Examining the participation of parents in selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District, KwaZulu-Natal

by

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submitted in accordance with the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

in the subject

EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR S. S. KHUMALO

JULY 2023

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I declare that the above dissertation is my original work and that all the sources used or cited by me have been fully referenced and acknowledged. In addition, I declare that I have submitted the dissertation to the originality verification software and that it meets the accepted originality requirements. I also declare that I have not previously submitted this dissertation or part of it for examination at UNISA for other qualifications or at any other higher institution.

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DEDICATION

I wish to extend my deepest appreciation to my parents and husband for their immeasurable support and encouragement. My parents' guidance, along with my husband's faith in my abilities, empowered me to reach beyond my boundaries to strive for success. I am immensely thankful for their love and support that were invaluable and inspirational sources of strength for me throughout my academic journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)

This study investigated the level of parental involvement in three primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District. This includes parental duties such as attending school events, assisting with homework, and providing a conducive home environment for children to flourish in their scholastic pursuits. Such involvement not only strengthens the bond between parents and educators, but also nurtures a school community built on trust and respect. This study also analysed the reasons for the non-involvement of parents, and its deleterious consequences on learners' academic performance. A qualitative case study research project employed the interpretive paradigm and utilised the purposive sampling technique to facilitate eighteen semi-structured interviews and document analyses, collecting data from selected schools. Findings revealed that all three schools experienced a lack of parental involvement as a result of socioeconomic factors such as poverty, illiteracy and the lack of knowledge, inadequate resources, and time-constraints. This was exacerbated by schools not utilising effective communication channels to involve parents in school activities. After identifying barriers to participation, the staff and parents of each school were eager to learn how they could overcome these challenges. This investigation, while acknowledging the benefits of parental participation, utilised Epstein's Theory of Parenting Typologies and Overlapping Spheres of the School, Parent, and Community as the theoretical framework to elucidate the status of parental involvement in the King Cetshwayo District. In addition, suggestions for implementing strategies to promote parental participation were advocated. Recommendations included the provision of resources and training, designing effective policies, building meaningful relationships, increasing communication techniques, and fostering a sense of community. If implemented, monitored, and sustained effectively, these approaches will lead to increased parental involvement, improved academic performance, and enhanced social skills.

KEY TERMS: disengaged parent, parent-educator relationship, parental involvement, school community, socioeconomic status, supportive parent

ISIFINGQO (ISIZULU)

Lolu cwaningo lubheke izinga lokubandakanyeka kwabazali njengenxenye ebalulekile ezikoleni ezintathu zamabanga aphansi esifundeni saseKing Cetshwayo. Lokhu kubandakanya imisebenzi yabazali enjengokuhambela imicimbi yezikole, ukwelekelela ngemisebenzi yasekhaya Kanye nokwakhela abantwana ikhaya elilungele ukufunda nelizobakhuthaza ukuba bazimisele emsebenzini wabo wesikole. Lokhu kubandakanyeka akuqinisi kuphela ubudlelwano phakathi kwabazali nothisha kodwa bukhulisa umphakathi wesikole owakhiwe phezu kweqiniso nenhlonipho. Lolu cwaningo luphinde luhlaziye nezizathu zokungabandakanyeki kwabazali Kanye nemiphumela engemihle yalokho emfundweni yabantwana. Lolu cwaningo oluhlahlela okuphathelene nesimo, luthathe ipharadam yesiqondiso lwase lwasebenzisa ukhetho oluhlosile ukuhlela liqhube izinhlolokhono ezihlelwe uhafu eziyishumi nesishiyagalombili Kanye nokuhlolwa komqulu wokuqoqa ulwazi ezikoleni zemfundo yamazinga aphansi ezikhethiwe. Okutholakele kuveze ukuthi izikole zontathu zibhekene nokungabandakanyeki kwabazali okudalwa izinkinga zezimali nezenhlalakahle njengenhlupheko, abazali abangafundile, ukweswela ulwazi, ukweswela izinsiza kusebenza nokungabi naso isikhathi. Lokhu kwandiswe izikole ezingasebenzisanga izindlela ezifanele zokuxhumana ukuze zibandakanye abazali ezintweni zesikole. Ngemuva kokuthola imithangala evimba ukusebenzisana, abasebenzi besikole Kanye nabazali besikole ngasinye babe nentshisekelo yokuthola izindlela zokulwisana nalezi zingqinamba. Lolu cwaningo, lubeka ekhanda inzuzo yokusebenzisana nabazali, lusebenzise isichasiselo esibonwa ngokucabanga sika – Epstein's Theory yezindlela ezahlukene zokukhulisa abantwana nemikhakha eyahlukene yesikole kanye nomphakathi njengohlaka lwesichasiso esibonwa ngokucabanga ukuze kuhlazululwe isimo sokubandakanyeka kwabazali esifundeni saseKing Cetshwayo. Ngaphezu kwalokho, imibono yokwenza izindlela zokuphumelelisa ukubandakanyeka kwabazali zasungulwa. Iziphakamiso ezibandakanya ukutholakala kwezinsiza kusebenza nokuqeqesha, ukusungula inqubo mthetho esebenza kancono, nokwakha ubudlelwano obunesisindo, ukunyusa izindlela zokuxhumana, nokugqugquzela ukwazisana njengomphakathi. Uma zisunguliwe, zabhekwa, zagcinwa kahle, lezi zindlela zizoholela ekubandakanyekeni kwabazali okwengeziwe kuphinde kukhuphule imiphumela emihle yabafundi kucije namakhono okuhlalisana.

AMAGAMA ASEMQOKA: Abazali abangazibandakanyi, ubudlelwano bomzali nothisha, ukuzibandakanya kwabazali, umphakathi wesikole, izimo zezimali kanye nezenhlalakahle, umzali owesekayo.

ABSTRAK (AFRIKAANS)

Hierdie studie het die omvang van ouerbetrokkenheid as 'n fundamentele komponent in drie laerskole in die King Cetshwayo-distrik ondersoek. Dit sluit ouerlike pligte in, soos om skoolgeleenthede by te woon, met huiswerk te help en 'n bevorderlike huislike omgewing te bied vir kinders om in hul skolastiese aktiwiteite te floreer. Sodanige betrokkenheid versterk nie net die band tussen ouers en opvoeders nie, maar koester ook 'n skoolgemeenskap wat op vertroue en respek gebou is. Hierdie studie het ook die redes vir die nie-betrokkenheid van ouers en die nadelige gevolge daarvan op leerders se akademiese prestasie ontleed. 'n Kwalitatiewe gevallestudienavorsingsprojek het die interpretatiewe paradigma gebruik en die doelgerigte steekproeftegniek gebruik om agtien semigestruktureerde onderhoude en dokumentontledings te fasiliteer en data van geselekteerde skole in te samel. Bevindinge het aan die lig gebring dat al drie skole 'n gebrek aan ouerbetrokkenheid ervaar het as gevolg van sosio-ekonomiese faktore soos armoede, ongeletterdheid en die gebrek aan kennis, onvoldoende hulpbronne en tydsbeperkings. Dit is vererger deurdat skole nie effektiewe kommunikasiekanale gebruik het om ouers by skoolaktiwiteite te betrek nie. Nadat hindernisse vir deelname geïdentifiseer is, was die personeel en ouers van elke skool gretig om te leer hoe hulle hierdie uitdagings kon oorkom. Hierdie ondersoek, terwyl die voordele van ouerdeelname erken word, het Epstein se teorie van ouerskaptipologieë en oorvleuelende sfere van die skool, ouer en gemeenskap as teoretiese raamwerk gebruik om die status van ouerbetrokkenheid in die King Cetshwayo-distrik toe te lig. Daarbenewens is voorstelle vir die implementering van strategieë om ouerdeelname te bevorder, bepleit. Aanbevelings sluit in die verskaffing van hulpbronne en opleiding, die ontwerp van effektiewe beleide, die bou van betekenisvolle verhoudings, die verhoging van kommunikasietegnieke en die bevordering van 'n gevoel van gemeenskap. As dit effektief geïmplementeer, gemonitor en volgehou word, sal hierdie benaderings lei tot verhoogde ouerbetrokkenheid, verbeterde akademiese prestasie en verbeterde sosiale vaardighede.

SLEUTELTERME: ontkoppelde ouer, ouer-opvoeder-verhouding, ouerbetrokkenheid, skoolgemeenskap, sosio-ekonomiese status, ondersteunende ouer

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CEDU	-	College of Education
DH	-	Departmental Head
DoE	-	Department of Education
ERC	-	Ethics Review Committee
HOD	-	Head of Department
KZN	-	KwaZulu-Natal
RSA	-	Republic of South Africa
SASA	-	South African Schools Act
SGB	-	School Governing Body
SMT	-	School Management Team
UNISA	-	University of South Africa

CHAPTER ONE

AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Jacobson and Jacobson (2020:23) stated, "Every young child who believes in herself, had a parent who believed in her first." These words embody parental support aimed at fostering their children's belief in achieving success in every aspect of life and is relevant to the topic as the researcher chose to focus on examining the quality and extent of participation of parents in selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District (KZN, RSA). During post-democracy, concerted governmental efforts were made to ensure the maximum involvement of all stakeholders in decisions that affected educational institutions (South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, RSA, 1996a). These stakeholders include the management team of the school, comprising of the principal, the deputy principal, and departmental heads (the SMT). Other stakeholders include educators, the schools' governing body (SGB), parents and learners (Guzman, 2022). Since parents are allowed to choose a school of preference for their children, they are also expected to participate in school activities that enhance the formal education of their children.

The researcher, with extensive South African teaching experience spanning seventeen years, has observed a widespread lack of parental involvement in their learners' formal education. This issue of low parental participation has been a long-standing concern in academic and policy contexts (De Luigi and Martelli, 2015). Its multifaceted nature carries significant implications for learner success, as research consistently demonstrates that active parental engagement positively influences academic performance, socio-emotional development, and the overall well-being of children (Myers-Young, 2018). Additionally, Van Zyl (2013) stated that the South African Department of Education supports the premise that effective parental involvement results in improved learner-performance. Conversely, inadequate parental involvement is linked to higher dropout rates, decreased motivation, and educational disparities among learners (Delgado, 2019). Understanding the determinants of low parental involvement is pivotal for designing effective interventions and elevating the overall quality of education for all learners.

To address this issue, the researcher conducted an extensive literature review, focusing on four key areas: the reasons for limited parent participation, the consequences of low parental involvement, the benefits of increased parental engagement, and strategies for encouraging greater parent participation (Delgado, 2019). Information retrieval to answer these research questions was guided by Epstein's (2001) theoretical framework, which encompasses overlapping spheres and six typologies of parental involvement (see 1.7 and 2.9). Furthermore, the researcher adopted a qualitative approach aligned with the interpretive paradigm, utilising a case study design and purposive sampling across three selected primary schools, involving a total of eighteen participants (comprising two SMT members, two educators, and two school governing body parent component members from each school). These schools are pseudonymously referred to as School A, School B, and School C.

Following the principles of trustworthiness and ethics, the study used semi-structured interviews, combined with data analysis, to collect data and applied a coding and thematic analysis approach to address the main and sub-research questions (see 1.4). The research study of this complex and multifaceted subject is aimed at identifying important factors that contribute to low parental influence, assessing their impact on learners, and examining positive aspects and strategies for improving family-school cooperation. In doing so, this research seeks to illuminate the path to a more inclusive and successful future for our learners.

1.2 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to examine the quality and extent of parent participation in the education of their children in the selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District. Considering the importance of parental participation in education, the researcher was troubled to learn that there was a lack of parental involvement in the selected primary schools which affected learner-performance emanating from conservations with other colleagues teaching in the area and cluster meetings in the district. Barger, Kuncel, Kim-Moorman and Pomerantz (2019) posited that researching low parental involvement is crucial because it helps identify and understand the factors contributing to this issue, enabling educators and policymakers to develop targeted interventions. In addition, Lara and Saracostti (2019) mentioned that by delving into the reasons behind low parental engagement, researchers can devise strategies to

bridge the gap between schools and families, ultimately enhancing learner performance and well-being. This knowledge is invaluable in fostering a collaborative partnership between parents and schools (Epstein, 2018), which can have a profound impact on a child's educational journey and overall development. Therefore, this study dissects parental participation incisively by focusing on selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District that has a history of poor parental participation. Its objectives are to identify the challenges associated with poor parental participation, assess the impact of limited parental involvement, explore the potential benefits of increased parental engagement, and develop strategies for enhancing parental involvement.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Many parents in the King Cetshwayo District are neither supportive at home, nor active at school. There have been numerous complaints regarding parental involvement which emanated from educational meetings and from discussions with colleagues from the Circuit. The researcher derived this understanding after engaging in multiple conversations over the years with colleagues from her own school and neighbouring schools. The researcher who taught at a high school for three years, is currently teaching at a primary school for the past fourteen years. During the course of the researcher's teaching career, schools have been experiencing many challenges associated with the lack of parent participation. In most cases, children live with grandparents because parents are separated, divorced, deceased, incarcerated, or work in areas far-away from home. It was also evident that the majority of the children who tend to underperform come from such homes, while learners whose parents are involved in the school's activities produce quality outcomes. It unfolded through such discourse that impoverished socioeconomic backgrounds contributed mainly to the lack of parental involvement.

