding the impact they have when they are involved in the education of their children.

Ntekane (2018:1) asserted that the grades and test scores of learners whose parents or other primary caregivers take an active interest in their education are higher. He further indicated that these learners perform better socially and exhibit better behaviour which would greatly aid in lowering crime and poverty, something that both the community and the entire globe need.

Individual one-on-one interviews were conducted as the study’s data gathering method. The research data analysis included the verbatim transcriptions of the participants’ responses collected from their individual face-to-face interviews. The researcher started coding data by identifying repeating patterns after tabulating all the information attained from the participants’ responses.

Seven themes emerged and each theme was provided in alliance to the literature already available and the conceptual framework that underpinned the study. Direct quotations from the gathered information were applied to support the emerging themes from the data generated through the semi-structured, individual face-to-face interviews. The themes included the study’s conceptual foundations and literature, which was then interpreted.

Considering that English is the second language of three of the parents, two of them provided their responses in their native language which was IsiZulu. This did not create a challenge to the researcher as IsiZulu is a language she is fluent in. Nonetheless, during member checking there were minor edits to ensure the clarity of their responses. However, three parents provided their responses in English. All the school principals also provided their responses in English. Five school principals and five parents from the five SS in the Gauteng East (GE) district participated in the study. Below the researcher has presented the themes and indicated the participants: PA (P) and PR (Principals).

4.3 PRESENTATION OF THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

Table 4.1: *Research themes and sub-themes that emerged.*

THEME 1: Parenting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Parental Involvement (10) ❖ Parental Empowerment (6) ❖ Disempowerment (6) ❖ Exclusion (6) ❖ Career opportunities (7)
THEME 2: Communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Methods of communication (10)
THEME 3: Volunteering

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Entitlement (3) ❖ Interference (3) ❖ Social stigma (8) ❖ No reimbursement (3)
Theme 4: Learning at Home
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ No homework (6) ❖ Curriculum differentiation (6)
THEME 5: Decision-making
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The School Governing Body (SGB) (7) ❖ The Individual Support Plan (ISP) (6)
THEME 6: Collaborating with the Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Career opportunities (7) ❖ Sponsors (6)

4.4. ANALYSIS AND THE DISCUSSION OF THEMES

Data was obtained using the semi-structured interviews constructed to measure six dimensions of PI from the ten participants. The findings constituted of six discrete themes derived from Epstein's (2009) Six Types of PI framework. Sub-themes arose through axial coding the data from the interviews. The section that follows confers a more thorough analysis of the themes.

4.4.1 THEME ONE: The Lived Experiences of Parental Involvement with regards to Parenting

As stated in the review of the literature, parenting refers to the fundamental duties of parents of children with various abilities, such as providing clothing for, setting up a home environment that supports learning, buying the required books and school supplies, and setting high expectations for their kids' success in school (Epstein, 2001). According to Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017), PI in children's education commences at home, where parents advocate a sound and secure atmosphere, appropriate learning opportunities, support, motivation, and a positive outlook on school. Considering this, parents of children in SS were

questioned about the various parenting techniques they used to make certain children succeed in school.

Participants' experiences and understanding of parenting were examined in relation to this theme. Five sub-themes were identified and will be discussed in more detail below.

4.4.1.1 Parental Involvement (PI)

Al-Dababneh (2018:618) contends that successful PI requires certain actions to identify the hurdles that impede effective PI, and then the redesign of services and reallocation of resources to address these hurdles. The parent's ideas of their experiences with PI derived from the referral and admission procedure of their learners from mainstream and full-service schools to the special schools. Their interaction with the school principals enabled them an opportunity to acquire knowledge regarding their role in the education of their children.

One of the parents indicated clearly that the idea of what PI was communicated by the previous principal where her child was attending. Surprisingly, the language she received was similar when she was enrolling her child at the SS. Ntekane (2018:1) refers to PI as a circumstance where parents are actively involved in their children's education; they do this both independently and in conjunction with the teachers and schools in ensuring that the learner is given the best assistance possible in the learning process.

Parent 1 (PA 1) narrated the following:

“I was called to a parent consultation session from the previous school when my son was doing Grade 1, and the School Based Support Team (SBST), Learner Support Educators (LSE), and teachers told me that my son required support and that I should be involved and support him at home, too. They further required my consent to acknowledge that my son will attend a variety of support structures available at the school. I was informed that there was no progress demonstrated by my son and luckily, I also noticed that even at home he couldn't read or write. That's when the referral procedure started.”

According to (Myers-Young, 2018), a child is more likely to participate in activities positively and constructively if parents support their strengths and weaknesses through meaningful feedback.

One of the participants provided his understanding of PI by highlighting his pursuit to enrol his child into a SS:

“I saw that my child was not coping academically in a mainstream school, and I was consulted by the teachers several times. After visiting a special school to observe what they all about, I became fully involved in the referral procedure and gave consent for her to be cognitively assessed for placement purposes because I wanted her to acquire the necessary skills offered at the special school that the mainstreams schools were not equipped with. We parents suffer from not knowing because if I did I not visit the special school, I would still have doubts about it.”

Another participant, PA 5, also linked her experiences and understanding of PI through interacting with the teacher.

“The challenges that my child presented both academically and behaviourally were challenges of great concern to the teacher. My son was unable to perform like his peers and his chronological age was a great concern for his grade level scholastic functionality.”

These responses signify that the parent or caregiver must be involved in all aspect the decision-making process of their child’s learning endeavours (DoE, 2014). It is, therefore, evident that parents need to be equipped with sufficient knowledge, not only when their children experience academic obstacles. When children practice their knowledge and skills outside of school with their parents' support and supervision, they will retain and be well controlled (Barrioh, 2018).

The results in the study by Kizir and Sahin (2020) indicated that three of the teachers stated that in the process of identifying the learner with special needs, they first meet and talk to the family. This is reiterated by the policies such as the SIAS policy (DoE, 2014:3) whereby it states that Parents and caregivers must always take part in the identification and evaluation processes that affect their children and must be acknowledged equally as stakeholders in the process. PI requires teamwork from all stakeholders and parents can be perceived as natural stakeholders that can influence and shape their children’s attitudes towards school. They have a voice to narrate unknown stories, valuable experiences and are their children’s primary and vital teacher. The transcription below was narrated by PR 1 when asked to share her view on PI:

“Parental involvement requires collaboration with the teachers, management, and SGB with an interest or aim to take the school and learners to another level.”

This means that collaboration can strengthen a team and leads to more innovation, efficient process and increases success for the school and learners. PR 3 considered PI as:

“The involvement in different levels, It involves educational support, physical support, and emotional support. It involves the learner in total, the whole child. But it also involves the collaboration between the teacher and parents because we are working on the child together.” Agboka (2018:10) maintains that collaboration is about the home and school working together for the success of the learner.

Based on the data generated, the results indicated that the school should facilitate PI, build relationships, create an atmosphere that enables parents to involve themselves freely and foster partnerships. Riley, (2009) in Campbell (2011:6) concurred that the development of trust and understanding between the family and school is an essential role that school leaders should facilitate.

PR 2 regarded PI as the following:

“When the school involves parents in entirety, meaning that in all aspects of our school be it academic progress, governance, or sporting activities of our school and in the lifespan of our children. He further noted that: Parental involvement is a key aspect that all schools must foster and promote because no school is an island; and for education to be successful we need to know that it is a societal matter.”

The responses from the participants above indicated that schools should initiate PI.

Parent evenings/meetings enable both the home and school to interact and discuss ways to better the learner. PR 4 had the following to say when asked about his view regarding PI:

“I think first of all basic things like attendance of school functions, not only extra mural or functions like sport and cultural events but also attending parent evenings and consultation meetings. Parents must be involved in homework and must supervise the preparation of tests/examinations.”

This denotes that the main objective of attending school functions is to acquire knowledge and to understand the child’s progress as well as the nature and functionality of the school. Wulandary (2017:2) believed that PI at the school included the willingness to attend school events, the initiative to engage with teachers and the contribution in providing suggestions to

support the school policy. Aiding learners who require high-intensive support constitutes of a dual responsibility in the learning process such as assisting learners with homework.

PR 5 outlined that PI is:

“The participation of the parent in the education of their child, and participation could mean when there are meetings at the school the parent attends; and when there is communication from the school to parents the parent responds. In short, I regard parents as cheerleaders that boost their child’s confidence and by being present they show that they are concerned about their child’s education.”

The parent needs to motivate the child to study, abet them in appraising and reinforcing what they have learned, mentor them, and make an exertion to learn about the content that their children have learned at school, what they ought to learn, what resources they need, and how they can benefit their children in collaboration with the school (nihal Lindberg & Guven, 2021).

Children with severe speech disorders, musculoskeletal disorders, intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, severe multiple developmental disorders and other conditions frequently reside in special or boarding schools. As a result, many children study and live apart from their family, only seeing them on weekends or during holidays. There are also SS that are set up like mainstream schools, with students going to class in the morning and coming home in the afternoon. One would think that the lack of PI in SS that are boarding schools might be caused by the fact that parents do not interact with their children on constant basis.

This was explicated by PA 4 who expressed herself by saying the following:

“I think PI is a 24/7 job, like the whole week 24 hours. It involves being there for your child throughout everything, all milestones. I assist my daughter with her schoolwork, like I literally compile exam notes for her and she has to learn with encouragement and assistance. I have been there for athletics, been there for cultural events, so really PI is that you are a 24/7 parent. However, it is difficult for parents who have children living in the school.”

Moreover, P4 asserted that being a teacher made it easier for her to understand the needs of her daughter. The participant revealed that it’s easier to channel what you are faced with because you understand the need of being involved, rather than anyone who is not in the position to deal with the lack of PI.

4.4.1.2 Parental Empowerment

Parental empowerment aims to promote the understanding that parents should be active promoters of self-control, self-efficacy, and self-determination, rather than acquiescent recipients of decisions made by others such as, teachers or school management (Connor & Cavendish, 2018). This is reiterated by Myers-Young (2018:10) who posited that the next step in improving PI is to start with effective family empowerment, which enables parents to guide decision-making rather than having it dictated to them. This requires SS educators to put children and their parents at the centre of the educational process in order to link them with the school and create a productive collaboration (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

When parents are actively involved in the education of their children including those with disabilities they perform better. In the Gauteng Department of Education (DoE), and according to the Screening Identification Assessment and Support (SIAS) policy, it is stated that parents should be empowered to comprehend how the capabilities of their children can be impeccably developed (DoE, 2014). On a normal basis, a teacher would not be in need of a parent if the learner performs outstandingly in all areas of development. Thus, a parent would be called into school because there is a need identified by the teacher/school. P5 shared his concern and indicated:

“The reason we would request parents to come to school is because we see an area of need. For example, we had learners who we saw were not taken care of; from looking at them you see the situation at home is not good. In that manner, we often hand-out food at home and put them in the school uniform programme for them to receive uniforms and these learners are on school nutrition. So, you see...it’s difficult to assist a parent who never shows up when summoned to school.”