Although parents are encouraged to be more actively involved in school activities, a great concern exists regarding parental apathy in many South African schools; but this is also a global phenomenon (Mijlof, Roman and Rich, 2020). A study conducted in the United States of America by Siems (2015) supports this contention regarding reasons for low parental involvement in schools by revealing that:

- 71%: Too little time
- 66%: Different priorities

- 42%: Do not know how to proceed
- 29%: Low educational levels
- 25%: Do not care about children's educational journey
- 22%: Lack of basic resources
- 20%: Language or communication barriers
- 19%: Overwhelmed, intimidated, or unwelcomed at schools
- 6%: Socially isolated

Moreover, Li and Qiu (2018) conducted a study using data from the Chinese Family Panel Study from 2010 to investigate the impact of family background, particularly income, on children's educational attainment and the level of parental support. Their research encompassed 14,960 households across China. The findings indicated that socioeconomic status, including income, accounted for 20% of the variance in parental support for their children's education. Additionally, the study observed that parents with higher socioeconomic status were more actively engaged in their children's educational pursuits. Furthermore, Munje and Mncube (2018) claim that poor parent participation affects learners' academic achievements and acts as a hindrance to the smooth functioning of schools. This situation necessitated an ongoing discourse on parents' interest in their children's schooling, especially in 'disadvantaged' schools in South Africa. After carefully examining the reasons for the lack of parent involvement and its implications on learner-performance, it was envisaged that strategies would emerge to improve parent participation. Since it was quite evident that even though many studies covered the subject of parental involvement, no study of this nature had been conducted in the primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District; hence, the need for such a study.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

According to McCombes (2023) research questions are specific inquiries that guide a research study, help researchers to explore, and investigate to understand a particular issue. They are also crucial in defining the scope and purpose of the research. The following research questions were designed to investigate the phenomenon of parental involvement, its extent, the impeding factors and their impact, advantages of parental involvement, and strategies to improve parental involvement in the selected schools.

1.4.1 Main Research Question

What is the quality and extent of parental involvement in the selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District?

1.4.2 Sub-questions

- What challenges impede parental involvement in the selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District?
- How are these selected primary schools impacted by poor parental involvement?
- What are the advantages of parental involvement in education?
- What effective strategies could be suggested to address poor parental involvement in the selected King Cetshwayo District's primary schools?

1.5 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.5.1 Aim

The aim of this study was to examine the quality and extent of parental involvement in the selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District.

1.5.2 Objectives of the Study

- To determine the challenges that hinder parental involvement in the selected primary schools;
- To demonstrate how poor parental involvement impacts the functioning of selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District;
- To explore the advantages of parental involvement in education; and
- To suggest recommendations to alleviate the phenomenon of poor parental participation in the selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District.

1.6. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.6.1 Defining Parental Involvement and Parental Engagement

Parental involvement pertains to the level of engagement a parent exhibits in matters concerning their child's education and life (Epstein, 2018). Abdullah, Seedee,

Alzaidiyeen, Al-Shabaat, Alzydeen and Awabdeh (2011) define parental involvement as the interaction and engagement that occur between a parent and a child, or between a parent and an educator at a school, which can potentially impact the child's educational achievements and overall development. The *No Child Left Behind* movement (RSA, 2001) defines parental involvement as participation in school activities on a regular basis, a two-way process with meaningful communication, assisting in academic learning, volunteering to assist at school, and becoming full partners in their children's education by being included in decision-making processes and becoming part of school advisory committees.

Parental engagement is defined by Waterford (2018) as a process where parents and educators jointly bear the responsibility of assisting their children in learning and achieving educational objectives. Further, Bodrova, Leong and Leong (2013) define parental engagement as the active participation of parents in their children's education which include utilising resources, advocating for learners, and supporting children's academic, social and emotional development. Parental engagement includes participating in school meetings and activities, tracking progress, and being available to listen and provide constructive and timeous feedback. In addition, Hornby and Lafaele (2011) and Wilder (2014) mentioned that engaged parents assist in the promotion of their children's educational aspirations, communicate cordially with their children, and have positive attitudes toward educators.

1.6.2 The Role of the School Governing Body (SGB)

South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996a) which states that all public schools must have a democratically elected SGB consisting of parents, learners, educators, non-teaching staff, and the school principal. The SGB is responsible for managing and controlling the use of school property including buildings and grounds, enacting statutes, and deciding whether local communities may use the school facilities for social purposes. Ntekane (2018) states that collaborative decision-making and increased community involvement leads to improved learner-outcomes as well as greater engagement between staff and stakeholders.

1.6.3 Parental Involvement when Utilising Modern Technology Platforms During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Delgado (2019) mentions that several countries use digital technology as a means to promote parental involvement. A study by Plowman (2016) suggests that the rapid advancement in technology and the widespread use of online media have ushered in an element of communication that influences parental involvement and parent-child relationships. Li, Ranasinghe, Ergun, Liu and Singh (2020) state that the sudden shutdown of schools during the Covid-19 pandemic (since March 2020) has seen the rapid increase in the use of digital technology and remote learning tools. Technology enabled learners, parents and educators to stay connected while providing much-needed support during these unprecedented times. Furthermore, parents had to assume new roles as educators and facilitators in order to assist their children with online learning. However, the increased reliance on technology created stress and anxiety for parents because it changed family dynamics. Winingsih (2020) claims that distance learning during lockdown engendered new roles for parents: they transitioned to becoming educators at home, facilitators, motivators, and directors.

1.6.4 Challenges Impeding Parental Involvement

According to Taliaferro, DeCuir-Gunby and Allen-Eckard (2009), the lack of parent participation can be attributed to practical issues related to daily life such as being at work or taking care of other children at home. De Luigi and Martelli (2015) assert that barriers to parental involvement are many and complex which stem from (among others) societal factors, family dynamics, children's demands, parent-educator relationship, and health problems of parents. Matshe (2014) adds that the lack of parental involvement in underprivileged communities may not be deliberate, and may instead be influenced by socioeconomic factors, poor communication, illiteracy, and a lack of capacity. Moreover, Okeke (2014) contends that feelings of inferiority and negative attitudes toward the school, can lead to the reluctance to become involved. Factors such as family structure, job dynamics, poverty, and the parent's level of education can also play a role. Marishane, Van der Merwe, Van Zyl and Zengele (2013) emphasises that some reasons for the non-involvement of parents are hindrances such as the distance from the school, transport problems, insufficient time, financial constraints, parents lacking confidence or feeling inadequate when

communicating with educators because of language barriers and believing that teaching and learning was the sole responsibility of the educator.

1.6.5 Implications regarding the Lack of Parental Involvement

Fedena (2019) agrees that the foundation of early learning begins in the home, where it happens naturally and informally. Parents should inculcate in their children the necessary skills, values, and essential attitudes to equip them for daily living. However, without early exposure to such learning, children may have difficulty adjusting to the social environment of the school. Fedena (2019) elaborates that children with disengaged parents develop a negative attitude in class and are more likely to be disruptive which adversely affects their academic performance. The current situation at schools in the King Cetshwayo District is worrisome as there is a dire need for interventions to increase parent participation. This should lead to the awareness of the benefits associated with their participation in school activities.

1.6.6 Advantages of Parental Involvement

"Evidence from international studies confirm that parental involvement has substantial benefits for families and schools, as well as long-term economic benefits for developing and developed countries" (Meier and Lemmer, 2015:1-11). A study conducted by Gan and Bilige (2019) based on parental involvement in home-based education contexts regarding children's academic achievements in China, revealed that Chinese children's academic performance correlated with parental involvement. Moreover, Lara and Saracostti (2019) studied the effects of parental involvement on the academic achievement of learners in Chile and found that the key factor was parental involvement; the results indicated that children whose parents have little or no involvement in their children's school life achieved below-average academic results. Parental involvement fosters stronger relationships between schools and families, creating a collaborative and supportive educational environment. This can lead to a more inclusive and effective educational system, benefiting students and the community as a whole (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2001). The next section explains the theoretical framework that underpinned this study.

1.7. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The researcher utilised Epstein's (2001;2002;2006 and 2018) theoretical framework consisting of six typologies and overlapping spheres of parent involvement to explore the links between family, the school, and the community in order to answer the research questions in line with the aim and objectives of this study. Epstein (2018) maintains that the school, family, and the community are important 'spheres of influence' regarding a child's development; and when these environments work collaboratively toward a shared goal, a child's educational development is enhanced. In other words, Epstein (2018) emphasised that the child is at the centre of the model. This model drives the development of six key involvement typologies. Practices, experiences, and philosophy make up each of the school, family and community forces. Learner-welfare and achievement are enhanced when e forces are filtered through. The theory promotes the creation of a stronger connection between the school, home, and community by implementing activities guided by the six types of involvement: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Lastly, Epstein (2002;2006 and 2018) implores educators to help improve learner-achievement and experiences in schools by implementing activities across all six types of involvement.

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.8.1 Research Paradigm

The interpretive paradigm provided the structure for conducting this study. This design in research involves understanding how people interact when providing a product or service - it analyses the context and meaning of how people make-sense of an environment and how they utilise it to inform their decisions. The ontological stance of interpretivism aligns with relativism which maintains that reality is subjective and varies from individual to individual (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:110). In this study, the perceptions of educators, the SMT (principal and one departmental head) as well as parent component members of the SGB of the selected schools were analysed. The epistemological standpoint of interpretivism embraced subjectivism which recognises that our understanding of the world is based on real-world phenomena. According to this view, the world does not exist independently of our perception and comprehension

of it (Grix, 2004:83). Therefore, as stated by (Creswell, 2015) the interpretive methodology is concerned with understanding events from a human perspective by examining the interactions between individuals, as well as the cultural and historical contexts in which people live.

1.8.2 Research Approach

Qualitative studies provide insight into the diversity of certain cognitive behaviours within a population (Creswell, 2015) The researcher adopted a qualitative approach to dissect the thoughts, feelings, and opinions of participants by conducting semi-structured interviews involving a sample of eighteen role-players (six SMT members, six educators, and six SGB parent component members) from three selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District. According to Crossman (2019), qualitative research engages a form of social science that collects and analyses non-numerical data to extract meaningful information. It aims to better understand social life by studying people or places. This confirms that this study was embedded in a descriptive, interpretive, and analytical approach to discover new knowledge and skills.

1.8.3 Research Design

McCombes (2020) explains that a research design is a framework for the planning of research to answer the research questions. Consequently, the research design determined the parameters of the study (i.e., what was to be included or excluded), description of the guidelines, the evaluation of the results, and the reporting of the findings. The research design for this study entailed a 'qualitative case study' as it promoted the acquisition of in-depth knowledge related to a specific context with the possibility of generalising to a wider population. "Case studies answer the 'why' and 'how' in order to facilitate an understanding of social phenomena by means of detailed analysis of the context" (Martins, 2013:391-395). A qualitative case study explores small groups such as parents who are members of the SGB, learners in a specific grade, a group of educators in a school, or principals of selected schools. In this research, the case study design was used to determine the degree of parent participation in the selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District.

1.8.4 Research Methods

The data collection methods applied in this study involved semi-structured interviews with individual participants and document analysis.

1.8.4.1 Interviews

Qualitative researchers utilise interviews as one of the data collection tools. An interview is a meeting of people face-to-face for consultation. It is also considered as a conversation where questions are asked, and responses are expected (Creswell, 2015). Eighteen semi-structured interviews were conducted involving three school principals, three departmental heads (DH), six educators from the Foundation Phase and Intermediate/Senior Phase, and six SGB parent component members to assist the researcher in obtaining a better understanding concerning the reasons for the lack of parent involvement in the selected schools. Further, by examining the participants' opinions, behaviours, and experiences of the phenomenon under investigation, an incisive perspective of parental involvement in the selected primary schools of the King Cetshwayo District would be extracted. An open-ended, pre-planned question schedule guided the process of collection of in-depth information. After the conducting of the semi-structured interviews, probing for clarity and elaboration in the form of follow-up questions was executed.