Parents who feel more effective and who are confident in their capacity to impact their child’s achievement exhibit greater involvement in school related activities (Campbell, 2011). Feedback from PRs indicated that barriers such as, low self-esteem, previous school experiences and the level of education might promote a lack of PI. In Campbell (2011) hard-to-reach parents are a concoction of the unemployed, having low income, non-native English speaking parents and parents who were poor attendees. They are non-responsive. PA 4 reflected her experiences as a teacher and as a parent at the SS and said:

“There are parents who are really involved and then you get those that are overly involved and you get those that are not involved at all.”

Additionally, PR 4 mentioned that:

“It is difficult to empower and equip parents who are unavailable, inactive and absent from their children’s educational development.”

PR 4 also reported that:

“We typically have groups for parents of children with unique disabilities and our clinic runs the programme from children in preschool. We have children with hearing problems, who are deaf, and so on. And we encourage parents to learn sign language, and we encourage them to come in and see we do. We encourage groups of specific disabilities, especially hearing loss and the in continent’s clinics.”

Participants in this study indicated that parental empowerment is essential to enhance PI because it provided consciousness to parents about their responsibilities in their children's education. The data generated from all PRs stipulates that parental empowerment services are available at the school. They shared the same sentiments and revealed that their schools are fortunate because they have professionals with different expertise, for example, they have a nursing sister, social workers, therapists, and psychologists who bring change and offer development to the parents. Health professionals are appointed at district offices and stationed at the SS to ensure quality support (DoE, 2007).

PR 2 further maintained that:

“On a monthly basis, we conduct capacity workshops, and we try to use the services of our School Based Support Team (SBST) and our therapists to capacitate our parents, and I must say it has yielded good results because parents meet other parents and then they share their experiences.”

The responses expressed above bespeak that PRs are in cognisance about the value of empowering parents. The findings of Moriwaka (2012) indicated that operational seclusion between home and school was a critical obstacle, and a systematic approach is necessary to develop successful home-school partnerships in SS. It is asserted by Kern (2020) that involving parents empowers them and provides them with a sensation of independence since enables them to take accountability for decisions concerning the educational development of their children. Odongo (2018:28) stated that educating parents to increase their level of knowledge on disabilities will not only lessen their anxiety related to caring for the disabled

child, but will also expand the level of involvement in their education, monitoring and intervention.

4.4.1.3 Disempowerment

The roles of parents are emphasised in the policies such as, the White Paper 6, SIAS, and in the Guidelines for Full Service/Special Schools, as well as in the South African School Act 84 of 1996. The researcher is of the opinion that the school needs to develop workshops that provide information, skills and strategies in an environment that promotes increased PI whereby educators foster open discussions, design activities that are hands-on and experiential, and learning that is group and self-directed (Klein, 2012). Findings from PA 1, 3 and 5 indicated that parents lack awareness of their obligations as stipulated in the policies. They responded by saying:

“There are no workshops that educate us as parents about our roles. Some of the parents would think sending a child to school is all that he/she has to do, and teachers would take it from there. Some parents tend to say that they are not educational experts and teachers are trained and are paid to do their job.”

This signifies that some parents’ attitudes towards PI needs motivation. Majozi (2014:15) reported that teachers’ attitudes is an issue that requires sustained attention as several studies mentioned it as an impediment to effective PI. Cited by Majozi (2014), Bush (2002) had elucidated that attitudes might impact future reactions to alter the process.

The SGB as the statutory body of parents of the school must facilitate team-building activities which could enhance PI. PA 1 & 4 mentioned that:

“It would be lovely to engage with other parents as we would be more comfortable to speak and express our feelings with each other, rather than to discuss with teachers or voice out in a meeting.”

It was evident that the SGB and school principals had never attempted to organise parental workshops that consisted of solely parents discussing their experiences and empowering one another. The mission is to empower parents through parent-to-parent support schemes. In Bray, Carter, Sandler, Blake and Keegan (2017: 1537), various authors reported that parent-to-parent support schemes are valuable as they encourage social, emotional, and practical support, particularly the sharing of feelings, coping models, problem-solving skills, reduces feelings of isolation, enhancing self-efficacy and empathic understanding. Bray et al.

(2017:1542) outlines the ability of the parents to express their emotions, concerns and worries with other parents who travelled analogous expedition and had “been there” which was narrated as the most important characteristic of the support scheme.

When PA 1 and 5 were asked if they were conscious of any school policies available at the school, the reactions of PA 1 and 5 showed that they did not even understand the word “policy.” The researcher rephrased the question by firstly explaining in detail what school policies were and what its purpose was.

They responded by saying the following:

“I’m not sure about the policies; I don’t know of the policies maybe teachers do.”

Policies establish quality standards for teaching and learning, as well as possibilities for the authentic engagement of staff, learners and parents (Allen, Reupert & Oades, 2021).

PA 3 noted that:

“We receive parent guides in a booklet whereby a code of conduct is seen and there are definitions and acronyms. However, I highly doubt most parents even go through the booklet. Remember, some of the parents are illiterate and won’t understand all the information provided in the booklet. I also think, maybe if we can get someone who can go through the booklet with us so that we understand it, engage with them by asking questions for clarity and refer to it whenever necessary.”

The participant’s response indicated that receiving written information might be a bad approach to some parents, especially those with low educational levels. This was reiterated by PA 4 who noted that:

“You know some of these parents are just like their children, they have learning disabilities too.”

During the interviews, principals confirmed that some parents cannot read nor write therefore, the statements indicate how big the magnitude is on the influence of parental empowerment for students’ achievements. The benefits of PI are accumulated by all the stakeholders, especially the learner. The findings revealed that parents needed to be empowered and that their considerations and voices must be enhanced by the principals and the SGB of the schools.

4.4.1.4 Exclusion

The findings from the participants revealed that there are no intervention methods designed to involve parents who are working, parents of children with other disabilities, and the involvement of parents in the Individual Educational Plans (IEP). Kern's (2020:257) opinion is that exclusion of certain individuals arises from societal prejudice regarding differences. PR 1 mentioned that:

“We only cater for parental workshops for parents with autistic learners. We have three classes for autism, and I think I'm learning something with your question and have to sell this idea to the SBST that we include other parents from different disabilities.”

The findings showed that the school caters for a certain group of parents. PR 2 also mentioned that:

“Learners who are autistic are counted twice, for instance, if a teacher has six autistic learners in his/her classroom, it means he/she has a total of twelve learners.”

In the study by Murray (2015:70-71), autistic learners are described by variety of authors who revealed that numerous children with autism struggle with poor social abilities, lacked social awareness and occasionally exhibited troublesome behaviour that may exhibit their own learning and disrupts other learners. This presents teachers with greater responsibility to meet the social, behavioural and scholastic needs of these learners (Murray, 2015).

PR 1 further indicated that:

“The school caters for learners with a variety of disabilities. For instance, we have learners who are intellectually disturbed, physically-impaired, visually-impaired, and hearing-impaired. Some learners have Down Syndrome and other neurodevelopmental disorders including Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. You know, some learners are diagnosed with specific learning disorders which are not physically visible. So, I think all these disabilities also matter and that the parents of these children would also greatly benefit.”

Furthermore, PA 2 mentioned that:

“There are workshops for learners with autism and epilepsy. Because my child is epileptic, I attend the meetings that are facilitated by teachers, social workers, nurses, therapists, and the SBST. It motivates us because it informs us about the disabilities us as parents have.”

During the meetings, we get to ask questions and raise any concerns that we have and I must say, having specialists around really helps because they know more about these disabilities.”

Sentiments on how involvement was impacted by time were expressed by parents. One parent noted that the main obstacle of participating was “just time.” PR 2 elaborated by saying:

“I think we need to start considering parents who are working and some tend to be single mothers, and I don’t know how they can come to programs that will enable them to benefit from the information provided to the parents who do attend.”

Campbell (2011:5) noted that while parents and family circumstances continue to have the greatest effect on a child’s advancement and chances in life, working and single parents often lack the time to participate in school events and workshops that would help them develop the skills they need to support their children with school. PA 5 noted that:

“I am single parent who works long hours and even if the meetings are on the weekends, I don’t have the time because I have to do laundry, clean, cook ,and attend funeral /family functions. But I can spare an hour and visit the school when their meetings can be conducted on weekends.”

These findings indicated that there is a need to facilitate inclusion. The researcher is of the opinion that the success of inclusive education depends on the school managers. Inclusion plays an essential role in measuring the success of a democratic society that values every individual with their unique needs and provides for them. Inclusion also recognises the value of a fair, high-quality educational system that is open to all learners and free from bias. The results also revealed that there was a certain group of disability that was regarded as crucial while other disabilities are regarded as moderate. This means that some parents are neglected because they do not receive the support provided to parents who have autistic learners. Thus, PI is only facilitated for a specific group of parents.

4.4.1.5 Socioeconomic Status

A parent's capacity to participate meaningfully in school and their ability to provide their children with specific educational opportunities might be restricted by a lack of financial resources (William & Sánchez, 2013). The term socioeconomic status is the measure of wealth or poverty that takes into account factors like income, employment, and educational attainment (Vukojević, Zoyko, Tanović, Rešić, Vrdoljak and Splavski, 2017). Nevertheless, research provides evidence that learners in SS exhibit lower scholastic performances and

originate from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Lenkeit, Hartmann, Ehlert, Knigge, and Spörer, 2022). Odongo (2018: 26) further reiterated that the preponderance of individuals with disabilities and their families has insufficient or no access to education, work opportunities, healthcare and other basic requirements of life such as, safe drinking water, food and clothing.

PR 1 & 5 shared the same sentiment and noted that:

“Unemployment is a major concern of our parents who often claim that they can’t come to school. The possibility of a teacher not seeing a parent for the whole year is highly due to socioeconomic factors. This has come to the point where we often send out a driver to fetch parents because we need to consult and discuss with him/her.”

According to research, parents inability to participate in school activities is caused by their long workdays, various jobs, and insufficient transportation (Cooper, Cronsnoe, Suizzo & Pituch, 2010).

PR 3 mentioned that:

“Most of our learners receive grants so only 20% of our learners’ pay fees. The percentage of parents involved in the school is limited and often transportation would be the main reason they cannot come to school.”

PR 4 noted that:

“I think the common problem is that the special schools don’t have a feeder zone around the school, so our parents don’t live in the immediate facilities. For example, we have buses that transport children from the whole East Rand. Thus, many of our parents live far and would often note transportation fare as one aspect that hinders them to reach out or adhere to the invites from schools.”

PR 4 further eluded that:

“Finance and transport are the two major problems that parents report about. However, if it’s urgent, we often send out one of our drivers to fetch parents or fetch him/her at the station.”

PA 1 indicated that:

“Fortunately, I work at the school as a general worker, and this makes things easy for me to engage with my child’s teacher and all stakeholders at the school. Many parents are unemployed and they only receive an income through social grants which has to cover the basic needs of their children and even the household needs. Thus, for a parent to spend a whole R20 for a return taxi fare to school is difficult because one would think about buying a loaf of bread rather than to go to school. However, there are some parents who live closer to school but they don’t attend meetings and I can’t really say what hinders them except to think that they are maybe scared of the teachers.”

PA 5 reported that:

“My son was in a mainstream school near home, and it was easy for me to walk to school whenever they called a parent meeting. He was referred to a SS and I must catch a taxi to attend and its quite a challenge because sometimes I don’t have money to take a taxi. It’s quite far for me to walk and I’m currently unemployed.”

Furthermore, PR 2 reported that:

“Fortunately, I provide the parents with the school’s yearly program of the meetings so that they can plan prior. One of the elements that work for me is encouragement. I sometimes write a newsletter and it will indicate that parents will be receiving gifts after the meeting. That gift would just be yearly calendars and a pen. I provide them with a cup of tea and if the budget allows, I add scones and they would get refreshments before our meeting starts.”

According to the findings, the lack of PI was primarily because of budgetary limitations on the part of the parents. The study revealed that SS are limited in the GE District, and parents enrol their children to a school that will meet their children's educational needs regardless of the distance they must travel. Parents revealed that students may be referred to SS which are not in their near surroundings. The study suggests that parents need to make means for transportation when they receive the school’s year plan which indicates the dates of the meetings.

4.4.1.6 Career Opportunities

The lifelong process for career development posed the greatest challenge for people with learning disabilities (Kerka, 2002; Zainal, Mahmud & Wan Pa, 2020). Since the poverty rate for individuals with disabilities is relatively high globally, employment for them is critical (WHO, 2021). Ideally, stakeholders who are offering career advice must distribute accurate

information to parents and assist learners in making sound decisions about their future occupations (Sasamori, 2017).

The study revealed that SS offered individuals with learning disabilities and physical disabilities equal rights to perceive services that will enhance their expertise, abilities, and mind-sets for their future careers (Ibrahim, Abdullah, Yassin, Handrianto, Uçar, & Kenedi, 2021).

PR 1 reported that:

“We do inform parents about the career opportunities available for the learners. We often conduct it in this fashion: when we notice that a particular learner is so excellent in a particular skill subject, we engage with the parent and use the relationship we have with the retail companies where some of our learners are employed. Thus, we do encourage parents to support their learners in the identified skill to be able to promote socio-economic development and combat the unemployment rate of individuals with disabilities. PA 2 noted that:

“At the beginning of the year, let me say, the first parent meeting I attended, I was fortunate because a former parent came to address parents and shared her experiences with us. She shared what her child went through, how she received help, and how they handled the situation at home. A former learner was also there to inspire parents to say I was at the school and with my teachers and parents’ support I now own my bakery and have my own salon. That on its own really enlightened me to think that there can be a successful future for our children, regardless of the disabilities that they have manifested in them.

PR 4 mentioned that:

“In year one, we have an orientation where learners are introduced to all the skills offered at the school. We also invite parents for skills choice, whereby our departmental heads present different skills. For example, in our service department we have food production; we also have health care which includes early and beauty technology. Like I said, our curriculum is still piloted when the learners exit here, they do not get any official or formal certificate. So, we have an exit plan to say by year four we arrange with some different companies to ask for learnership certificates for our learners.”

PR 4 further noted that:

We have a group of learners who exited last year, and one of the groups that did nail technician got training from one of the nail experts and upon their training they received starter packs, so each learner had a kit to start their own nail business.

When asked if she was aware of the career opportunities available for her daughter, PA 4 responded by saying:

“Yah, OT looks out for matric students, and we have a bit of special classes who undergo training before they exit at the age of eighteen. And with our matriculations we see who qualifies for university or colleges so we assist with applications to the universities.”

PR 2 reported that:

“We have children who exit our school at the age of eighteen, and we have occupational therapists (OT) that manage what we call “school-to-work programs.” This is where we prepare our learners that are about to exit. The OT takes them through the program and they will visit some local companies and show learners the various skills that we offer, for e.g., we have a bakery within the school, so the therapist would take learners to the local confectionary in our area or a supermarket where there is confectionary so they can see what people are doing in these areas. We also got a skill in metalwork and our therapist would make an appointment with some local companies where they do metalwork and give exposure to learners. So, all that is facilitated and coordinated by our OT.”

PR 3 reiterated the following:

“Yes, we have career day whereby our OT takes the school leavers and she does career path testing for every child to determine their strong capabilities. When tested in each skill, we then place the learners where he/she fits best or where their interests are. We conduct a skill day/educational day for parents on what the way forward is regarding work opportunities, and we keep a register of our school leavers as well where if we get people that need somebody to come and work we know which child will fit the job. Actually, at the moment, we have a lot of ex-learners in the Presidential Youth Educational Initiative (PYEI) and not only in the PYEI, but we also have ex-scholars employed by GDE as general workers.”

PR 4 noted that:

“I’ve noted that we have two groups, school leavers and matriculations. What we do is we involve parents and look at the opportunities. We look, for instance, in the colleges for

further opportunities and we assist parents with these applications. And with our Grade 12s we give them guidance, for instance, bursaries and we try to get opportunities with our local companies because employment for people with disabilities is a challenge, so we try to involve parents and assist them with career guidance.”

PA 5 indicated that:

“The school does facilitate meetings to discuss career opportunities. However, some parents do not avail themselves that is why they are being robbed by their children. It was last reported that a learner requested money indicating it’s for a school project.

Parents don’t understand the terms that the learners use so they would borrow money to give to their children. Being involved with the school discards such incidences.”

There are similarities with the findings from the participants. SS facilitate effective PI when learners are to exit school for career purposes. The study suggests that the school principal strived to expose learners to a variety of career choices which will enable them to develop future independent endeavours.

4.4.2 THEME TWO: Lived Experiences of Parental Involvement With Regards to Communication

The focus of the communication involvement type was on creating efficient home-to-school and school-to-home communication channels that could help parents better understand school policies and programs, monitor their children’s academic achievement, and enhance parent-teacher contact (Epstein, 2009). To encourage parental participation in inclusion, it is essential to establish and cultivate parental communication and collaboration with school personnel, especially with the teachers who are directly involved in their children’s education, as these factors are crucial in the formation of trusting working partnerships between parents and teachers (Epstein, 2010).

Solid interaction between school and home provides the two parties with a deeper understanding of mutual expectations and the needs of the children (Leenders, De Jong, Monfrance & Haelermans, 2019: 2). Participants indicated that one way communication occurs through the newsletters, reports, SMSs and D6 communicators; and two way communication occurs telephonically, using school diaries, evening conferences, parental workshops and through parent-teacher consultation sessions. The schools’ principals indicated that the school often facilitated/initiated communication with the parents.

Communication between home and school must go beyond merely reporting problems to parents. When communication is established earlier, it will encourage communication will demonstrate to parents that they are interested in the learners' achievement in both good and bad circumstance (Michigan Department of Education, 2001).

4.4.2.1 Methods of Communication

Every participant concurred that the communication methods should be suitable and accommodative to benefit all parents. All school principals indicated that using a variety of communication methods enabled them to reach to parents in multiple ways.

Communication can occur in various forms, including verbal and written communication, and can be accomplished through diverse approaches to support children's education (Epstein, 2009). The Principals (PRs) noted that they use termly parents meetings, SMSs, and the telephone to communicate with parents and always engage with the parents whenever a need arises. The interviewees confirm that two-way communication benefits both the school and home, and is one of the ingredients for learner's success.

PR 5 reported that:

“There is one way communication because we always initiate communication. It is quite rare to find a parent who initiates communication for a good cause. They only initiate communication with the teachers when something is wrong, or if they want to report/ lay a

Having regular, transparent conversations established the lines of communication between parents and teachers. This is the greatest approach to prevent any misunderstandings. Parents who were well-informed and communicated with regularly felt included and were more likely to be encouraging and apprehending and were less prone to conclude to unfavourable judgements (Popovska, Popovski & Dimova, 2021).

PR 3 noted that:

“The lack of communication is a problem because even if parent meetings are called for, maybe like the Annual General meeting, parents still do not come and normally these meetings start around 17:00-18:00 so that we can accommodate working parents. However, we end up rescheduling because we struggle to form/reach a quorum for these meetings to take place.”

PR 5 also revealed that:

“Two-way communication is beneficial. For instance, we had a learner who told his parent that the school requires R150 for certain material he has to buy for a school project. I mean, we are a special school and learners perform skilled activities such as welding. The parent contacted the school with an aim of wanting to buy the material and was seeking clarity regarding the size of the material only to find out that there is no such thing because we are using resources/aids within the school. So you see, two way communications put these learners in line because now they know they cannot lie about home at school and lie about school at home.”

PR 4 noted his concerns as follows:

“We encourage open communication but parents have a tendency to change contact numbers and they don’t update the school and that creates a problem because it’s difficult to reach them, especially when emergency matters arise.”

PR 1 mentioned that:

“At the beginning of the year, we call parents and give them our school year plan indicating what is going to happen throughout the year and new parents are introduced to the school. Parents have the opportunity to plan ahead by asking for a day off or early departure at work to save monies for transportation and schedule their time for the meeting.”

PA 2 noted that:

“I think it will be beneficial if the school encourages communication at the very beginning of the school year, and I prefer to communicate with the school/teachers telephonically because in that way I don’t have to travel to school.”

It was maintained by PA 5 that:

“In order for me to go to school I need to take two taxis for a return, and as an unemployed person like me, it’s quite difficult.”

PR 3 & 4 indicated that:

“They use D6 communicators as well as school diaries to communicate with parents.”

P3 further maintained that:

“D6 communicators are effective because these young mothers are socially active and are always on their cellphones.”