1.8.4.2 Document analysis

Document analysis, as a form of qualitative research, involves the examination and interpretation of documents by the researcher concerning the specific topic under investigation (Kutsyuruba, 2017). Researchers begin by selecting a set of documents that are relevant to their research question or objectives (Patton, 2015). There are two categories: primary and secondary sources of documents. Diaries, letters, memoirs, personal journals, speeches, manuscripts, direct interviews, and other unpublished works can be primary sources and typically serve as the main objects of an analysis or research work. Secondary sources are created by someone who did not experience first-hand or participate in the events or conditions being researched which are used to interpret and analyse primary sources (Morgan, 2022) These sources are one or more steps removed from the event and may contain pictures, quotes, or graphics of primary sources. The documentation that was perused in this study included public

records (official and ongoing records of each school in the study), policies pertaining to parental participation or expectations of parents, minutes of meetings with parents where learners' progress was discussed and recorded, attendance registers of all meetings conducted with parents, and documents which were essential for corroborating the evidence that the researcher obtained via interviews. The researcher then systematically reviewed the selected documents, extracting relevant data or content according to the established criteria. This process involved reading, transcribing, summarising and coding the information, as necessary. After extracting and coding the data, the researcher analysed it to uncover insights and address the research question, which included identifying patterns, themes, contradictions, or significant findings within the documents.

1.8.5 Sampling

In qualitative research, purposive sampling is a method which is popular for the selection of relevant cases (mainly individuals) when resources are limited (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014). This involves selecting participants (interviewees), especially those who have extensive knowledge and experience regarding the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2015). In addition, criterion sampling refers to a predetermined set of requirements that is stipulated because it is of relevance to research. This research selected participants and study sites that were purposeful to provide an incisive understanding of the research problem. Participants from three primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District that catered for Grades R to 7, and which recorded low parental involvement, were consulted in this research. Participants (6 males and 12 females) were selected on the basis of their knowledge pertaining to the relevant subject field but had to possess at least five years of experience in the study's area. The principal, one HOD, two educators, and two SGB parent component members of each school participated in semi-structured interviews.

1.8.6 Data Analysis Strategy

Qualitative data analysis entails processes that enable us to transition from collecting data to interpreting and sense-making of perspectives of individuals, settings, and situations under investigation. Gay, Mills and Airasian, (2018:76) state, "Data analysis is the researcher's attempt to summarise the collected data in a dependable and

accurate manner". To derive novel insights and knowledge, a qualitative researcher must rigorously engage in analytical processes at every stage of research, from converting raw data into valuable findings (Gay et al., 2018). Coding followed by the thematic analysis approach was applied to analyse the data sets by identifying similar/dissimilar patterns in a meaningful way (Braun and Clarke, 2022). This firstly involved transcribing the responses and employing a deductive approach to facilitate coding and theme categorisation processes which were guided by existing concepts and ideas. The researcher organised, synthesised, simplified, and presented the data in such a manner to draw clear, logical, and profound conclusions (Caulfield, 2019). Hence, thematic analysis (TA) helped to make-meaning of individuals' views, knowledge, experiences, and values from sets of qualitative data.

1.8.7 Trustworthiness of the Study

In research, trustworthiness refers to the degree to which the study's findings can be considered accurate and reliable (Creswell, 2015). The consistency and validity of the research process depends on the strength and appropriateness of the research design, research methods, and data analysis. The validation strategies employed in this study included triangulating - comparing the results of the varied interviews with document analysis to ensure robust and well-supported conclusions (Creswell, 2012:258-9). There are several criteria used to assess trustworthiness including credibility which assesses the internal validity of the research, focusing on the truthfulness and accuracy of the findings (Braun and Clarke, 2022). Transferability is the extent to which the findings of a study can be applied or transferred to other contexts or populations. Therefore, detailed descriptions by the researcher motivate readers to transfer this study's information to other similar settings (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen, 1993). Dependability focuses on the consistency and stability of research findings over time and under different conditions, while confirmability is concerned with the objectivity and neutrality of the research findings, and how well the inquiry's findings are supported by relevant collected data (Maree, 2016). In addition, the researcher builds trust with participants, ensuring that conclusions were not drawn based on isolated eccentric experiences and prejudice regarding the phenomenon under study. By utilising member-checking, the researcher provided the participants with an opportunity to verify their own responses which authenticates the study's

findings and conclusions. The researcher's impartial stance should be established at the beginning of the study as it is crucial to ensure that the reader comprehends the researcher's position to detect any potential biases or assumptions that may influence the investigation at hand (Merriam,1988). To this end, the researcher refrained from preconceptions or biases that would distort the results of the study.

1.8.8 Ethical Considerations

Involving human subjects (participants) in research raises intricate and distinct legal, ethical, political, and social considerations. There are three main objectives of research ethics: to ensure that research is conducted in a manner that serves the interests of individuals, groups or society; to screen specific research activities and projects for ethical soundness; and to protect human participants from any harm (Imenda, 2014). The researcher adhered to all ethical aspects, while the supervisor advised, monitored and conducted random checks. The researcher applied for ethical clearance and received a clearance certificate from the UNISA College of the Education Ethics Review Committee (see Appendix B). Permission to conduct the study in the selected schools was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee.

The researcher then sought and obtained permission to access school sites from the Head of the Department of Education, KwaZulu-Natal, and submitted the permission letter to the regional directorate of the King Cetshwayo District and the Circuit Manager of Mthunzini. The principals of the three selected schools, the SGB parent component members, and educator-participants were given consent forms to read all the finer details of the research. If they were in agreement to participate voluntarily, then they were requested to sign the consent form which was collected and securely stored. The following rights of the participants were protected: privacy, anonymity, confidentiality and wellbeing. The researcher protected all identities and treated all information confidentially as per ethical stipulations. Possible participants were informed well in advance about the risks and their role in the study in order for them to make an informed decision. Feedback on the study's results (after completion) will be provided to participants upon request.

1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

A study on parental involvement in education is significant for understanding how parents can support their children's development. Research by Fedena (2019) found that parental involvement can have positive effects on a child's well-being, especially in fostering better academic performance and healthy social-emotional development. Based on the concern for the low parent participation, this study examined in detail this phenomenon at selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District. Further, the study sought to investigate the reasons for poor parent participation, its impact on learners' overall educational experience, the benefits of parental involvement, and varied strategies that could be implemented to significantly improve the participation of parents in schools. The study is significant as the findings will be useful to other educational researchers, the King Cetshwayo District officials, parents, learners, SGBs, educators, school principals, and other schools experiencing parent-participation challenges. Importantly, the findings will assist the SMTs and other stakeholders in finding reasons for the lack of parent participation, designing strategies to improve parent participation, and thereafter implementing measures to maximise parent participation.

1.10 DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

1.10.1 Parental Involvement

Parental involvement refers to various practices and behaviour of parents that enhance the academic aspirations of their children. Such parents are active partners in the school system. Squealch and Lemmer (1994:93) state that this entails the voluntary participation of parents in various activities, both within the school and at home, which could range from supporting and upholding school values, to overseeing their children's homework.

1.10.2 Supportive Parent

A supportive parent in education not only engages in activities such as attending parent-educator meetings, school events, and volunteering, but also plays a vital role in fostering a positive learning environment at home. Supportive parents assist with homework, engage in discussions about school matters, encourage a love for learning,

and provide emotional support. They listen without judgement but seek to understand children's concerns and challenges (Van Zyl, 2013). Such parental involvement is crucial in enhancing academic success and promoting the holistic development of children.

1.10.3 Disengaged Parent

A disengaged parent is one who demonstrates minimal involvement in school and home-based activities regarding a child's education (Squealch and Lemmer, 1994:93). These parents may be less likely to attend parent-educator meetings, school events, or participate in their children's academic progress. Their level of support and supervision regarding homework and school-related matters is generally low. The disengagement of these parents can have negative consequences for their children's educational progress and holistic development. These parents meet very few demands of their children, are indifferent, show apathy, and are often dismissive of educational matters (Morin, 2019).

1.10.4 Parent-educator Relationship

When parents and educators communicate and work together effectively, it ensures learners' sustained success in academic pursuits. Educators who engage with parents through messages and face-to-face conversations are well-informed of happenings at home. Parent-educator involvement promotes the general wellbeing and social orientation of the learner (Passiatore, Pirchio, Taeschner and Tritrini, 2013).

1.10.5 Impediments to Parental Involvement

This entails factors that hinder parents from participating in their children's education which include poverty, language barriers, and the lack of transportation (Henderson and Mapp, 2002). These challenges limit parents' access to resources which prevent them from attending school meetings, volunteering in school activities, and supporting their children's learning.

1.10.6 Benefits of Parental Involvement

The Carnegie Corporation of New York (2015) states that the benefits of parental involvement in education include improved academic outcomes, better social-

emotional development, and increased collaboration between parents and schools. Active parent involvement can also foster a sense of trust, develop healthy relationships, and provide extra resources for children (Jeynes, 2012). In addition, parental involvement enhances learning outcomes, school attendance, and sound learner-discipline.

1.10.7 Stakeholders

A stakeholder's primary role is to contribute to an organisation to meet its strategic objectives by utilising experience and knowledge. In the field of education, the term *stakeholder* generally includes those who have a vested interest in the wellbeing and success of the school and its learners. This includes administrators, educators, staff members, learners, parents, families, community members, local business leaders, and elected representatives such as those on the school governing body (SGB). Together, these stakeholders should contribute to a quality education environment by promoting the school's vision and mission which leads to high standards of learner-achievement (Great Schools' Partnership, 2014).

1.10.8 Socio-economic Status

A community's socio-economic status (SES) is an indicator of its members' economic resources, educational attainments, and social networks (Henderson and Mapp, 2002). It is often used to measure the extremes of wealth and poverty of a community and is also used to assess the needs of a community. This status is a comprehensive assessment of an individual's economic and social standing, encompassing elements such as education, income, and occupation (Baker, 2009).

1.10.9 Community

A community is a collective social unit characterised by shared norms, religion, values, customs, and identity. Additionally, communities often possess a sense of locus rooted in a specific geographical area. Schools should work closely with the community. The school community is a collective of individuals, families, and organisations that are connected to the school in some way by sharing common interests, goals, and values (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2018).

1.10.10 Academic Achievement

The extent to which a learner, educator, or institution has attained short- or long-term educational goals reflects the degree of academic achievement. Academic achievements are often measured through examinations and/or continuous assessments (Gutman and Schoon, 2013). This is reflected in an individual's quality of grades, achievement of honours, number of awards, and success in competitions. These showcase their ability to excel academically, engage fruitfully in school life, contribute to the community, and display resilience during challenging situations.

1.11 CHAPTER OUTLINE

- In *chapter one,* the introduction, background to the study, aims and objectives and the research problem were presented. Also, in order to facilitate the understanding of the topic, a brief explanation of the research methodology and operational terms were defined.
- *Chapter two* provides the literature review which outlined parental involvement internationally and in South Africa. This chapter also included the theoretical framework which underpinned the study.
- In *chapter three,* the following were explained: research methods, the research paradigm, research approach, research design, the sample, data collection, and the analysis of the data. Also, the major limitations of the study were outlined.
- *Chapter four* comprises of the presentation of the results, discussion arising from the data analysis, and the major findings of the study.
- In *Chapter five,* the study was summarised, conclusions were drawn, and recommendations were suggested based on the research findings.

1.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY

One of the generally accepted principles of effective educational practice is parental involvement and engagement (Borgonovi and Monitt, 2012). This chapter described the study's background, formulated the research questions, and presented the literature review, theoretical framework, aims and objectives of the study. The research paradigm, research approach, and research methods were also explained. In addition, sampling, data analysis, trustworthiness of the study, ethical

considerations, and the significance of the study were outlined. Lastly, the limitations of the study, definition of key concepts and the chapter outline were included. The next chapter (2) discusses the literature review and the theoretical framework.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement in the educational process constitutes an invaluable yet often underutilised asset for schools. It has the potential to significantly enhance the quality of education, particularly in the context of dwindling financial resources (Wood and Bauman, 2017). Additionally, Wood and Bauman (2017) claim that it can foster a sense of pride and vested interest within the school community, thereby contributing to a more robust and engaged learning environment. Moreover, Marcon (2018) claims that active parental involvement is crucial in children's education as it cultivates a strong sense of pride and connection to the school. Learners benefit from the knowledge that their parents are invested in their learning journey, which can lead to improved motivation and academic performance.

According to Epstein (2018), as outlined in the introduction of this chapter, since the main function of the school is to provide quality education for learners, it is where parents should become involved so that their children can hone various skills and broaden their information-base in order to build their future careers. The alliance between home and school is based on an understanding that schools are not only important for parents and families, but also reciprocally relevant at various levels in uplifting the school community; but most critical is parents' commitment to ensure quality of education for their children. Whilst the involvement of parents, educators, schools, and the community in children's education is imperative, there are challenges associated with parent involvement. This chapter dissects relevant literature pertaining to the participation of parents in education. The study of relevant literature commences by focusing on the following:

- definitions of parental involvement and parental engagement, and their relevance in education;
- educators', principals' and parents' perceptions of parental involvement;
- the role of the school governing body and its influence on parental involvement;

- involvement of parents in the past and during the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the increased usage of modern technologies;

- impediments affecting parent involvement;

- 'the advantages of parental involvement, and how they benefit key stakeholders;

- effective strategies that will increase parental involvement; and the last section of this chapter:

- discusses the theoretical framework that underpins the study.