PR 2 and 3 noted:

“You know, parents these days are youngsters, and they always have data regardless of their employment status. So, don’t you think it’s wise that the school create a link or something that we could watch or engage with on these social platforms? You see, WhatsApp makes things easier because my daughter’s teacher communicates with us through WhatsApp, and most parents engage and respond to whatever messages she sends. We also like TV, so making use of media to facilitate parental involvement might encourage parents to phaphama (wake up). I mean, we like to adopt what we see on TV, so schools should consider these spheres.”

PR 2, 3 & 4 added:

“We foster an open door policy whereby parents are advised to communicate with the school/teachers or principal using any platform at any given time. We also utilise WhatsApp groups that are run by teachers. We also have a Facebook page that provides sufficient information about our school as well as the schools website.”

P2 further noted that:

“We utilise our administrative staff to respond to any queries on our Facebook page because we believe engaging with parents is vital.”

PA 2 stated that:

“Fortunately, I am part of the SGB parent component and I’ve noticed that only a few parents voice their concerns in the parent evening meetings. I have never received any input in respect to any concern from the parent’s side requesting it to be addressed with teachers or the school principal.”

Additionally, PA 3 noted that:

“Some of us are even scared to talk during the meeting because there are many of us. I think it’s better if teachers conduct one-on-one sessions with the parents, so that they can get the full background of the child.”

PA 5 indicated the following:

“The SGB should make time to meet up with parents only to hear their grievances because it is intimidating to talk in the meeting and to approach some teachers. Yes, the school has an

open door policy but it requires strength to approach a teacher whom you don't even know. How will he/she perceive you?"

Parents who are supportive and eager are more likely to attend seminars and conferences, reply to notes and phone calls, and take part in the governing body and planning the teams' decision-making processes (Popovska et.al, 2021).

PR 2 mentioned that:

"The school invites the parents to address them about the progress of the child but some parents do not show up. This frustrates teachers because they complain about being the only ones making an effort in the parent-teacher relationship."

The abovementioned results indicated that most parents seldom interact/engage with the teachers during one-on-one sessions nor make use of the various communication methods made available to them. Schools were very likely to initiate communication that informed the parents about the school curricular, learner's health and school performance. Parents indicated that they needed to be represented by the SGB who facilitated the parent meetings. Another factor was that teachers should create a friendly atmosphere and demonstrate a positive attitude towards parents that enabled them to be at ease when they were supposed to consult with the teacher. Rafiq, Fatima, Sohail, Saleem & Khan, (2013: 213) reckons that parents will develop familiarity during the interactions with teachers who had a greater capacity for monitoring their children's progress and could respond to their problems.

Teachers and school principals must ensure that they're doing everything they can to build relationships that are constructive in order to promote a safe and trustworthy environment to assist negating their scepticism (Reese, 2021). Several schools have made special efforts to bring parents to school as early as possible in the school year, before learners begin to develop problems, so that their initial communication with them maybe favourable (Rafiq et al. 2012). The findings above maintained that PI was a two-way communication process that required dual responsibility from both the school and home for it to be effectively successful.

The statements above also revealed that the school should create opportunities for parents to engage and communicate their concerns/suggestions. Teachers should be trained to facilitate effective communication in order to create a friendly atmosphere for parents to feel free and be able to voice anything to them. The greatest beneficiary of the reward of a successful

home-school partnership is the learner. Ideally, the lack of communication was a major factor that negatively affected PI with regards to effective communication.

4.4.3 THEME THREE: Lived Experiences of Parental Involvement with Regards to Volunteering

The fourth dimension of involvement in which parents needed to participate in was volunteering to aid in the education of children in SS.

According to the study's respondents, volunteering was poor due to the fact that it was not stimulated by most schools, and parents' attitudes towards volunteering were not so positive. According to Epstein (2009), the volunteer type involved recruiting and organising parents to assist and support.

4.4.3.1 Entitlement

Related to this was the sub-theme that emerged when PR 1, 2 and 5 echoed the same sentiments that can be seen below:

“As the school, we have agreed not to use this platform. When you allow parents to volunteer, it becomes a challenge when there is a post offered at the school. This creates misunderstanding because parents tend to automatically think/claim that the post belongs to them because they are volunteering.”

PR 2 added:

“We don't encourage volunteering, but we tried a system where parents who do not participate in fundraising activities can instead offer free services as a way to compensate for their lack of participation, but we discarded that seeing that it will lead to more parents wanting to offer their services so as not to partake in the fundraising activities.”

PA 1 noted:

“As a general worker at the school, I started with volunteering. I have a daughter and a son and I saw that at my daughter's school they don't positively welcome volunteers because I started there. However, I volunteered at my son's school and was a hard worker. When they curbed volunteering, I stayed at home. Because I was a hard worker, I applied when the general worker's vacancy was advertised. I had to undergo an interview and afterwards I got the job. It caused huge havoc because the parents that previously volunteered blamed the

school principal of favouritism. They did not understand that it was not them but someone else who got the job.”

4.4.3.2 Interference

The participants reported that when parents are allowed to volunteer at school, they take over. This reveals that parents were not trained about their boundaries and their roles and responsibilities within the school. Parents are not a homogenous ground, they display a variety of characters and personalities that might intimidate or annoy educators. Teachers are not trained on how to accommodate parents with a variety of traits.

PR 3 noted that:

“Getting parents involved is difficult, especially when they want to self-volunteer. They want to control and forget the main reason they came to school. Often, teachers would complain about how they conduct themselves. Sometimes you would think that there is conflict between the parent and teacher. However, at special functions we sometimes ask them to volunteer by assisting, but in the classrooms we don’t let them volunteer because it disrupts classes.”

Similarly, PR 4 indicated that:

“We don’t always encourage parents to volunteer during school days. We require from parents to become informed regarding fundraising and other activities but not during school hours. We prefer not to allow them to volunteer, we rather employ class assistants or additional help, but not necessarily parents because they tend to interfere.”

PA 1 indicated that:

“(Laughing)... You know, you would find parents gossiping about what the teacher does in the classroom, how unfair she was towards that learner, how she was supposed to handle the situation... so and so. It becomes bad because it ruins the teacher’s image to such an extent that you would find some parents wanting their children out of that teacher’s classroom.”

4.4.3.3 No Reimbursement

The study revealed that parents as volunteers did not acknowledge that they were not a district employee who had no employment rights. Parents need to be trained to understand what it means to volunteer at their child’s school. Parents and the school did not acknowledge that volunteer involvement was for the benefit of the child.

PA 5 reported that:

“Yes, we do encourage parents to volunteer but abathandi (they don’t like to), and I understand why. Parents are not working, so when parents come to school to volunteer, they go back home empty handed. As a husband and father, when I go out, my family is expecting something when I come back. Sometimes I would get hurtful remarks from my wife as she would say “you always go to that school that doesn’t offer you anything, you use money that could buy our children bread and you go to attend school meetings and come back with nothing but then you want food” so, it’s quite difficult to volunteer, especially when you are not working. As an SGB member, I have to attend the meetings and be at school whenever they need me, but sometimes I can’t because of money. Sometimes, I would walk from home to school and it’s quite a distance, but I do it because I want to be there for my child.”

PA 4 noted that:

“Yes, some parents do volunteer. Once a year, we used to have a Moto show and the school would ask parents to please come and assist because we had food stalls. Willing parents would come and help with braai, hamburgers and hotdogs. Some parents would volunteer during athletics because I do athletics as well. Parents would bring their children to the stadium and take them back home and they will assist with discipline.”

4.4.3.4 Social Stigma

The results of this study indicated that most of the parents were ashamed of the society due to social stigma regarding SS. The SS had a negative meaning linked to it, and was labelled as schools that admit slow learners/crazy children by those who do know the purpose of SS.

PA 1 stated that:

“At first I was scared to even come to school because I was afraid that other parents would see me and make fun of me. The community where I live refers to the school that my son attends as isikole samahlanya (school for crazy individuals). The school accommodates learners who have moderate and highly severe cases.”

Odongo (2018:22) regarded stigma as a barrier that hinders numerous parents of children with disabilities to be able to access essential services for their children. Due to limitation of information, our societies do not understand that having a child with learning disabilities is a challenge on its own.

PR 5 indicated that:

“You know, we don’t admit walk-ins, our admissions are facilitated from the district. What happens is that the department would give us a list of learners that we are supposed to admit and some learners would never pitch. Our SBST would consult the previous schools to check on the learners to find that parents declined to send their children over to our school.”

PA 1 noted that:

“My daughter was attending a full-service school when she was in Grade 5. Her age cohort determined that she was supposed to be in high school. I then signed all the necessary documents after the LSE and SBST had informed me about the SIAS process.

If I had considered what people would say, I would have ended up like some of the parents who refused to allow their children to go to SS and applied for them in a secondary school instead. They have dropped out of school and they are roaming the streets.”

PA 2 mentioned that:

“I didn’t care about what people would say because even my family did not understand the nature of my child. She was struggling and the teachers in the mainstream school requested that she undergo a cognitive assessment. At first, I was in denial, but as I engaged with her I noticed that the school is right. I agreed to the assessment process and findings indicated that my child was functioning at a lower level than she should. At church they would gossip that my daughter attends a special school, but because I wanted her to be at a school where she will benefit greatly, I didn’t care what people had to say.”

The findings reported that society had an impact on the lack of PI in the SS. Parents reported that society had negative attitudes towards individuals with disabilities and stated that society alienated them and made fun of them. Duran and Ergun (2018:1) cited Kayama, Haight, Ku, Cho, East Asian and US educators (2017), defined stigmatisation as a process by which individuals who were perceived as having “unwanted differences” in society were stigmatised and lost their status and dignity as a result of prejudice, discrimination, social exclusion and unfavourable emotional reactions shown by the vast majority of people.

Kayama et al. (2017) further reported that families of children with disabilities were obliged to cope with derisive, hostile, or rude behaviour from the community while battling with the challenges of their children’s disability. Moreover, the study revealed that parents of learners in SS were poorly involved in volunteering activities aimed at supporting their children’s education in inclusive settings.

4.4.3.5 Time Constraints

PA 2 indicated that:

“My daughter is involved in sports, so when they go on field trips, I volunteer to come on the trip and assist with the preparation of learners and ensuring that everything is okay.”

PA 3 noted that:

“By volunteering my skills and time where needed, I as a parent got the chance to interact with and get to know and understand the other learners, parents and teachers. However, there are limited slots for one to volunteer for.”