This section of the chapter focusses on the spheres of influence theory and six parenting typologies propounded by Epstein (2009). The focus of Epstein is on what parents do in schools and at home that can fit into the vision of the school which engendered recommendations for improving parent participation in selected primary schools.

2.2 DEFINITIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT, AND THEIR RELEVANCE IN THE SCHOOLING SYSTEM

Defining parent involvement is important in order for one to understand the complex dynamics of parent involvement since the definition of parent involvement has evolved over the years (Myers-Young, 2018). The following sub-sections elaborate on these definitions:

2.2.1 Parental Involvement

The term *parental involvement* refers to parents who are in regular, reciprocal and meaningful communication with stakeholders of the education system regarding academic and other relevant school activities (Myers-Young. 2018). This ensures that parents become supportive in their children's learning and actively involved in their child's education; that is, parents become full partners in their children's education (Mmotlane, Winnaar and Kivulu, 2019: 128). Kaplan Toren and Seginer (2015:812) elaborate that parental involvement is a "multidimensional construct that includes parents' educational goals, future plans for their children, decision-making, school support, parental understanding, and parental participation in the school". Similarly,

Castro, Esposito-Casas, Lopez, Martin, Lizasoain, Navarro-Asencia and Gavirra (2015:34) consider parental involvement "as the active participation of parents in all aspects of their children's social, emotional and academic development."

The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996b) states that the parent means the biological or adoptive person or legal guardian of a learner, or the person legally entitled to the custody of a learner, or the person who undertakes to fulfil the obligations of a person towards the learner's education at school. Ceka and Murati (2016) claim that parent involvement is the first step to parent engagement. Whilst educators advise parents on some aspects about learners, parents also hold valuable information about their children that educators may not know which would be important to share if holistic education is to be achieved. Sapungan and Sapungan (2014) maintain that when parents are involved in the inclusion process, it opens an opportunity for parent-educator collaboration to create a strong support structure for learners to overcome barriers.

Parental participation levels in schools can be divided into three main categories: high involvement, medium involvement, and low involvement. The higher the level of parental involvement, the greater the quality of the learner's educational achievement (Lara and Saracostti, 2019). The National Education Collaboration Trust (RSA, 2016) affirms that parents are obliged to participate in the upbringing of their children, and that they must circumvent problems such as illiteracy, income, race and religion to prevent them from participating in their children's education.

Vandergrift and Green (1992:57-59), assert that parental involvement in education can be categorised into four types of parents (Table 2.1) based on the assumption that the degree of parental involvement in school can be determined by the degree of support for their children's education, their visibility at school events, motivating children, and by providing for children's wellbeing by assisting with homework, attending school meetings, and communicating regularly with educators. Moreover, effective parental involvement is being supportive and fully engaged in the formal education of children by monitoring discipline and showing their children that they are understanding, and caring (shown below as the 'type one' parent category). The 'type two' parent is fully involved at home but does not contribute to child's formal education by not adhering to notices sent by the school, not supportive of school events and they do not attend

parents' meetings. In a study by Van Zyl (2013:233) over a period of ten years, found that parents of school children belonged to the least favourable, non-supporting, and inactive 'type four' category.

Table 2.1: The four types of parents (Vandergrift and Green 1992:57-59)

Type **One** parent:	Type **Three** parent:
+ Parents _support_ their children's' formal education (e.g., by being understanding and encouraging)	- Parents _do not support_ their children's formal education (e.g., they do not assist with homework, projects, and assignments)
+ Parents _are active_ participants in their children's formal education (e.g. supervision of homework, attending meetings, and volunteering)	+ Parents _are active_ participants in their children's formal education (e.g., they attend parents' evenings at school, fundraising events, and market days)
Type **Two** parent:	Type **Four** parent:
+ Parents _support_ their children's' formal education (e.g., caring for children's wellbeing by seeing that appropriate breaks are built into children's study programme, and assisting with homework)	- Parents _do not support_ their children's formal education (e.g., they ignore everything that has to do with children's formal education at home and at school)
- Parents _are inactive_ regarding participation in their children's formal education (e.g., they do not attend parents' meetings at school)	- Parents _are inactive_ regarding participation in their children's formal education (e.g., they ignore all communication from school, and do not attend parents' meetings)

2.2.2 Parental Engagement

Parental engagement involves parents and educators sharing a responsibility to help children learn and achieve educational goals; there must be a connection between family involvement and academic achievement (Waterford, 2018). Fox and Olsen (2014) add that parental engagement is the cooperation of schools, families and communities such that all parties play a significant supportive role in children's upbringing to ensure their holistic wellbeing. Sapungan and Sapungan (2014) mention that parental engagement in schools is different from parental involvement in schools, although both are useful. Parental engagement allows for educators to hold the primary responsibility to set educational goals - they relate to parents not as partners, but as advisors who guide the parents through the academic support processes for the benefit of their (parents) children's education. Waterford (2018) elaborates that partnerships between families and educators promote the development of high-performing and balanced learners which promotes opportunities for them to learn from a larger range of viewpoints and life experiences.

Pontz (2019) reiterates that school-family partnerships enhance learner-achievement, encourage regular school attendance, and foster higher levels of motivation and self-esteem by developing key social and emotional learning skills such as self-awareness, relationship-building and responsible decision-making. Harris and Robinson (2016) claim that such skills can be developed when programmes are coordinated across settings, including home and school. When parents and educators collaborate, sound principles of behaviour, positive attitudes, and relevant skills are inculcated in young people which continue into adulthood. The Queensland Department of Education (2020) mentions that parental engagement does not just end with parents/guardians volunteering in school activities but expands into participating in decision-making processes regarding educational interventions that schools need to implement to uplift learners' academic performance.

According to Section 20 of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996b), parents can be represented via the SGB which serves as a statutory body consisting of parents, the school principal, teaching and non-teaching staff, and learners from Grade 8 to 12. All components of the SGB collaborate by promoting and maintaining the wellbeing and effectiveness of the school community, thereby enhancing

productivity in teaching and learning. Balli (2016) agrees that for inclusive education to be successful, educators and parents should collaborate in planning, creating, and implementing measures for an inclusive school environment where children with special needs feel welcome, accepted, and supported. According to Smith, Reinke, Herman and Huang (2019), research revealed that parental engagement in schools is closely linked to improved learner-behaviour, excelling in academics, improved social skills, learners attending school regularly, and adapting easily to the school environment irrespective of income or family background. The perceptions of parental involvement by educators, school management teams, and parents are discussed in the following section:

2.3 EDUCATORS, SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS, AND PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Day and Dotterer (2018) highlight that during the last decade, there has been a great interest in the level and *type of parents* who actively participate in their children's education. Day and Dotterer (2018) add that the lack of parental involvement has been severely criticised by both educators and the DoE. While there is agreement on both sides that parents play an integral role in improving learner achievement, there is also a perception that too much parental involvement undermines the autonomy of the teaching profession, especially regarding decisions of academic importance. Llamas and Tuazon (2016) add that for this reason some educators and principals may have a negative attitude towards parental involvement.

Bilton, Jackson and Hymer (2018) mention that there is evidence to suggest that educators and principals may have differing views on parental involvement in education, specifically what the boundaries of parental involvement ought to entail. For example, both groups may share common goals concerning learners' education and social development, but parents may be focused more on their own children whereas educators consider their classroom as a unit. Bilton et al. (2018) assert that differences are expected within each group (i.e., cultural diversity, sociability, social background, personal issues, and demography) which may affect how parents and educators perceive the concept of parental involvement, especially regarding their responsibilities in the school-family collaboration.

It is important to note that parents' perceptions of parental involvement may vary based on their cultural background, personal experiences, and their child's specific needs and circumstances (Froiland and Davison 2014). A study by Pinquart (2016) shows that many parents perceive parental involvement as a means to actively support and enhance their child's academic performance. They believe that by being engaged in their child's educational journey, they can help improve grades and overall learning outcomes. As an experienced educator having dealt with many parents over the years, this is not the view of all parents as some parents believe it is the sole responsibility of the educator to assist the child in achieving optimal outcomes. There are parents who also view involvement as a way to have a say in school-related decisions. They want to be part of the decision-making process by providing input on matters such as curriculum, school policies, and extracurricular activities (Epstein, 2018). Parents often see their involvement as a way to instil a sense of responsibility and accountability in their children by actively participating in their children's education; as such parents aim to teach their children the importance of commitment, time-management, and taking ownership of their learning.

2.4 FUNCTIONS OF THE SGB, AND ITS ROLE IN INFLUENCING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The SGB serves as the vehicle to govern and manage school activities. However, there is a misconception that SGBs regard themselves as being co-responsible for providing and delivering quality children's education (Selamolela, 2019). According to SASA regulations (RSA, 1996b, Section 20), South African public schools are required to have a democratically elected School Governing Body (SGB) consisting of parents, learners, educators, non-teaching staff, and the school principal. The SGB should include the school principal as an ex-officio member and members chosen from educators, non-teaching staff, and democratically elected parents of learners in Grades 8 to 10 at the secondary school level. Parents who work in schools cannot represent other parents on the SGB. While active SGB members can be reimbursed for operating costs, they are not allowed to receive payment for SGB-related work. Additionally, SGB members can participate in sub-committees aimed at promoting learners' interests using their expertise. The composition and number of SGB

members may vary from school to school, depending on factors such as learner enrolment.

Lemmer and Van Wyk (2014) mention the core functions of a SGB: liaising with the SMT, and promoting the school's mission, vision, purpose, direction, priorities and strategies within the boundaries of its constitution and legal obligations. According to the Schools Act, 84 of 1996 (SASA), the parents are given the platform in the SGB to participate in school governance and support their children to become better citizens. As a legal entity, the SGB is the only structure in the school where parents lawfully participate. The powers were given to the parents through the Act to be involved in key decision-making processes of public schools since parents are regarded as key stakeholders. The roles of the SGB include:

- starting and administering a school fund;
- determining admission and language policies aligned to provincial and national guidelines;
- drafting a learner code of conduct after consultation with educators, parents and learners;
- opening, maintaining, and monitoring one bank account for the school;
- preparing an annual budget and submitting it to parents for approval;
- compiling and submitting audited financial statements to their provincial departments of education;
- buying textbooks, educational materials, and equipment for the school;
- paying for services;
- supplementing the funds supplied by the education department (in the case of Section 21 schools) by setting, collecting and administering school fees, overseeing fund-raising efforts, and deciding on applications for exemptions from school fees; and
- advising the DoE on the appointments of teaching and non-teaching staff in accordance with legislation and policies (RSA, 1996b).

The SASA (1996b) further states that the SGB's responsibilities include administering, maintaining and controlling the school's property, adopting a constitution, and deciding on whether the surrounding community can use the school facilities for social and religious purposes. According to Van Deventer (2016), the role of the SGB strengthens

partnerships between the school, the parent and the community. In this sense the SGB provides the service of liaising between the parent and school regarding challenges and disagreements. The following section discusses parental involvement in the past and during the Covid-19 pandemic, including the utilisation of modern technology:

2.5 INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS IN THE PAST AND DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWNS, AND THE INCREASED USAGE OF MODERN TECHNOLOGIES

The functions parents enact in promoting children's education is not new. Parents have been children's initial educators since time immemorial. In ancient cultures, parents have been the primary educators of their children (Delgado, 2019). Before the recording of history, evidence suggests that parents were nurturers and educators of their children through modelling, care and guidance. They communicated the skills, morals and values of the time that were influenced by their own life experiences, the environment in which they lived, and their cultural norms (Booyse, Le Roux, Seroto and Wolhuter, 2016). According to Kober (2020), in ancient cultures there was no other education than that provided by the extended family and the clan. As civilisation evolved, children continued their early education at home; later formal education occurred outside of their homes. In the 19th and 20th centuries, public schooling gradually evolved and replaced fieldwork, factory work, and domestic chores as the child's primary function. Plowman (2016) suggests that rapid technological advances, the expansion of online media usage, and the falling costs of mobile technologies, increased communication channels that suddenly inspired parent participation and better parent-child relationships.

According to Delgado (2019), using digital technologies as a means to promote parental involvement has been a practice used in projects in different countries. The rapid internet leap of the 1990s, and the expansive spread of mobile technologies in recent years, have introduced modern communication that is influential in promoting enhanced parent-educator-learner relationships. A study by Papadakis, Zaranis and Kalogiannakis (2019) found that 293 families in Greece between September 2018 and November 2018 displayed positive attitudes towards the use of technologies for educational purposes. This confirmed that parents strive to create an enriching learning environment at home. However, according to Papadakis et al. (2018), it was

found that older and less educated parents may have difficulty adapting adequately to the rapid advances in technology, and may not be able to effectively harness the benefits that mobile learning technologies can offer their children - the younger parents with a higher level of education adapt relatively easier to the new technologies by creating a better and modern learning environment at home.

A study by Packman (2020) reveals that in accordance with all the rules and regulations promulgated by the Disaster Management Act of the Republic of South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic, schools which closed on the 18th of March 2020 expected that teaching and learning will resume on the 14th of April 2020. Schools acted swiftly and with urgency by migrating to remote teaching and learning. Educators collated packages of worksheets whilst others set up online classes by using Skype and Zoom platforms. Some independent and public schools were fortunate to adopt and access online teaching and learning methodologies. However, they encountered numerous challenges but circumvented them by resorting to WhatsApp group teaching. Unfortunately, the majority of public and underprivileged schools could not access online platforms as they were under-resourced which created a challenge for learners, schools, and parents. Packman (2020) elaborates that the extended lockdown pressurised parents to become more committed than previously which resulted in them becoming 'home' educators. In other words, they had no choice but to become more involved in their children's learning. Since the schools were instructed to close in an effort to mitigate the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, many parents juggled their time-schedules of their careers to assist with their children's learning from home. The sharing of resources among learners and neighbours (like data) was evident during these long months of isolation which also engendered a collaborative relationship between educators and parents as they now had the opportunity to appreciate fully the importance of a strong home-school partnership, albeit through online platforms.

Although it has been found that learning from home (or distance learning) has positives such as parents and children bonding, the process came with challenges. The Covid-19 pandemic had a profound effect on family life which created stress and anxiety (Rohitha and Krisnawati, 2020). The staggered reopening of schools in May 2020 allowed for some normality to return. Despite Covid-19 having a negative impact on the whole of society, some advantages emerged in terms of parents' increasing

commitment to their children's educational needs. Moreover, according to Onyema and Deborah (2019), technology was key in rescuing education during Covid-19. The transition to the use of technology in education reformed educators' methods of teaching from the traditional approach (dispensers of knowledge) to a more flexible approach where they act as facilitators, mentors and motivators to inspire learners to participate and partner with their parents when at home. The following section provides information on the impediments of parental involvement.

2.6 IMPEDIMENTS TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND THEIR IMPACT ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

A common complaint among educators is that parents are not actively involved in their children's schooling (McKenna and Millen, 2013). This may be so because of barriers that prevent effective parent contribution to their children's education which can be attributed to a variety of factors including the lack of access or understanding of the school system, differences in culture, language barriers, and financial constraints. Singh, Mbokodi and Msila (2004) found that in eight historically disadvantaged secondary schools, the lack of parental involvement was a major issue which exposed several impediments confronting parents especially from the rural areas. These impediments from the researchers' experience include: lack of transport, poverty, language, drug and alcohol abuse, disinterestedness in education, attitude of educators, time-constraints, and leaving educational matters solely in the hands of educators.

Van Zyl (2013:234) contends that the majority of learners who originate from 'disadvantaged' areas are still affected by the legacy of apartheid which left them beginning at the bottommost rung of the socio-economic ladder. Reasons for non-involvement reported by parents could be categorised into two areas: Physical and psychological hindrances (Van Zyl, 2013). The former includes parents' homes and workplaces being situated far from schools, transport problems, time-constraints, and financial challenges; the latter (psychological hindrances) includes diffidence when communicating with educators because of language barriers and illiteracy. The misconception that formal education was not the domain of the parents further compounded the problem of not contributing to assist in guiding children with their

homework. This was exacerbated by children's lack of cooperation by not delivering school correspondence to parents.

2.6.1 Language Barriers and the Lack of Communication between the School and Parents

According to my experience I observed that parents blame educators for the lack of effective communication; they believe that the educator is obliged to contact them to discuss the learner's progress at school. Also, educators are often criticised for waiting too long until the learner's problem escalated to being serious (Olsen and Fuller, 2011:105). In addition, Olsen and Fuller (2011:105) claim that parents appreciate the list of expectations of them, but this should be presented at the beginning of the year. Moreover, parents prefer that educators take time to discuss issues concerning their children, the process of learning, and their children's academic progress. Additionally, Dick (2016:48) states that the presence of language barriers and low levels of literacy among parents hinder effective communication between school and home, resulting in parents being reluctant to contact the school.

2.6.2 Negative Attitudes towards Parents by School Staff

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) claim that barriers arise when parents experience negative attitudes displayed by school staff who feel that parents' low level of education leads to their inability to help their children with school tasks, thus a feeling of inferiority exists among parents. In other words, the attitudes of school personnel towards poor and illiterate families could be a possible barrier to parental involvement. When staff members display a positive attitude towards all families, then parents will feel welcome at school. Also, according to Dick (2016), there are some schools which lack ethical practices regarding including parents in matters of education. These include educators believing that some parents do not possess adequate parenting skills, are lazy, and therefore they (educators) marginalise them by not making the parent feel welcome. I believe that educators should welcome parents at the school gate, attend to parents expeditiously (even without an appointment), and not side-line their concerns raised at meetings.

2.6.3 Marginalising Parental Concerns in Education

Yolanda, Sierra and Rodriguez (2014:91) identify several reasons for educators not encouraging parents to become actively involved in their children's education. These include educators and principals underestimating the importance of parental feedback, large class sizes, burdensome workloads that leave little time to consult with parents, and the lack of interest from school leadership regarding parental involvement. Beycloglu (2016:89-90) states that "very few schools have policies on parental involvement although there are quite a number of DoE guidelines that relate to one another".

2.6.4 Socio-economic Backgrounds of Parents

Seid, Bloomfield and Hesse (2018) define socio-economic status (SES) as one's standing or rank relative to others in a group or society, determined through employment or occupation, income and education. This revealed that in South Africa, there are many socio-economic factors that make parental involvement difficult. These include illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, and ineffective communication methods such as the language used to relay school notices or messages. Matshe (2014) adds that parents in South Africa do not have time to visit schools because of their socio-economic challenges and their lack of skills to help their children at home with schoolwork because they (parents) are semi-literate.

Munje and Mncube (2018) elaborate that poverty is one of the main obstacles preventing parents from disadvantaged communities to assist in their children's education as their priority is fending for the daily needs of their families. The SES defines the quality of life, the opportunities, and privileges (if any) in society. Poverty is not a single factor contributing to the lack of parental involvement; it is also characterised by multiple physical and psychological stressors. Munje and Mncube (2018) also observe that many children in South Africa are being raised by grandparents who support their families on social grants. Therefore, on a daily basis, grandparents of learners focus on survival; that is, sustaining their grandchildren, and not on their education. Moreover, illiteracy prevents grandparents from assisting grandchildren with schoolwork and monitoring their work at home. Furthermore, Liu and Yi-Lin (2019) contend that parents' SES and educational level may influence

learners' academic performance because of the role-model effect - learners strive to become successful or well-educated as their parents.

Jabar, Garcia and Valerio (2020) reiterate that parental involvement has many positive effects for underperforming learners such as boosting self-esteem, increased motivation, and independence which can lead to academic success regardless of their socio-economic status. Lindberg and Damircan (2013) confirm that the involvement of parents in education is considered amongst the most important factors in increasing the quality of schooling because both the home space and the school environment influence a child's thought processes. The next section elaborates on the advantages of parental involvement:

2.7 ADVANTAGES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT TO KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Many parents want their children to be successful in both their professional life and in their private life. Parents usually perceive the school system as a means for their children to attain success in adulthood. However, the school alone cannot provide learners with personal, vocational, and cultural skills they need to succeed. In order for learners to be successful, schools must also involve parents in education (Lemmer and Van Wyk, 2014:199). Research confirms that parental involvement has significant benefits for families and schools, as well as long-term economic advantages for developing and developed countries (Meier and Lemmer, 2015). Pelayo (2018) explains that stakeholders refer to everyone who is invested in the school's welfare, success, and shares a common interest in the needs of a school. Stakeholders include the principal, the educators, the SGB, families, the learners, and the surrounding community.

2.7.1 Advantages of Parental Involvement for Schools, SMTs and Educators

Ntekane (2018) emphasises that parents who are involved in their children's daily schooling activities are more aware of and appreciate the challenges educators face in the classroom. Educators have challenging school and classroom responsibilities which are generally unappreciated by parents who could help by becoming actively involved in their children's education. When parents become involved in their children's education, they combine forces with educators to make a formidable

educational team characterised by teamwork and mutual respect. The entire education system benefits when parents foster an atmosphere of learning and collaboration with schools. Importantly, parental involvement has a greater influence on improving the quality of school programmes and stimulating the school environment to become more productive (Epstein, 2018).

Lemmer and Van Wyk (2014:200) focus on the following benefits of effective parental involvement:

- Enhances the relationship between parents, educators, and the school;
- Improves the educator's awareness of the child's home conditions, which can affect their academic performance;
- Positively increases commitment to teaching; and
- Reduces the burden of overload on educators.

It is advantageous for the educator to know that parents are aware of the complexities of the classroom. O' Toole (2016) mentions that constant communication between home and school helps the educator to know the learner personally, to understand their problems, and to solve them more efficiently. This, in turn, enables the educator to teach the learner more effectively by personalising the learning experience, especially for those learners facing challenges.

2.7.2 Advantages of Parental Involvement for the Community

Since community involvement is essential in achieving the vision and mission of schools (Epstein, 2018), the community should be encouraged to contribute to local schools through volunteering and monetary contributions. If the community is involved in assisting in school activities, the school will be guaranteed continuous support and trust from the community. Community-building activities are important for creating a sense of bonding among the different families and groups connected to the school. Olsen and Fuller (2011) indicate the various benefits for educators, schools and communities when parents actively participate in their children's education, and these include:

- educators and administrators exhibit higher morale and job satisfaction;
- communication improves between educators and parents;

- communities have better opinions of schools with involved parents; and

- parents have more respect for the teaching profession and academic programmes, thus they participate in fundraising drives (among other activities).

2.7.3 Advantages of Parental Involvement for Parents

Involvement in children's schooling can be beneficial for parents as research shows that it increases parental confidence, satisfaction, and interest which facilitates meaningful interaction with their children and promotes the fulfilment of children's intellectual needs (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011; O'Toole, 2017). Derrick (2017) claims parents become more aware of their parenting capabilities by becoming actively and emotionally involved in their children's schooling as they will understand the role of the educator and the curriculum better. In addition, Kiely (2017) states that parents are more likely to respond to educators' requests for assistance at home when they are kept updated with their children's progress at school and this will engender more positive opinions about the school and play a more active role in school policymaking as well as becoming active community members.

According to the Public School Review (2021), when parents actively participate in their children's education, it leads to a sense of satisfaction as they contribute to their child's future success. This involvement fosters a deeper understanding of the curriculum and school activities, resulting in a higher quality of education for the child. This enhanced understanding also allows parents to spend more time assisting their children with school matters, and promoting open and effective communication between them. Furthermore, Baker, Wise, Kelly, and Skiba (2016) emphasise that collaboration between parents and the school aligns their (parents') vision for the institution, leading to increasingly positive perceptions of the school.

Further, Derrick (2017:135) emphasises the benefits of parental involvement, citing improvements in parenting skills through well-structured workshops designed to empower parents to support their children at home. Educational training programmes, as suggested by Derrick (2017:135), equip parents with knowledge and skills in various fields, enabling them to become more effective in supporting their children's education. Maluleke (2014:33) reiterates that parents benefit from active involvement

in their children's education which helps them to better understand their responsibilities and expectations towards the school, while it equips them with the knowledge and competencies to effectively manage their children at home. These improvements ultimately enhance the quality of their children's learning experiences at school.

2.7.4 Advantages of Parental Involvement for Learners

Parental involvement plays a crucial role in the achievement of positive outcomes among children (Compton, 2016). Epstein (2018) confirms that families are the cornerstones of education. For example, when schools, families and communities work together to support learning, learners perform better at school, the drop-out rate decreases, and they have a greater liking for school. Olsen and Fuller (2011) claim that the benefits of parental involvement for learners include learners displaying a positive attitude towards school, discipline improves, fewer learners are placed in remedial classes or special education programmes, and children from diverse cultural backgrounds perform better. According to Van Zyl (2013:227), improving the performance of learners is one of the main objectives in education, but this requires active parental involvement.

Although parental involvement is an effective way to ensure learners' success, Barger, Kuncel, Kim-Moorman and Pomerantz (2020) purport that inadequate parental involvement contributes to poor learner-performance and class-participation. A study by Boonk, Gijselaers, Ritzen and Brand-Gruwel (2018) indicates the following benefits for learners whose parents were actively involved in their education:

- they attain high scores in tests;
- they have a better school attendance record;
- their home tasks are completed on time, executed with neatness and pride, and presented in a pleasing manner;
- they develop higher self-esteem and work ethics; and
- their improved social skills and disciplined behaviour allowed them to acclimatise better to their school environment.