PA 1 reported that:

“Regardless of the fact that parents do not have time, we have parents who are not working and that live close to the schools and who can help. But parents have never been asked to be volunteers.”

PR 1 mentioned that:

“Due to the limited time the school has, it’s quite difficult to engage parents who may want to volunteer. We have health workers that need to do check-ups to our learners, and we provide staffing like assistant teachers to assist in the classrooms.”

The findings from the participants suggested that volunteering was not encouraged by the school principals, especially during school hours and in the classroom. Unemployed parents who lived far from school do not have transportation fare to come to school. Parents who are working are busy and don’t have time to come to school. Parents with low self-esteem are scared to be judged by society, so they resort not come to school.

Parents reported that schools occasionally let them volunteer at school. They clarified that their involvement was restricted. Lack of time from both the school and home was considered as the barrier that hindered PI to a greater or moderate extent. The results also indicated that volunteering was only allowed during events and trips that took place outside the classroom.

4.4.4 THEME FOUR: Experiences of Parental Involvement with Regards to Learning at Home

4.4.4.1 No Homework

Homework is defined by Chopel and Choeda (2021) as the task assigned to learners by school teachers that were intended to be carried out at home. The key to the success of children with special educational needs was the collaborative effort of parents and schools to promote learning (Epstein, 2009). The findings from the six participants revealed that learning at home was not happening, and the four participants indicated that learning at home was facilitated by the school. However, challenges to effectively involve parents to assist learners with homework still needed encouragement.

PR 1 mentioned that:

“As we are dealing with learners who are intellectually impaired, we consider some of our parent’s abilities and their level of understanding, thus, we don’t send homework home. However, parents do come to the meet-a-teacher sessions to view their child’s books at school.”

PR 2 & 5 reported:

“Our school covers 20% of theory and 80% of practical work. Bear in mind, some of our parents are illiterate and we don’t want to burden them with homework, so no, we don’t give our learners homework.”

PR 4 reported that:

“At our school, we have learners who have higher needs than others. Thus, some learners are able to complete matric and I think for me, one of the most important generality for parents to do is to take an interest in the schooling of their children. Even if parents don’t come to school or don’t attend functions/parent evenings, but at least parents must be involved in the child’s schooling by monitoring their homework, completion of tasks, preparation for examinations, signing of reports. Like I said, we have an open-door policy, so if and when a parent doesn’t understand the work, he/she can consult the teacher and get the necessary information maybe in a simplified manner.”

PA 5 explained that:

“For me, I want my child to learn. I once requested his books from the school and was told that the books stayed at school inside the learner’s file, and all the activities are done at the school.”

PA 1 noted:

“You know teacher, mina nami eskoleni bengihluleka (I was also struggling at school), so having to assist my child with homework is difficult. You know...I’m just glad that there is no homework because now I will be feeling ashamed as I wouldn’t be able to read nor write for her. Just imagine how she would have felt or perceived me.”

P1 added:

“I think reminiscing back to my school days, I was struggling at school and did not have the opportunity to go to the special school or a school that would help me to channel my skills because I believe every learner has potential. I come from an illiterate family and my parents never assisted me with my homework, so this is a big problem that causes inefficient parental involvement with homework because I am also not familiar with it. Like I said, I’m just glad there is no homework.”

PR 2 noted that:

“My daughter doesn’t come with homework, but I make means to buy her some reading books because I believe manipulating and being surrounded by books can trigger her interest to attempt reading.”

PA 2 indicated that:

“Basically, it’s all up to the parent because yes, there is no homework, but a parent should look at what interests his/her child. Like when you see your child’s interest is cooking, you need to stimulate that at home. You can ask him/her to help you with cooking and provide cooking ingredients for them to cook whatever meal they wish to. So, to support a learner doesn’t really have to be about books and reading. The practical work that they do at school should also be stimulated at home, that’s how parents can be involved in the learning at home.”

PA 3 commented the following:

“It is important for me to discuss with my child and listen to him about what his/her day has been like. I normally ask about the work that they did at school, teach him/her more about

sewing and praise him/her when he/she gets it right. I think I have the next David Tlale (the fashion designer). However, parents who are working does not find time to do what I do because they come home late and are tired.”

PA 4 postulated that:

“I think because I am a teacher as well, it’s quite easy to engage with other teachers. Whenever there are parents’ evenings, I make sure that I go to the teachers and go through her books. I make sure that she is up-to-date with everything. I also make sure that if she has homework, we sit and do the homework and if there is a test or an exam that we plan ahead for that, so you can say, maybe I am an over-involved parent.”

The study revealed that there were contextual factors that deter the PI in homework. These factors included parents who experienced barriers to their learning, and illiterate parents who cannot read nor write and find it difficult to assist their children with homework (Abrahams, 2013).

The participants’ statements above also revealed that once parents were aware about the career path their child was interested in they will assist with that at home. Chophel and Choeda (2021:36) contended that the purpose of homework was to have students revise the lessons already taught in the class to reinforce learning and facilitate the mastery of specific skills. The two schools that promoted homework indicated that the repeated failure by students to do their homework negatively impacted both the teaching and learning process which ultimately impacted scholastic performances (Chophel & Choeda, 2021).

The study’s findings also indicated that parents might not prioritise homework because some of the schools do not offer homework, and some single parents work hard to provide food and home necessities. Frequently, it emerged that parents arrived home quite late and do not find the time to supervise homework.

4.4.4.2 Curriculum Differentiation

According to Abodey and Ansah (2017: 40), Curriculum Differentiation (CD) referred to one that is individualised to cater to the diverse needs of all the individuals in a school. Similarly, Letzel-Alt. Pozas, Schwab, Schneider, Lindner, Dias and Cadime (2022:1) contended that CD was one pedagogical strategy that acknowledged learners’ diversity and strived to effectively address their various learning demands.

(Whipple, 2012). In Letzel-Alt et al. (2022), Unesco (2017) was noted as one of the policymakers that urged teachers to embrace learners' diversity by adapting their instructions to the diverse needs of the learners in order to maximise each learner's learning potential. Individuals with learning disabilities displayed a wide range of abilities, learnt in different ways, and were motivated differently (Abodey & Ansah, 2017). SS utilised learning models that were not a one size fits all. They served and accommodated the learners' multiple abilities as well as their disabilities.

PR 2 and 3 echoed similar statements:

"We are a school that is not dictated by the district with regards to curriculum coverage. We follow D-CAPS which is called the differentiated curriculum whereby we do a lot of adaptation for our learners. So, our curriculum is driven by the learners pace and the coverage is only what the child is able to comprehend or master."

PR 5 noted:

"At the beginning of the year the curriculum is discussed with parents. We are offering a curriculum called Technical Occupational Curriculum (TOC), a new curriculum that has been piloted. We cover 60% of practical work and 40% of theory work and our subjects are reduced. We have fundamental subjects that all learners are prerequisite to do and we have selective skill subjects that learners select according to their strengths and interests."

PR 4 reported that:

"We have two groups, where we have our school leavers and obviously our Grade 12 learners. We explain the curriculum that is offered to parents for both groups."

PA 1 postulated that:

"Yes we are told about the curriculum coverage at the school during the meetings."

PA 2 indicated that:

"I became aware of the curriculum offered by the school when I physically went to see the SS. Fortunately, I saw a variety of the curriculum activities and because in the community/area where I live, we have an individual who is intellectually challenged to a certain level, yet he is able to do everything for himself. He doesn't have a formal job per se, but the skills he acquired from his school enabled him to make a living for himself. He does volunteer work

and uses his skills to get an income. So, I was amazed by the practical work these learner's do."

The findings suggested that learners attending SS had educational service programs that were inclusive. Teachers at the SS crafted lessons that provided variation that meets learners' capabilities within their zone of proximal learning development. The findings also highlighted that SS recognised the value of CD, as well as the potential impact in it, as reflected in the quotes by the principals.

Learners were recognised as a homogenous group with unique diverse abilities and were provided with real life application skills. The study revealed that Gauteng East District was one of the districts that used CD to help learners in SS to reach their highest learning potential. DoE (2001:7) maintained that changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methods, curricula and environment to meet the needs of all learners is a key element that supports inclusion.

4.4.5 THEME FIVE: Experiences of Parental Involvement With Regards to Decision-Making

Decision-making in critical areas of learning is regarded by Epstein (2009) as the fifth dimension of PI in the education of children in SS. This sort of involvement included the home and school participating in school decision-making and producing parents leaderships and representative's such as parent-student councils. Parents and principals of children in SS participated in the study and revealed the following sub-themes:

4.4.5.1 School Governing Body (SGB)

The South African School Act (SASSA) Act 84 of 1996 required the SGB to take responsibility for the effective management of the school. This act enabled parents the power to influence important matters including the school budget, school and language policy, discipline, and the appointment and promotion of teaching and administrative personnel because they are obliged to make up the majority of an SGB (Van Wyk, 2004). The participants shared the following experiences.

PR 1 mentioned that:

"There is a system that has been created by the policy in terms of the SASSA act whereby parents become decision-makers because they are the majority. The parents elect the SGB who becomes their representative."

PR 4 noted:

“Obviously the system of the school government body where parents are elected on the SGB and on that level form part of the decision-making processes and budget in the financial management and policies.”

PR 2 mentioned:

“Well, the law of this country which is the SASSA Act 18 of 1996 detects to us as schools that parents must be fully involved in the education of their children. So the act on its own gives us the power and a leg to stand on to see that we promote parental involvement and engage with them when making decisions that are related to our school. The SGB of the school is functional and represents the majority of parents.”

PA 2 indicated that:

“At the beginning of the year or the circle, the School Management Team (SMT) together with the SGB component of both parent/teacher components reviewed the school policies. But I don’t remember any day that they came with feedback or take us through the policies they developed, amended or added, or any decisions they made regarding the education of our children.”

PA 1 noted that:

“The SGB of the school only calls us when there are meetings and when there is an annual general meeting (AGM) towards the end of the year and most parents do not come to the AGM. Normally these meetings sits around 17-18:00 to accommodate working parents. We would end up going back home and the meeting would be rescheduled because we struggle to form/reach a quorum for the meetings to take place”.

PA 3 said that:

“I believed being part of the SGB constituted decision-making for the benefit of learners. Reaching a certain decision requires a common goal from all parents. However, parents who are do not part of the SGB do not interfere in the school matters.”

PA 4 commented and said:

“I think parents are not catered for because their inputs are raised on decisions already taken. I attend parent meetings, however, the agenda formulated just informs us about the decisions the school principals and the SGB has already taken.”

The findings above suggested that the SGB does not conduct or consult with the parents about the school’s endeavours beforehand. The SGB just reported what had been discussed and finalised by the school leaders and themselves and just informed parents. The study’s findings suggested that PI regarding decision-making was limited.

4.4.5.2 Individual Support Plan (ISP)

The DoE (2014) asserted that ISPs were plans that were designed to accommodate learners’ multiple intelligences. Parents are valuable stakeholders and equal partners in the ISP process, and the IEP meeting is the most significant location for exercising the right to parent participation in decision-making (Šćepanović & Kalinić, 2018). According to Hardman, Drew, and Egan (2008), the IEP team must be made up of the student's parents or guardians, at least one regular classroom teacher, a special education teacher, and a district representative who is familiar with the general education curriculum and the resources available to students with special needs.

A study conducted by Menlove, Hudson, and Suter (2001) revealed that parents frequently did not attend ISP meetings because no one had engaged them before the ISP meeting to give an explanation of what would happen at the meeting, what their role was, and what information had to be presented. From this study, participants revealed the following:

PR 1 mentioned that:

“Educators within the institution understand that every learner must have an ISP. It stretches that ISP must be reviewed quarterly. Designing of an ISP is not the sole responsibility of the teacher but involves the parent and other stakeholders like the social workers, the sister nurses, and the therapist. However, it is difficult to formulate ISP because of the lack of PI.”

PR 3 indicated that:

“Presently, we have a shortfall in that department. Most parents do not come in, but whenever they do, for instance in the SBST parent interviews, we do discuss ISP.”

PR 4 indicated that:

“It all depends; it’s different from child to child. Some of our learners have higher needs than others. You know, ISP was effectively channelled by parents of the younger children. PI extremely decreases as children grow, and it becomes difficult to formulate ISP together with parents.”

PR 2 reported that:

“Yes, ISPs are done on a termly basis. For each and every term, we invite parents and even prepare for the oncoming term as well.”

PA 1 and 5 shared the same sentiments when saying:

“I am not familiar with the ISP, and have never engaged with the teacher to do it.”

The study’s findings revealed that PI in ISPs was very limited. Participants indicated that some parents were illiterate and that facilitating ISP collaboratively with them seemed in doubt. PI in ISPs at some schools was positive when learners were in the foundation phase. Ideally, the study revealed that parents lacked awareness on their parental right when it came to participating in the IEP process.

4.4.5.3 Awareness Campaigns

The first imperative intervention for children with disabilities can be done by raising parents’ awareness about the disabilities that their children manifest as early as possible so that appropriate interventions can be implemented (Abd Rauf, Ismail, Balakrishnan & Haruna, 2018).

PR 1 reported that:

“Yes, we conducted awareness campaigns before COVID-19. We used to erect a big tent inside the school and invite parents, the SGB, neighbouring schools and other stakeholders.”

PR 2 indicated that:

“Yes, I think awareness campaigns are one of the programs that would actually advocate that parental involvement is to empower learners’ educational development, be it academically or in terms of skill or sport.”

PR 3 said that:

“Yes, we do awareness campaigns, like in March we do Cerebral Palsy awareness, in April it is Autism month, and in October it is Down syndrome. So basically, every month where there is a disability that we should promote and embrace, we do awareness campaigns.”

PR 4 outlined that:

“Awareness campaigns are good, but uhm, the problem with awareness campaigns is that they need parents to come and be a part so that they could learn. So awareness campaigns are not applicable because they do nothing for parent’s economic situations.”

PA 2 mentioned that:

“I believe awareness campaigns can be a great intervention strategy for parents and the rest of the communities because these parents/communities do not know what is happening at these schools and what potential benefits and impact these school have on our learners. You see, lack of knowledge hinders the development of our society and promotes discrimination and inequality on the grounds of disability.”

PA 1 noted that:

“Awareness campaigns can benefit a lot from parents like myself because people in our society can be so mean and judgemental. Their attitudes only change when it happens to them, or when someone they really close with experiences the same situation.”

As a result, parents of children in SS believed that awareness campaigns can change people’s perspectives regarding children attending SS and with disabilities. The principals demonstrated that knowledge might enhance parents to get involved in their children’s education because it will curb their low self-esteem and enable parents to embrace, support and encourage their children.

4.4.6 THEME SIX: Experiences of Parental Involvement With Regards to Collaborating With the Community

Lastly, parents and school principals were asked if they collaborated closely with the community on the education of children in SS in the research area. Two of the following themes emerged as follows:

4.4.6.1 Career Opportunities

Learners with disabilities can succeed in their careers if they have developed a strong identity, were determined, had a supportive network and created an atmosphere that promoted

their development (Sefora & Ngubane, 2021). The UN Convention on the rights of people with disabilities promoted equal rights of individuals with disabilities within the societies they belong. The World Report on Disability (2011), outlined that young individuals with disabilities were more likely to be unemployed and lived in poverty in adulthood than their peers without disabilities.

The study revealed that SS in the GE District strived to promote skills that individuals with disabilities could use to make a living. Participants had similar comments and said that learners with disabilities deserved to be employable or be able to generate their own income by using their skills. The findings also indicated that the occupational therapists at these schools were doing a remarkable job. Children attending SS in the GE District had opportunities to be independent citizens.

PA 1 further noted that:

“At the school, they inform us about the curriculum that our learner’s may choose from. My son is a good cook and a baker; he bakes a cake that I couldn’t bake, so I always encourage him to look at the baking career to make a living.”

PR 1 indicated:

“Uhm, you know, our kids exit our school at the age of 18 years, and we have occupational therapists who manage them. We have what we call a school-to-work program whereby we prepare our learners that are about to exit. The occupational therapists usually take them through the program and they will visit some local companies, just to be exposed. For example Ma’am, we have a bakery within the school, so the therapist will take the learners to the confectionary/supermarket in the area, so that they see what people are doing in that line of work. So, these programs are managed by our OTs.”

PR 2 noted:

“Let me tell you something interesting. The previous vision we had was explicit to everyone and read as follows: we engage our learners so that they become independent, employable, and integrated in the community. So, we keep a good relationship with other institutions so that when they exit they get opportunities to be employed. So we talking, we have our learners employed in our local retailers as bakers.”

PR 5 reported that:

“We try to employ our learners at the school because even for the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative (PYEI), we normally select our kids who have exited.”

Furthermore, PR 4 mentioned that:

“We have two different groups. You have your school leavers that are not in grade 12, and then obviously your grade 12 learners. The school leavers will typically be children that leave school before the end of grade 12. So, we will interview their parents and look for opportunities. We look for, for instance in the colleges for further opportunities there and we assist parents with that. With our grade 12s, we give them guidance, for instance bursaries, and we try to get opportunities out there because employment for individuals with disabilities is a challenge. So, we involve the parents quite a lot, we try to assist them with career guidance.”

4.4.6.2 Sponsors

Sponsorships promoted the schools and learners with sustainable development by enabling the schools to aim bigger with regards to supporting the learner’s educational development.

The school connected and interacted with companies and provided the local companies with a chance to give to its local community. The more powerful the relationship is, the more significant opportunities for networking outside the school would be.

PR 1 mentioned that:

“The relationship between the school and the community is remarkable. If I take you around the school premises, most of the things have been donated by outside organisations within the community.”

PR 2 noted that:

“Er....with regards to community involvement, we have a very healthy relationship with the outside stakeholders, social welfare development, local police and all that is facilitated by our School Based Support Team together with the school therapist.”

PR 4 indicated that:

“We depend a lot on the community, especially when it comes to fundraising. There are companies that are involved with the school, so we are involved in the community on different levels.”

PR 4 added that:

“As I have mentioned, some local companies offer our learners some training and provides them with learnerships and sometimes permanent jobs.”

PA 2 reported that:

“Yes, there are donors, but mostly financial donors. We also have people from church and certain organisations that would come and donate things like food parcels and toiletries.”

PA 3 and P5 noted that:

“The relationship between the school and its community is very good. The local community and businesses support the school programmes, as well as our school leavers regarding positions after their exit point.”

PA 5 further indicated that:

“We get sponsors who donate wheelchairs, hearing aids for learners with hearing impairments, and those with visual impairment would undergo tests and receive glasses and these things become theirs permanently.”

This theme revealed that community involvement was effective within the schools. However, participants never mentioned how parents were encouraged to be involved within the community. The school principals never revealed any endeavours that were conducted by the community for parents to participate. The study suggested that most parents were not aware of the community activities or programs around them.

4.5 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter evaluated the data derived from the interviews and revealed the recurring themes that arose from the various data sources. The data generated from the lived experiences of the participants emphasised the holistic nature of PI in the SS of Gauteng East District, and the principles and elements which needed to be in place to facilitate successful PI. During the analysis of data, six themes emerged which integrated previous literature, as well as the conceptual framework that underpinned this study.

From the data generated, and the process of analysis, it was evident that the Epstein model gave layers that outlined the significance of home-school partnerships. The study revealed that parents of children in SS struggled to effectively partake in the education of their children due to socio-economic factors, social stigma and low levels of education. It further

highlighted that parental voluntary involvement, learning at home and communication, and decision-making was limited. It was established that parenting and the alliance with the community were facilitated by the school and not the home.

The study emerged that there was lack of home-school partnership, as most of the themes were facilitated by one or the other party. The next chapter focuses on the summary of findings, recommendations and the conclusion.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examined the conclusions and recommendations made on the literature reviewed and data gathered. This study used a qualitative investigation with a small sample of participants from five SS of Gauteng East District to explore their lived experiences on PI for their children who required high-intensive support in their educational development.

The qualitative research approach was applied. As mentioned in chapter 3, individual, face-to-face semi-structured interviews with the purposely selected participants were conducted. The study's conclusions have made it clear how school principals and parents feel about the significance and necessity of forming parent-school partnerships. Additionally, they acknowledged that they face difficulties that limit PI in the schools and necessitate the participation in children's education through the use of Epstein's Six Model of PI.

5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

THEME 1: Parental Involvement with Regards to Parenting

The study aimed to explore the lived experiences of the SS principals and parents in the GE District on how they facilitated support structures to involve parents at the school and how parents involved themselves in the education of their children. The study revealed that the principals of SS in GE District do facilitate PI. They utilised their support specialists and the SBST within the schools to support and empower parents with knowledge and skills. However, this is only acquired by parents who respond to the school invites.

THEME 2: Parental Involvement with Regards to Communication

The schools used a variety of communication channels to facilitate PI with regards to communication. However, the study revealed that communication was constantly aided by the schools and not in the homes.