Smith, Reinke, Herman and Huang (2019:363) state that the family forms the first level of children's learning where they are guided on how to build relationships and follow routines. On the school level, the learner acquires knowledge, social skills, and strategies for solving academic and social problems.

Baker et al. (2016) maintain that parents devote much of their time to supervise children's home tasks; this strengthens the bond between parent and child. Avvisati, Bebas and Byon (2015:296) assert that in a traditional family structure with a present husband and wife, it is usually the wife who decides about their children's education. Additionally, Avvisati et al. (2015) contend that when mothers engage in communication with their children regarding school issues, this significantly improves children's academic performance, particularly in processing linguistic information. However, performance in mathematics is enhanced when both parents are involved. According to Harris and Robinson (2016:188), when parents support their children's formal education as well as extracurricular activities, learners feel motivated because they feel that their parents are interested in their holistic development and overall success. When there is effective communication and educator-parent collaboration, the researcher noticed that attitudes from both parties change such that this harmonious relationship fosters healthy social skills, enhanced learner-performance, and a feeling of belonging to the school. as mentioned by Ntekane (2018), parental involvement in education has many benefits for schools, learners and parents. For schools, it improves the overall learning environment by fostering a sense of community and collaboration. Learners, on the other hand, experience improved academic performance, increased self-esteem, and strengthened social skills when their parents are actively involved in their education. At the same time, parents benefit from a deeper understanding of their child's progress and a closer connection to the learning process. As posited by Epstein (2018), this collaborative partnership ultimately creates a more successful and successful educational journey, benefiting both partners in the growth and development that is the child. In the next section, recommendations on improving parental involvement are discussed.

2.8 STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

In my experience, schools that have a high rate of parent engagement help close the achievement gap between groups of learners. Hence, to encourage and increase

parental involvement, schools should focus on the following goal along with the approach and strategy:

Table 2.2: Goals with approaches and strategies (Dick, 2016; Van Zyl, 2013; RSA, 1996 and Simon, 2017)

Goal	Approach and Strategy
1. Encourage Parental Participation in School Activities	- Devise policies in collaboration with SGB members to ensure parental attendance at school activities (e.g., sports day, fundraising functions, and parent-child-educator meetings) (Van Zyl (2013)
2. Set Goals and Create a School Policy	- Set goals for enhancing parental participation. - Design a school policy for parental involvement. - Establish an awareness campaign highlighting parents' role in their children's schooling. - Compile an annual programme of events and responsibilities for parents, disseminated at year-end for the following year. Include specific activities, timeframes, and responsible individuals (Van Zyl, 2013).
3. Create an Invitational Atmosphere	- Ensure a welcoming and professional environment in the school, particularly at the waiting area. - First impressions matter when parents or visitors enter the school (Van Zyl, 2013).
4.Facilitate Collaboration and Shared Decision-Making	- Encourage parents to form sub-groups based on grades or subjects. - Utilise internet platforms for communication, especially if parents feel intimidated by open conversations (Dick, 2016).
5. Offer Workshops and Programmes	- Organise workshops on how parents can support their children's learning in specific subject areas. - Help parents develop strategies to accelerate their children's success in and out of the classroom (Van Zyl, 2013).

Goal	Approach and Strategy
6. Improve Communication Strategies	- Promote one-on-one educator-parent interaction during parents' meetings. - Encourage parents to read all school correspondence and actively participate in communication (Van Zyl, 2013).
7. Embrace South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996b)	- Actively involve parents in school governance as allowed by the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996. - Promote democracy, tolerance, cooperation, and joint decision-making among all stakeholders (RSA, 1996b).
8. Early Learning Through Informal Parental Teaching	- Recognise the importance of parents teaching core skills, values, and behaviours. - Early learning sets the foundation for practical skills needed in adulthood (Simon, 2017).

In addition, a study by Simon (2017) showed that children who receive parental support develop their comprehension, critical-thinking skills, motivation, and self-discipline in school. On the other hand, disengaged parents who have little interest in their children's academic life, often see their children fail, thus creating a 'lost generation' of learners who are not interested in learning or gaining access to information. This not only affects their academic achievement, but also their self-esteem and future employment opportunities. Ticuşan (2015) points out that parental involvement also has a positive effect on learner behaviour and their attitude to school. Children who have parents who are disinterested in school activities generally display negative and destructive behaviour in the classroom. When parents monitor the behaviour of learners at home, they (learners) are more likely to behave in school, pay attention in the classroom, and develop better learning skills. The next section presents the theoretical framework employed in this study:

2.9 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THIS STUDY

2.9.1 Epstein's Theory of Parental Involvement

There are many theories of partnerships on parental involvement. For the purposes of this study, the theoretical framework of Epstein (2018) was appropriate because it

relates to the phenomenon under investigation, particularly the overlapping spheres and typologies of parental involvement (outlined in chapter one). Epstein (2018) refers to the overlapping spheres of influence which reveal that functional homes and schools are intertwined by adopting common goals and objectives to enhance learners' education; and that this should be extended to the community so that parental involvement is not only seen as existing between parents and school, but a three-way collaboration between schools, parents, and communities. This notion, together with the six typologies of parenting as a whole, was employed to place the research objectives and research problem in perspective which led to advocating salient recommendations to increase parental involvement at schools.

2.9.2 Relations between the Overlapping Spheres

Figure 2.1 below illustrates Epstein's (1997) model of the theory of overlapping spheres.
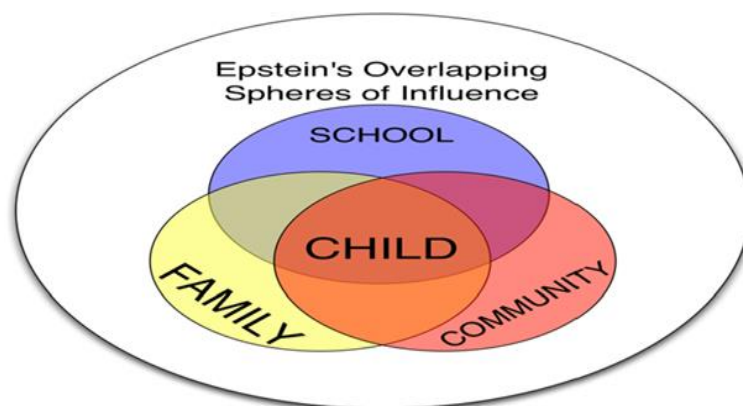
Figure 2.1: Epstein's model - Theory of Overlapping Spheres (Epstein, 1997)

In the 1980s, Epstein (1996:214) began to formulate a specific concept called the "overlapping spheres of influence". This was based on the analysis of data collected from educators, parents, learners, and the community. From a social, organisational perspective, Epstein (2001) maintains that most effective families and schools share common goals and a common mission for children. As a result, they engage in joint efforts to perform certain tasks. According to Epstein (2001:31), "The model stresses the mutual interests and influences of families and schools which the policies and programmes of the organisations promote via the attitudes and actions of individuals in them". Epstein (2018:12) adds that schools may choose to connect with different groups by either minimal communication which would then lead to a minimal

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connection between the spheres, or maximal high-quality communication which would then lead the three spheres coming closer together.

The central figure in all these groups is the learner. If the spheres of family, school and community are not connected, the learner will suffer; if they are well connected, the learner will benefit. The theory of the overlapping spheres of influence includes the internal as well as the external model. In the external model Epstein (2009:135) states that, "The family, the school and the community are recognised by the external model of overlapping spheres of influence as the three major contexts in which the development, learning and growth of children take place". According to Epstein (2001:415), the forces at play, including family philosophy, school philosophy, and the element of time contribute to the learning and development of children. Epstein (2001:415) maintains that communities, families and schools work together and independently to enhance the growth and learning of children. However, the internal model is complex but essential; the relations are at times at an individual level where the conversations exist between the principal and the parent, or the educator and the parent, face-to-face or through phone calls.

The operation of schools and families as true partners ensures 'maximum' overlap such that clear communication channels, and working together between the families and the school is the major positive. Epstein (2001) elaborated that different groups can fulfil, through their actions, the roles and responsibilities of each other as their common goals and objectives can produce exceptionally astute learners who would become successful citizens in the future. Gary and Ian (2018:115) found that the combined efforts of all stakeholders bring the spheres of influence of the family and the school closer together to foster greater and meaningful interaction between them. The following section examines Epstein's (2001) typologies of parent involvement in relation to the theory of overlapping spheres:

2.9.3 Six Typologies of Parental Involvement

Parental involvement includes various roles and responsibilities (Epstein, 2001:408-410). Epstein's (2001) six typologies of parent involvement describe key dimensions of parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, partnership in schools, and community involvement.

2.9.3.1 Typology one: parenting

As an educator with many years of experience, I observed that parental involvement was evident especially during the early years of education (such as in the Foundation Phase), but faded out during later years. In support, Olsen and Fuller (2011:142) who highlight the importance of parental involvement in school activities refer to early childhood education (ECD) which is based on the fundamental belief that parents are the primary and most influential educators of their children. Since parents have a great influence on the activities of children when they are at home, the role of parenting is seen as a shared responsibility of families and educational institutions to support the development of children and young people by creating caring home environments that facilitate their learning (Epstein, 2009). Therefore, the school should be able to assist and guide families on how to provide learners with a conducive home learning environment. Also, parents should assist schools to understand the family context, culture, and educational goals. Epstein and Sheldon (2005:8) identified the following benefits of parenting:

- learners' respect for parents emanates from the realisation that family supervision is ongoing;
- awareness of the importance of school is developed, which in turn improves school attendance;
- parents gain understanding and confidence regarding the role of parenting;
- establishing a conducive environment for learning at home; and
- feeling supported by the school and other parents.

2.9.3.2 Typology two: communication

A study conducted by Epstein and Sheldon (2005:5) reveals that communication between schools and parents is initiated by the school itself. This communication typically arises when children encounter behavioural or learning problem, or when parents demonstrate a proactive interest in supporting their children's educational journey. Epstein (2011:425) is of the opinion that networking helps educators and families share information about school programmes and learners' progress in a transparent and effective manner. Schools convey information to parents through newsletters, circulars, report cards, files, messages in notebooks, emails, parent

meetings, workshops, conferences, and phone calls, among others. Epstein and Sheldon (2005:8) disclose challenges confronting schools in communicating with parents which include:

- reading information from schools becomes difficult when clarity and form are lacking;
- data presentation is seldom understood by parents;
- printed and non-printed information should be designed to cater for all education levels of parents;
- those who cannot speak or read the language of learning and teaching of the school (LoLT) should be assisted.

Olsen and Fuller (2011:137) emphasise that the main responsibility of the school is to provide regular, meaningful, reader-friendly, and relevant information about the school programme and children's progress through school-to-home and home-to-school communication. Epstein and Sheldon (2005:8) highlight several advantages of effective communication in education which benefit learners, parents, and educators alike. These benefits include:

- Educators: Effective communication allows educators to connect with different families to engage in meaningful dialogue. This facilitates a deeper understanding of families' perspectives and aspirations regarding their children's education, allowing educators to accordingly adapt their educational approach.
- Parents: Communication enables parents to understand school programmes and policies which empowers them to effectively monitor their children's progress. They are able to stay informed and involved in their children's education by maintaining a supportive learning environment at home.
- Learner: Effective communication allows learners to track their progress, receive timeous feedback for corrective and remedial purposes, understand what is needed to improve grades, comprehend school expectations, adhere to rules of behaviour, and engage in the participation process regarding school events. They are also at liberty to become decision-makers when choosing courses and programmes while developing partnerships by being messengers and network operators.

In sum, effective communication between schools, parents, and learners improves academic performance, promotes parental involvement, and strengthens partnerships between schools and homes.

2.9.3.3 Typology three: volunteering

Epstein (2001) declares that volunteering is closely linked to type two parenting as it involves communication. The school engages parental assistance by requesting parents to volunteer their time and effort to assist educators in administration, managing events such as fundraising, and coordinating cultural evenings such as school concerts, joining in school field trips, and planning and monitoring sporting events. Epstein (2001:44) elaborates that volunteering covers many areas where parents are involved: recruitment, training, securing sponsorships, initiating religious programmes, and overseeing school building projects. In some schools, schedules are structured to empower parents in understanding their roles and responsibilities regarding volunteering in specific projects.

2.9.3.4 Typology four: learning at home

Epstein (2011:442) explains that learning at home involves family members being involved in activities such as homework, goal-setting, curriculum matters, and decision-making. Information about homework rules, courses, entry requirements, goal-setting and academic subject content assists parents to advise learners to make the correct choices. According to Epstein (2001:44), learning at home should entail family-participation to assist children in challenging areas of the school curriculum. Hence, schools should empower parents through regular developmental workshops that relate to home-learning and parental involvement.