THEME 3: Parental Involvement with Regards to Learning at Home

Three of the schools did not give homework due to skills development performed at the school and contextual educational statues of parents.

Two of the schools raised an outcry on the lack of learners adhering to homework. The study indicated that parents' involvement in the ISP/IEP was limited.

THEME 4: Parental Involvement with Regards to Volunteering

Volunteering was limited and was not often encouraged by the majority of the schools. Parents could only volunteer when the schools wanted them to. Ideally, there was a certain extent to which parents could volunteer. A study by Mwaikimu (2012) reported that due to the lack of mechanisms that allowed parents to volunteer in classroom activities, parents' involvement in volunteering was therefore hampered.

THEME 5: Parental Involvement with Regards to Decision-Making

The findings revealed that the SS facilitated PI in decision-making because they had a functional SGB. However, decisions were taken by the SGB, not the majority of parents. Parents reported that the SGB, together with the SMT and teachers, informed them during parent meetings about the decisions that were already made.

THEME 6: Parental Involvement with Regards to Collaborating with the Community

The SS mastered the involvement of collaborating with the community and reported a productive relationship with outside agencies within their communities. The schools ensured equity of opportunities for learners who participated in community programs, such as training and learnerships. However, parents were not empowered with collaborating with the community. Parents were unaware of the available services offered within their communities.

The school principals and parents regarded the Epstein's Six Typological Model of PI as what helped to identify the areas that hindered effective, active, constant and productive home-school partnership and put measures to mitigate such hindrances. The schools played a vital role in fostering community growth. Vandalism of all kinds, community people walking through the schoolyard and grazing animals in the schoolyard during and after school hours were all signs of a lack of community involvement in schools.

Parents were members of the community and were better positioned to ensure that community members who did not have children enrolled in the school contributed significantly to enhancing and safeguarding the school.

5.2.1 Related Literature Review

The study found similarities and differences from the related literature. The findings from Ngwenya (1996) were similar in relation to parents who were involved in structure created by the school. Thus, there is no home-school partnership because the schools do facilitate PI whereas the homes do not. Similar factors such as time, work commitment, and financial constraints were also identified as hindrances to effective PI. Ngwenya (1996) conducted the study in rural areas, while the researcher conducted the study in urban areas. The study was investigated 26 years ago, and this current study revealed similar findings.

This study revealed similarities with that of Ruškus and Gerulaitis (2010) who also reported on the lack of the implementation of the IEP. These plans were not developed in conjunction with the parents. Lack of PI obviously hindered the process of IEP to be coordinated proactively.

The study by Hove (2014) indicated similarities with the fact that it had reported that the SS were more effective in the students' achievements. This study also revealed that the SS strived to facilitate career opportunities for the betterment of learners' skills development for employment opportunities.

Gedfie and Negassa (2018) reported that parent's communication with the school was perceived as minimal because they did not visit the school regularly. The findings of this study also indicated that parents did not initiate communication unless they wanted to report a complaint/ if there was a problem. Parents in these studies did not participate at all in volunteering and community involvement. Principals of this study also revealed that they did not encourage parental volunteering. Their results also revealed similarity whereby they reported that parent's participation in decision-making was minimal.

Jigyel et al. (2019) differed with the study as they had a sample size which consisted of 26 purposive sampled parents. Their study had a larger population compared to this study and did not include the school managers. However, it was similar with regards to the research methods which consisted of individual interviews and the criterion of selecting participants.

Munje and Mncube (2018) revealed a gap that existed between policy and practice in terms of school-home partnership. This study also revealed that parents were not aware of their roles as stipulated in the policies. Thus, the school policies were not implemented effectively.

5.3 SUGGESTED GUIDELINES

Parents and principals who collaborated well in school valued one another's contributions. School principals were the most crucial partners in education since they were the managers of the schools and the main delivery mechanism in the educational system. The principal of the school was the principal who had the most influence on improved educational results. The principal's abilities and dedication were connected closely to the academic achievement of the school.

Parents were the primary educators who supported and encouraged their children and who shaped their educational experiences. The SASSA act gave parents a mandate that they had a huge role to play in inclusive schools for the success of their children's education. This included creating a suitable home learning environment.

Onuegbu, Olotu, and Okoroafor, (2022) asserted that in the development of a child, it is imperative that the child experienced a holistic development as part of their physical, social, intellectual, emotional and moral education at home and in school. Magwa and Mugari (2017:75) stated that the idea that PI engendered learners' performances was appealing to the point that the community in general and educators in particular had considered PI as a pivotal ingredient for the remedy of many ills in education today.

5.3.1 Guidelines for the School Principals

Establishing school rules and processes that allow parents to participate successfully in the provision of learning support is a critical part of the principal's entrusted responsibility of promoting PI in the school's affairs. The results of the interviews showed that the GE District's special school principals did make an effort to support PI.

Principals are recommended to makes use of the laws and regulations to put in place an inclusive educational system. One of their responsibilities is to ensure that quality teaching, learning opportunities and support takes place in the school by supporting the families of learners attending their school. Principals from the SS of GE District should continue to include exit plans in job programs for students older than eighteen. Enabling the SGB to facilitate PI workshop programs, so that parents can express their expectations and concerns will enhance PI active participation in the school's decision-making.

The schools must constantly make use of a range of contact avenues (SMS, newsletters, social media: Facebook, WhatsApp, telephone/cellphones calls, emails, D6 communicators, school diaries, parents meetings/conferences/workshops, parent-teacher

consultations/interviews), and include home visits. Home visits can acquire sufficient information regarding the learner's background, home socio-economic status, and the life of the learner outside the classroom (Okeke, 2014). Communicating in a language that parents can understand fosters a warm, inviting environment which enables them to express themselves freely and confidently. Orientate the teachers, SGB and parents about the effectiveness of PI to promote the implementation of Epstein's Six Types of Models.

Encouraging parental support (e.g., networks or groups for parents) is sufficient to build collaborative and cooperative parents who will positively impact one another with knowledge and skills. This can foster peer learning that engages parents through cooperative learning and can improve their attitude towards PI. Parents can learn with or from each other by sharing their diverse experiences and utilises shared resources (Burgess, van Diggele, Roberts & Mellis, 2020). Direct interaction between parents who share similar discourse might encourage active PI.

Principals should recognise that parents' prior experiences may lead to their willingness or reluctance. Thus, creating new positive experiences may lead to their willingness to participate in their children's educational development. This includes significant contribution to empowering parents and ensuring them that they are actually welcome as active participants within the school. Uncovering the obstacle for effective PI might help with mitigating them.

Encourage a comprehensive and integrated support system through home-school partnerships and maximise PI in the creation of ISP/IEP for those students who require it. Give parents a school year plan that includes meeting dates at the beginning of the year. Offer training so that parents may understand their role and what is expected of them. Assure parents that they are welcome and valued at school.

5.3.2 Guidelines for the Parents

A parent's contribution to their child's educational growth is essential to their success in all of their endeavors. The results from the parents supported the notion that there is little parental involvement facilitated by parents at the special schools.

Recommendations for parents include encouragement to prepare ahead of time using the school's year plan, and save money in small increments for transportation. Assist learners with homework for skill improvement at home. Instead of going to school just when invited,

schedule an appointment to see the teacher to obtain regular, timely progress updates on your child's effort.

Parents should engage with the school's governing body to make constructive ideas that will help the school and learners grow. The SGB parent component must represent the parents of the school not the school to parents. Supporting the SGB, teacher, learners and the principal of the school will promote home-school partnership. Parents must reply to school invitations, read newsletters, SMSs, and emails from school. Working parents must use their leave days, request early or late departure from their managers/supervisors, and obtain a note from the school to turn in at work to curb the lack of PI due to work/time constraints. Establish parent support groups to acquire confidence/empowerment to attend the school activities regardless of their educational level.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following suggestions for further research are given in light of the findings:

Utilising Epstein's Six Typological Model of PI (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community), to facilitate PI in schools. The government/districts should publicise the SS to the parents through a variety of media so that parents of learners without disabilities can have informed knowledge. This can curb the social stigma experienced by the parents of children attending SS and promote an inclusive education system in South Africa.

Mainstream, full-service, private and other SS must adopt the strategies used by the SS in the GE District to promote PI. Ideally, SS serve as SSRC and have an the added responsibility of supporting other schools as part of a DBST and furnish support to other schools (DoE, 2014). The South African Government should provide employment opportunities for individuals with physical/learning disabilities to combat the unemployment rate, poverty, discriminatory attitudes and to promote inclusion and equity.

The school principals should design school PI policies and strong PI programs that foster PI and can be implemented

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

There were certain restrictions to this research study. This research was carried out in five of the SS in the GE District. While there were other SS in the Gauteng Ekurhuleni region, the outcomes obtained for all SS with regards to utilising Epstein's Six Typological Model to PI

cannot be generalised. Perhaps the findings might have been dissimilar if the research had been conducted in a dissimilar region since the schools might have approached PI in a different way than the ones that were chosen. According to Engward and Goldspink (2020), reflexivity is understood in qualitative research as attentiveness to the influence of the researcher on the research process. However, experiencing reflexivity as an IPA researcher is tricky, time-consuming and often uncomfortable; it does not ‘happen’ and the researcher had to learn to ‘live’ with data. Drawing on the work of Heidegger, the experience and expression of reflexivity is conceptualised as the ‘house of being’, a shared analytic space that researchers and participants inhabit. The fact that the study used a small sample of participants and did not include all SS in Gauteng South Africa also added to its shortcomings. In light of this, future studies could include a larger sample size and more participants.

5.6 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The study found that school principals had the authority to support and advance PI. The unwillingness of some parents to become involved demonstrated that SS leaders must shift gears when dealing with this issue. The study illustrated that principals do encourage collaborative relationships with parents. Additionally, the study supported the notion that when the family and school work together, schools may attain success and greatness.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ETHICS APPROVAL

APPENDIX B: GDE APPROVAL LETTER

APPENDIX C: PERMISSION LETTER

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPATION FORM

APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PRINCIPALS

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PARENTS

APPENDIX H- LETTER FROM EDITOR

APPENDIX A: ETHICS APPROVAL

UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2022/07/06

Ref: **2022/07/06/43958567/05/AM**

Dear Ms FB Thwala

Name: Ms FB Thwala

Student No.: 43958567

Decision: Ethics Approval from
2022/07/06 to 2025/07/06

Researcher(s): Name: Ms FB Thwala
E-mail address: 43958567@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Telephone: +2782 645 1040

Supervisor(s): Name: Dr Lydia Mbatlana
E-mail address: mbatlana@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 012 337 6097

Title of research:

Parental involvement in Special Schools of Gauteng East District as experienced by school principals and parents.

Qualification: MEd Inclusive Education

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2022/07/06 to 2025/07/06.

*The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2022/07/06 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

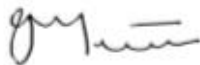
1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
8. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2025/07/06**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number **2022/07/06/43958567/05/AM** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Kind regards,



Prof AT Motlhabane
CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC
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Prof Mpine Makoe
ACTING EXECUTIVE DEAN
qakisme@unisa.ac.za

APPENDIX B: GDE APPROVAL LETTER



GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

R/A/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	19 July 2022
Validity of Research Approval:	08 February 2022– 30 September 2022 2022/310
Name of Researcher:	Thwala F.B
Address of Researcher:	2891 Mandela Stret Tsakane Brakpan
Telephone Number:	082 645 1040
Email address:	43958567@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Research Topic:	Parental involvement in Special Schools of Gauteng East District as Experienced by school principals and parents.
Type of qualification	MED
Number and type of schools:	3 LSEN Schools
District/s/HO	Gauteng East

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below are met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

1. The letter would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. **Because of the relaxation of COVID 19 regulations researchers can collect data online, telephonically, physically access schools, or may make arrangements for Zoom with the school Principal. Requests for such arrangements should be submitted to the GDE Education Research and Knowledge Management directorate.**
4. **The Researchers are advised to wear a mask at all times, Social distance at all times, Provide a vaccination certificate or negative COVID-19 test, not older than 72 hours, and Sanitise frequently.**
5. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s has been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
6. A letter/document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs, and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
7. The Researcher will make every effort to obtain the goodwill and cooperation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers, and learners involved. Persons who offer their cooperation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
8. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school program is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
9. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
10. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
11. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
12. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes, and telephones, and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
13. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers, and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
14. On completion of the study, the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
15. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings, and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
16. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a summary of the purpose, findings, and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards



Mr. Gumani Mukatuni

Acting CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 19/07/2022

2

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

APPENDIX C: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT SCHOOL

Title of the research: Parental Involvement in Special Schools of Gauteng East District as experienced by school principals and parents.

Date: _____

(Principal's Name and address)

Dear (Principal),

Re: Request for permission to conduct research at (School), Gauteng East District.

My name is Fisokuhle B. Thwala and I am currently registered at the College of Education at Unisa for an M.Ed (Inclusive Education) qualification under the supervision of Dr Lydia Mbatlana, a Senior Researcher at the University of South Africa. I am requesting your permission to conduct a research study entitled **Parental Involvement in Special Schools of Gauteng East District as experienced by school principals and parents.**

The aim of the study is to explore the lived experiences of school principals and parents with children in special schools regarding parental school involvement in Gauteng East District. The study will entail the recording of face to face interviews between the researcher and the participants, who will be the school principals and the parents of learners requiring Special Education. Participating in the research will be voluntary, and participants will be permitted to depart at any point without incurring any negative consequences.

The benefits of this study will include guidelines for improved parental involvement and support in Special schools (SS) and may contribute to increased retention of learners. The recommendations of the research from South Africa may lead to children in SS experiencing inclusion and an improved quality of educational experiences.

There are no potential risks envisaged in this research study. There won't be any reimbursement, or any incentives offered for taking part in the study. Communication on the results of the study will be disseminated through the writing up of an internal research report for Gauteng Department of Education on the findings, as well as the authoring of a paper for publication in a reputable accredited journal.

Yours sincerely _____

Fisokuhle Bernice Thwala

Email: 43958567@mylife.unisa.ac.za

Telephone: 082 645 1040

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Ethics clearance reference number:

Research permission reference number (if applicable):

Date: _____

Title: *Parental Involvement in Special Schools of Gauteng East District as experienced by school principals and parents.*

Dear Prospective Participant,

My name is Fisokuhle Bernice Thwala. I am an M.Ed (Inclusive Education) Student registered at the University of South Africa under the supervision of Dr L Mbatia a Senior Researcher in the College of Education at the University of South Africa. I would like to invite you to participate in a study entitled: **Parental Involvement in Special Schools (SS) of Gauteng East District as Experienced by School Principals and Parents.**

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The purpose of the study is to provide critical knowledge the school principals and parents might need to implement in their endeavor to support their learners who experience learning disabilities. This study will also help parents to comprehend the impact they have when partnering with the school. Furthermore, the study aims to propose the implementation of Epstein's model of Framework by both parties to support empower learners with learning disabilities in Special schools.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You are invited because your child is attending a Special school which intends to accommodate and cater for your child's educational needs. For this reason the researchers motive is based on exploring your experiences in regards to parental involvement through parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, collaborating with the community, partnering in designation of IEP and attending programmes proposed by the school.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The study consists of semi-structured face-to-face interviews. As participants you will be asked questions in relation to the involvement you have experienced in the child's educational journey. Participants will be engaged in a conversation facilitated by the researcher and a tape recorder will be present to capture the conversations.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participation in this study is voluntarily, and you can rescind at any moment without any negative implication. An information sheet will be handed out to participants and you will be required to sign a written consent form to acknowledge that you understand the nature of this study. Ethical measures will be considered and ensured.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The study will raised awareness about the importance of Parental Involvement in the education of children with Special Schools. The benefits of this study will include guidelines for improved parental involvement and support in SS and may contribute to increased retention of learners. The recommendations of the research from South Africa may lead to children in SS experiencing inclusion and an improved quality of educational experiences

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

There are no negative consequences for participation in this research project.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Information shared by participants will be handled in complete secrecy and anonymity will be safeguarded. . The researcher will make use of code names and school e.g. P for parents and T for teachers to safeguard the identities of the participants and schools in the study.

Generated data will not be shared and the researcher will not reveal the participants identities. A pseudonym/codename will be used for the interpretation of your responses.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a minimum period of five years in a filing cabinet at the researcher's residence for future research and/or academic purposes while electronic records will be retained on the researcher's password protected computer. Hard copies will be annihilated once the five year period has lapsed. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

You will not be compensated or remunerated for having taken part in this study. Your participation will however contribute to the direct research on the quality of educational experiences of children with special educational

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact the researcher on 43958567@mylife.unisa.ac.za or 082 645 1040.

APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT (RETURN SLIP)

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

I _____ (participants name) acknowledge that I have been informed both verbally and in writing by the researcher about the nature, procedure and potential benefits of participating in this study.

I have read and comprehended the study as elucidated in the information sheet.

The researcher had enabled me an opportunity to seek clarity and I am willing to take part in this study.

I understand that my engagement in this study is voluntarily and I have a right to withdraw without any penalty or other negative repercussions.

I am aware and ensured that my privacy and confidentiality are protected and the findings of this study will be disseminated through a research report as well as the authoring of a paper for publication in a reputable accredited journal.

I consent to the interview being taped.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement from the researcher.

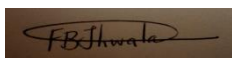
Participant: Name and Surname (please print)

Participant Signature

Date

FISOKUHLE BERNICE THWALA

Researcher's Name and Surname (please print)



Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX F: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SCHOOL TEACHERS

Parental Involvement in Special Schools (SS) of Gauteng East District as experienced by school principals and parents.

Section 1: Background Information

Male	Female	
Age		
How long have you been teaching in the sub-district?		

Section 2: Semi-structured interview guide

Overarching interview question:

What are your experiences regarding parental school involvement in Special Schools of Gauteng East District?

Probes:

1. What challenges do you experience in regards to involve parents at the school?
2. How often does the school create opportunities for parents to involve themselves in the school?
3. What are your experiences regarding parental involvement with respect to parenting?
4. What are your experiences regarding parental involvement with respect to communication?
5. What are your experiences regarding parental involvement with respect to volunteering?
6. What are your experiences regarding parental involvement with respect to decision making?
7. What are your experiences regarding parental involvement with respect to learning at home and collaboration with the community?
8. How often do you partner with parents in regards to designing and reviewing learners' IEP?
9. Are there any educational policies you inform parents about that stipulate their role in the education of their child? If so, please name one and elaborate.
10. What kind of parental involvement do you foster to parents?

11. What programmes do the school provide to enhance parental involvement in the school?
12. How effective are these programmes? Please elaborate briefly. If not, what are your suggestions to improve those in place? Briefly elaborate.
13. Do you inform parents about the various career opportunities available for their children? Please explain briefly.
14. In your view, do you think Epstein's Six Types Model of Parental Involvement can enhance productive and constant home-school partnerships? If yes or no, how so?

APPENDIX G: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS.

Parental Involvement in Special Schools (SS) of Gauteng East District as experienced by school principals and parents.

Section 1: Background Information

Male	Female	
Age		
How long have your child attended the SEN school?		

Section 2: Semi-structured interview guide

Overarching interview question:

What are your experiences regarding parental school involvement in Special Schools of Gauteng East District?

Probes:

1. What challenges do you experience in regards to parental involvement in your child's school?
2. What are your experiences regarding parental involvement with respect to parenting?
3. What are your experiences regarding parental involvement with respect to communication?
4. What are your experiences regarding parental involvement with respect to volunteering?
5. What are your experiences regarding parental involvement with respect to decision making?
6. What are your experiences regarding parental involvement with respect to learning at home and collaboration with the community?
7. How often do you partner with your child's teacher/school personnel's in regards to designing and reviewing of your child's IEP?
8. Are there any educational policies you are aware of in relation to your role in the education of your child? If so, please name a one and elaborate.
9. What role did/do you play in the educational development of your child?
10. What kind of parental involvement do you receive from the school?

11. What programmes do the school provide to enhance parental involvement?
12. How effective are these programmes? Please elaborate briefly. If not, what are your suggestions to improve the programmes in place? Briefly elaborate.
13. Are you aware of the career opportunities available for your child? If so, how did you become aware?
14. In your view, do you think Epstein's Six Types Model of Parental Involvement can enhance productive and constant home-school partnerships? If yes or no, how so?

APPENDIX H: LETTER FROM EDITOR

LETTER FROM EDITOR

Astrid Mc Bean-Levey

Editing/Proofreading Services

To whom it may concern

This letter serves to inform you that I have done language editing, reference
checking and
formatting on the thesis

Parental involvement in Special Schools of Gauteng East District as

Experienced by

School Principals and Parents

by

Fisokuhle Bernice Thwala



Astrid Mc Bean-Levey

16 March 2023

APPENDIX I: TURNITIN DIGITAL REPORT



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APPENDIX J: TURNITIN ORIGINALITY REPORT