Epstein and Sheldon (2005:8) identified the following benefits of home-learning for learners, parents, and educators:

- learners can successfully complete their homework;
- learners develop a positive attitude to increase their confidence toward schoolwork;
- learners improve their skills and abilities in all subject areas;

- learners improve their tests, assignments, and classwork scores; and

- parents understand each year's curriculum, what the child is learning in each lesson, and can therefore support their children throughout their schooling years.

2.9.3.5 Typology five: decision-making

When schools involve parents in decision-making processes, they develop parents for leadership as representatives in educational structures. Parents participate in decision-making at various school levels; for example, in school committees and SGBs. Epstein and Sheldon (2005:7) suggest that schools should involve parents in decision-making by providing families with information about the knowledge and skills required for learners to excel in each subject and grade. These activities can be organised and coordinated by the educator or initiated by knowledgeable parents. Educators should devise regular schedules of homework that require learners to interact with parents about what they were taught at school.

According to Epstein (2001:44), "Decision-making involves the inclusion of parents as key stakeholders in some committees such as the parent-educator associations and other relevant organisations". The purpose of such involvement is to actively engage parents in school decision-making processes that support the development of parent leadership and representative roles in the school community (Epstein and Sheldon, 2005:8). Moreover, Epstein and Sheldon (2005:8) emphasise that such involvement creates a sense of reassurance among learners who realise that their parents are actively involved in school decisions while working to protect their rights. Lastly, the parents acquire a sense of self-worth and recognition because their input is valued.

2.9.3.6 Typology six: collaboration with the community

This occurs when community services, resources, and partners are integrated into the educational process to strengthen school programmes, family practices, learning and development. Van Zyl (2013) states that collaboration is enriched when networking with specialists or institutions in specialised fields of knowledge such as universities, business managers and civic organisations which would capacitate parents in fundraising skills, acquiring learning materials, and sharing of facilities in partnership with the community.

Epstein (2001:44) agrees that coordinating community and school activities with the assistance and expertise of companies, agencies, and higher education institutions (HEIs) enhances the delivery of school curricula, family practices, and how children learn and develop. Since the school is supported by community organisations, businesses, and social agencies that provide donations for purchasing resources and offer relevant expertise, promoting such partnerships involving staff members enriches the school-community collaboration.

Epstein and Sheldon (2005:8) highlight the following benefits of collaborating with the community:

- learners acquire enhanced skills and talents through enriched curricular and extra-curricular experiences;
- learners benefit from programmes, services, resources, and opportunities that bring the community and learners together such that they become proud of their community and their (learners') own service to the community;
- parents acquire knowledge, use local resources to develop skills and talents, and are able to access much-needed services;
- parents who actively participate in school activities socialise with other families at community and school events which promote a sense of societal belonging; and
- parents recognise the critical role the school plays in the community, and the support and contribution of the community to the school.

From the researcher's perspective, Epstein's six typologies of parental involvement offer a valuable framework for understanding the multifaceted nature of parental engagement in education. These typologies provide a comprehensive structure for analysing and categorising the diverse ways parents can contribute to their children's academic success and school communities. By utilising this framework, researchers can explore the varying degrees of parental involvement, enabling a more nuanced and context-specific approach to assessing the impact of parental engagement on learner outcomes and overall educational experiences.

2.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

To achieve a comprehensive understanding of parental involvement, it is imperative to conduct a study that thoroughly investigates all facets of the topic. This study delved into relevant literature regarding parental involvement in schools in some parts of the world, but with special attention on the South African scenario. The definitions of parental involvement and parental engagement were provided. Other aspects presented includes educators', principals' and parents' perceptions of parental involvement, the role of the school governing body, the use of modern technology, and parental involvement in the past and during Covid-19, the advantages of parental involvement to key stakeholders, factors impeding parental involvement, implications of poor parental involvement in schools, the advantages of parental involvement and effective strategies that could address challenges impeding parental involvement in schools. The last section of this chapter utilised Epstein's Theory of Parenting Typologies and Overlapping Spheres of the School, Parent and Community framework to align with the research objectives under investigation. The next chapter (3) discusses the research design and methodology in detail.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter (3) describes the study's design and methodology that were employed to address the main research question in alignment with the aim and objectives of this research. Accordingly, a rigorous and reflective process of educational research was pursued to obtain reliable answers to research questions emanating from the educational problem under study. This process includes the systematic collection and analysis of data, the interpretation and presentation of results, and the logical construction of sound arguments (Sharp, 2012). The emergence of possible strategies to solve the problem under investigation was possible through collecting accurate and verifiable information from participants who narrated their lived-experiences, and by analysing relevant documents. This chapter also describes the research paradigm, research approach, research design, and methodology of the study. Lastly, the population, sampling procedures, data collection techniques, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations were discussed.

Moreover, the methodology focused on the main research question which centred on the quality and extent of parental involvement in selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District, and this inquiry was associated with addressing the following sub-questions**:**

- What challenges impede parental involvement in the selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District?
- How are these selected primary schools impacted by poor parental involvement?
- What are the advantages of parental involvement in education?
- What effective strategies could be suggested to address poor parental involvement in the selected King Cetshwayo District's primary schools?

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The research paradigm is a framework consisting of beliefs, values, and a universal perspective that guides the specific theory through which research is conducted (Mekonnen, 2017:98). Philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology), ways of knowing (epistemology), and ethics and value systems (axiology) inform a paradigm (Mekonnen, 2017). In this regard, the researcher who is a full-time educator, was wary of possible and unintentional bias, and thus refrained from influencing participants in any way, but maintained a professional distance so as to not the skew results. Moreover, the researcher conducted this study by employing the interpretive paradigm. Macmillan and Schumacher (2014) affirm that the interpretivism paradigm includes recognising the importance of people's subjective experience as the core of their reality (ontology), understanding people's experience through interaction and attentive listening (epistemology), and using qualitative research methods to gather information and analyse information (methodology). Interpretivism is an approach based on philosophical phenomenology where the objective is to understand the individual's personal meaning and subjective intention in a specific context without imposing *a priori* assumptions (Babones, 2016).

The desire to understand the world from the perspective of the participants requires the interpretive effort of the researcher, hence the inclusion of interpretivism as a methodology (Bonache and Festing, 2020). According to the interpretive phenomenological approach, our existence extends beyond a single social reality; it encompasses multiple socially constructed perspectives of a social reality (Babones, 2016). Interpretivism has its roots in hermeneutics which is the study of the theory and practice of interpretation. Sandberg (2005) agrees that hermeneutic writing is an expression of the author's thoughts, and that interpreters should attempt to make-sense of such expressions from the author's perspective.

Interpretivism suggests that researchers dissect the elements of a study by integrating human curiosity into the study. Accordingly, 'interpretative researchers' assume that access to reality (given or socially constructed) is possible only through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, and communication tools (Myers, 2008). The aim of employing interpretivism in this study was to present real-life perspectives of parental involvement in the three selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District. The analysis of this phenomenon was

intended to provide rich insight into how schools' stakeholders made sense of the situation regarding the lack of parental involvement at their schools.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

For the purposes of this study, it was appropriate to employ the qualitative research approach as it focuses on understanding a challenging social phenomenon from the perspective of participants in a specific context. McMillan and Schumacher (2014) confirm that the qualitative research design engages methods that emphasise the gathering of data from naturally occurring phenomena. Berg (2009) emphasises that qualitative research seeks answers to questions by exploring diverse social settings and the people who occupy such settings. This process entailed collecting in-depth information by examining various aspects of the research topic, and then extracting meaningful results and conclusions from it. Most collected information was in the form of words (verbal and written descriptions) rather than numbers.

Creswell, (2014) highlights that initiating qualitative research involves recognising assumptions, adopting a particular worldview, and the application of a theoretical lens. This process requires incisive interpretations that people or groups assign to a social problem which leads to gaining a comprehensive understanding of their contexts. A qualitative approach therefore affords researchers the opportunity to share in others' understandings and perceptions to discover how people organise and give meaning to their everyday lives. Further, by employing inductive analysis procedures, generalisations by synthesising the collected data would be derived. Unlike quantitative researchers, qualitative researchers do not formulate hypotheses or collect data to prove or disprove them (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014:347), instead they first collect data and then apply the inductive approach to synthesise all information to produce generalisations. This process, which emphasises inductive reasoning, involves developing notions from detailed observations, rather than commencing from a broad perspective and working down to the specific.

According to Johnson and Christensen (2014), qualitative research focuses primarily on collecting qualitative data; hence, qualitative researchers typically use inductive scientific reasoning since their primary research goal is to explore a range of settings to discover new knowledge. Myers (2011) and Suter (2012:55) describe qualitative research as research that aims to understand, interpret, and explain social

phenomena in their natural state via meaning-making cognitive processes. In qualitative research direct contact and interaction between the researcher, participants, and the environment are imperative. This close involvement allows the researcher to significantly guide processes that promote the interpretation of collected information which is essential to grasp a thorough understanding of the subject of study.

In sum, the qualitative research design was appropriate for this study as it sought to explore the perspectives of school principals, educators, and the parent component of SGBs regarding parental involvement. To identify perceived barriers and possible solutions to increase parental involvement in low-income school communities, an analysis of extensive data extracted from semi-structured interviews and document analyses was conducted.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

McMillan and Schumacher (2014:28) state that the research design defines the methods and steps for conducting research, including the time, data sources, and conditions under which the data was to be collected. The primary goal of the researcher is to establish a systematic plan to collect empirical evidence to answer the relevant research questions. The qualitative case-study research design was adopted for this study since it promotes an in-depth understanding of the subject being studied (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014). Riemer (2012:243) elaborates that case study research involves an investigative methodology that aims to thoroughly dissect and describe a challenging issue in order to gain a deeper understanding which entails reviewing multiple sources of information. As such, Baxter and Jack (2008:544) contend that this approach fosters exploration from diverse perspectives, thus facilitating the acquisition of previous and current knowledge to make-sense of the complexities within the study.

Additionally, this case study interpretative design allowed the researcher to define and list certain relevant elements that were explored during the study (Riemer, 2012:245). The adoption of this approach served two purposes: to identify and understand the barriers contributing to the lack of parental involvement, and to perceive how parent-participants' socioeconomic backgrounds influenced their attitudes towards their children's education. This approach facilitated the collection of in-depth and rich data

on participants' lived experiences which impacted parental involvement (Creswell, 2015). Furthermore, Creswell (2015) maintains that one of the key advantages of the case study approach is the ease of use of different data collection methods.

3.5 SAMPLING

A sample refers to the collection of data from a group of subjects or participants from within a specific population. In qualitative research, samples are usually small to allow for an in-depth analysis focusing on individual cases, which is a fundamental aspect of this mode of research (Sandelowski, 1996). Similarly, Maree (2016) defines sampling in qualitative research as the process of selecting a portion of the population for study, which usually involves a smaller sample size than quantitative research. Qualitative research is generally based on non-probability and purposive sampling rather than a probability-based or random sampling approach. The qualitative sampling strategies for this study were drawn from sources of information that met the specific criteria to provide in-depth information; these sources included individuals, documents, reports, and research sites. The schools, according to informal discussions with the staff and information emanating from District meetings, were regarded as being amongst the bottom-ranked when it came to parental involvement. Also, documents such as minutes of parents' meetings, educator-parent interview records, attendance registers, and school policies were considered relevant to authenticate and supplement information elicited from the semi-structured interviews.

3.5.1 Population of the Study

According to Punch (2005), a population refers to a technically large group that the researcher has an interest in, and from which a sample is drawn to gather information about the larger group. Similarly, Gravetter and Forzano (2012:138) define a population as the complete set of individuals who are of interest to the researcher, with only a subset of this entire set participating in a research study. McMillan and Schumacher (2014) add that a population encompasses all individual elements, cases, objects, or events that meet specific criteria and to which the study's results can be generalised. Also, Salkind (2010:1053) confirms that the population refers to the complete collection or target group from which one aims to draw inferences. The population for this study included twenty primary schools from the Mthunzini Circuit in

the King Cetshwayo District of KwaZulu-Natal Province. The Mthunzini Circuit is located in an area that was historically disadvantaged, characterised by a significant majority of unemployed and uneducated individuals situated in a low socio-economic environment surrounded by informal settlements. Since parental involvement is lacking in many schools in this area, the aim of this study was to examine the extent of parent involvement regarding children's schooling in the selected primary schools. The objectives included exploring the challenges to parental involvement and recommending effective strategies to address this problem.

3.5.2 Sample Frame

The sample frame refers to an extensive list of cases from which a sample is selected as being representative of the population. The sampling frame establishes a specific set of elements from which the researcher can select a sample from the desired population (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014).

3.5.2.1 Selection of schools

The researcher chose three schools out of the possible twenty primary schools from the Mthunzini Circuit of the King Cetshwayo District in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The researcher chose these three primary schools on the basis that they would be information-rich schools that could provide appropriate answers to the research questions. These three specific schools were selected due to their low rate of parental involvement as per discussions with their staff members and information emanating from District Meetings. Subsequently, varying socioeconomic backgrounds and demographic compositions, provided the motivation to select these research sites to gain a comprehensive perspective on the issue. Additionally, selection of these schools was based on specific criteria connected to the main research question: How are parents involved in the educational needs of their children in the selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District?

3.5.2.2 Selection of participants and sample size

This study was conducted at three primary schools in the Mthunzini Circuit of the King Cetshwayo District. In each of the three schools, six participants were chosen including two school management team (SMT) members (the principal and one departmental head), two members of the schools' governing body (the chairperson

and one other member) who represented parents and two experienced educators (one Foundation Phase, one Intermediate or Senior Phase). Regarding the experience element, Steyn and Van Niekerk (2012:16) contend that those who have accumulated five or more years of professional teaching experience are suitable as interviewees; therefore, for this study, the researcher purposefully selected participants (male and female) with more than five years of professional teaching experience from each phase in order to obtain rich and detailed information. These educators constituted the base sample that provided the data necessary to answer the research questions while achieving the research aim and objectives.

The total sample size consisted of eighteen (18) participants from three schools. The researcher selected the Mthunzini Circuit Management Centre in the King Cetshwayo District as the research site because of poor parental and community involvement in the area. The researcher gained this insight through years of ongoing discussions with colleagues within her own school and those from neighbouring schools. Furthermore, the researcher opted for these three specific schools for the study on parental involvement due to the diversity in their socioeconomic backgrounds and demographic makeup, ensuring a thorough and inclusive exploration of the issue. McMillan and Schumacher (2014:350) explain that site selection involves identifying the most appropriate locations for data collection, in particular targeting locations where people involved in a particular event can be found. This approach is particularly advantageous when research is aimed at the dynamic interplay between conceptions, expression, and meanings of expressions, which were envisaged to be articulated during data collection processes.

Additionally, the sampling method in qualitative research, involves non-probability and purposive sampling which are commonly employed, as opposed to probability or random sampling approaches. Qualitative sampling strategies encompass a variety of information sources such as individuals, groups, documents, reports, and sites (Johnson and Christenson, 2014). Robinson (2014) maintains that qualitative sampling techniques are purposeful; that is, they are selected for their ability to provide rich descriptive information relevant to the phenomenon under study. The method of sampling used in this study was purposive sampling which occurs when the researcher selects particular elements from the population that will provide incisive information about the field of interest. This involved distinguishing and choosing interviewees,

especially those who have extensive knowledge and experience with the research problem (Creswell and Clark, 2011).

Among the various strategies related to purposeful sampling, this study utilised criterion sampling which involved the application of predetermined criteria that were deemed relevant to this research study (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014). Based on the researcher's understanding of the population, it was decided to select participants who would provide the most in-depth, relevant, valuable, and empirical information to achieve the study's objectives (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014). The researcher also chose specific schools with poor parental involvement to gather information that aligned with the study's aim. Also, the purposive sampling technique enabled the researcher to choose participants based on geographic location and accessibility, in line with the aim, objectives and research questions of the study.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION

The aim of any data collection process is to capture relevant facts and perceptions that, when subjected to scrutiny, provide factual, authentic, and credible answers to the given research problem (McLaughlin, 2016; Sutton and Austin, 2015). In this study, the researcher used qualitative research methods to dissect participants' perspectives and lived-experiences regarding parental involvement in schools. Since qualitative research adopts a naturalistic approach by aiming to understand the phenomenon within its context, it desists from any form of manipulation (Maree, 2016). In other words, the study was conducted in authentic real-life settings rather than in an experimental environment where a data collection method such as interviewing is appropriate in the natural model (Miller and Fredericks, 1999). Stake (2000:435) confirms that a qualitative, interpretive paradigm allowed the researcher to study people in their natural settings. The various instruments that were employed to collect data are discussed below:

3.6.1 Semi-structured Interviews

The interviews enabled the researcher to directly access information regarding the perceptions of parental involvement from school management teams (SMTs), educators, and parent members of the SGB. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), a semi-structured interview is considered as the most appropriate approach

when conducting qualitative research as it enables the researcher to collect detailed responses from participants while allowing flexibility, encouraging them to propose solutions, and sharing insights in a non-threatening atmosphere. Creswell (2014) maintain that a semi-structured interview has the notable feature of generating rich data that cannot be obtained in any other way because it allows the researcher to probe for elaboration (especially where there were gaps in responses) and clarity without coercion.

In this study, the carefully designed semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix G) allowed the researcher the opportunity to pose open-ended questions which fostered the elicitation of a significant amount of information to realise the research objectives. The purpose of semi-structured interviews was to collect information regarding the views of principals, departmental heads, educators, and parents on parental involvement at their schools. In particular, the interviews sought to explore barriers to parental involvement, strategies for increasing parental involvement, and suggestions for promoting parental involvement.

All the necessary Covid-19 protocols were strictly followed, and informed consent (signed) was obtained from the participants. Measures were taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, thereby minimising any potential risks during the research processes. There was a total of eighteen (18) participants in the semi-structured or virtual (video call or telephonic) interviews which consisted of open-ended questions. Interviews (virtual and face-to-face) were staggered on a daily basis lasting for 10 days, and were of 30 minutes' duration. The UNISA Ethics Policy (2016) states that the researcher must ensure that the participant understands the information sheet that he or she has been given, and thereafter signs and returns it for archiving. All participants read and acknowledged the procedures and expectations of the study by signing and returning the consent forms before the commencement of the interviews.

3.6.2 Document Analysis

Document analysis is a qualitative research method involving a systematic procedure that researchers use to evaluate documents. This research methodology requires a repeat review of documentary evidence and data interpretation to get an empirical knowledge of the source documents in question (Morgan, 2022). Based on the insights

provided by document analysis involves a careful and systematic examination of a specific body of material to identify patterns, themes, and meanings. This approach is commonly used to analyse various forms of human communication such as written documents, photographs, motion pictures or videotapes, and audiotapes (Morgan, 2022). In addition, performing a triangulation technique helps researchers triangulate research results from other data sources, like surveys, observations, interviews, or focus groups. It also helps elucidate, refute, corroborate, or expand on results from different data sources to prevent bias (Bowen, 2009). In this study, the official documents for analysis included minutes of SGB meetings, development workshop attendance registers, minutes of meetings with parents, educator-parent meeting records, notices, circulars, newsletters to parents, policy on parental involvement, parental involvement plan for the year, records on involvement of parents in extra-mural activities or events, and evidence of post-event feedback (see sample of checklist in Appendix I and discussion in Chapter 4.5). Evidence from documentary sources was compared with the data elicited from interviews, and where necessary, included as additional information for analysis.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Fraenkel and Wallen (2008) define data analysis as a process that involves simplifying data to enhance its comprehensibility. Punch (1998:44) emphasises the importance of linking data analysis processes with the research questions. It is crucial that researchers have a perfect understanding of their analytical approach and its purpose to enable them to provide a comprehensive description of the methods used (Braun and Clarke, 2022). Creswell (2015) highlights that "qualitative analysis enables the researcher to identify themes or patterns that emerge from the raw data collected via inductive reasoning". Hence, data collected on parental involvement was processed through "inductive analysis" such that patterns emerged regarding the extent of parental involvement, its challenges, implications, and suggestions to increase parental involvement in schools. McMillan and Schumacher (2014:395) elaborate that qualitative researchers adopt the inductive analysis strategy to make-sense of the data, starting with specific themes and ending with patterns and categories.

When conducting data analysis, the researcher becomes the instrument for analysis, making judgments about coding, theming, decontextualising, and re-contextualising

the data (Starks and Trinidad, 2007). The thematic analysis approach was employed to analyse the data collected for this study. Braun and Clarke (2022) advocate for thematic analysis as a fundamental method in qualitative analysis as it equips researchers with essential skills applicable to various qualitative analysis approaches which involve identifying, analysing, organising, describing, and reporting themes derived from datasets. The process of conducting thematic analysis is structured into six phases:

- Familiarisation with the data;
- Generating initial codes;
- Generating themes;
- Reviewing potential themes;
- Defining and naming themes; and
- Producing the report.

The above six phases may be arranged in a logical manner, but the researcher may go back and forth as this process can be recursive and iterative (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Also, Braun and Clarke (2022) contend that thematic analysis is a valuable approach for exploring the perspectives of diverse research participants as it facilitates the identification of commonalities, variations, and unexpected insights within the data. Although there are many advantages regarding thematic analysis, it has a disadvantage in that it does not allow the researcher to delve into language use.

In this research, the data consisted of transcripts of all interview recordings and notes written during interviews and document analysis. This process enabled the researcher to examine the phenomenon from a fresh and transparent point of view, without any bias. During this process of analysis, important themes emerged from the collected evidence. All information collected during the research process was synthesised using a coding system, and then organised into structured segments. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), data coding identifies small, self-contained pieces of data called segments, which contain one idea or piece of relevant information consisting of one word, a sentence, or several sentences. The main research questions, sub-questions, aim and objectives helped to identify the main patterns. This allowed the researcher to break down and reorganise the data into themes or categories which facilitated the comparison process. The data was meticulously organised into separate

folders for future analysis and comparison. To facilitate interpretation, a coding system involving the assigning of labels and the use of colour-coding to group information based on different topics, was used. Each topic was initially colour-coded and relevant data was collected under the relevant topic. The researcher then compiled an extensive dataset as part of thematic analysis which involved verbatim quoting of participants' responses. In addition, the researcher repetitively read the notes written when analysing the relevant school documents and the transcripts from interviews to authenticate the accuracy of all collected data which included member-checking. McMillan and Schumacher (2014) explain that member-checking occurs when a researcher informally checks with individual participants to confirm the correctness of recording their verbatim responses. Further, documents were analysed to explore, support, and validate evidence from the interviews. Finally, the researcher carefully selected excerpts of raw data and direct (verbatim) quotes from transcripts as valuable evidence to illustrate the identified categories. This systematic approach simplified the researcher's understanding of the theoretical insights gleaned from textual data (Cohen et al., 2011:240).

3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF STUDY

Qualitative research is uniquely positioned to provide researchers with processed-based narrated data closely related to the human experience. Maree (2016) states that qualitative research recognises that the researcher acts as an instrument for gathering data. Therefore, discussions about validity and reliability in qualitative research often revolve around the concept of credibility and trustworthiness. King and Stahl (2020) maintain that researchers use a variety of methods to strengthen the credibility of their study including triangulation which uses of multiple sources of data, multiple observers, and multiple methods-the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point) Creswell, (2015). In this research triangulation was achieved through data collection from different groups and sites, as well as the use of document analysis. By designing a study that uses multiple informants and data-gathering methods, the researcher strengthened the study's results. Triangulation of research methods is desirable to overcome over-dependence on one method. The methods employed to enhance trustworthiness of this study, as identified by Guba and Lincoln (1985), are discussed below:

3.8.1 Credibility

It must be noted that although some sources seem 'outdated', the authors are established authorities in the field. Guba and Lincoln (1985) describe the concept of research credibility as the degree to which a study is considered believable; in other words, it concerns the credibility of the data. In essence, it could be characterised as the internal validity of the data; and hence the study as a whole (Hays and Singh, 2012:200). Credibility asks: How congruent are the findings with reality?

3.8.1.1 Credibility of literature review

The credibility of the literature is determined by the quality and rigor of the sources cited. Peer-reviewed journals, authoritative books, and reputable academic institutions are sources that enhance the credibility of the research, as they have undergone rigorous evaluation and validation processes. The researcher prioritises referencing as credible literature to establish a solid foundation for the study.

3.8.1.2 Credibility of data collection

When examining the credibility and reliability of the collected data, participants should have the opportunity to determine whether the information is indeed authentic, reliable, and verifiable as they are the only legitimate judges of the trustworthiness of the results (Singh, 2013:02). To establish the study's credibility, the researcher utilised established research methods, upheld ethical standards, and fostered transparency via data-sharing to emphasise replication feedback. In addition, the researcher exhibited great care and diligence when transcribing participants' responses, ensuring that their views were captured verbatim and remained unchanged. This approach was designed to promote credibility by preserving the originality of the perspectives of the participants without any manipulation to maintain research rigour.

3.8.2 Transferability

Research transferability refers to the potential application of results to similar situations or contexts (Major and Savin-Baden, 2010). To reinforce the principle of transference during the research process, researchers provide a comprehensive description of the research context (Singh, 2013:202). Also, Hays and Singh (2012:200) propose that the researcher's goal in terms of portability is to provide a sufficiently detailed

description of the research process such as participants' confidentiality and anonymity, locations, timelines, contextual background, and other relevant factors that enable the reader to assess the suitability of the study in specific scenarios or in a broader sense. Dick (2016) reiterates that transferability is about providing evidence to support the generalisation of findings involving different contexts, participants, groups and situations. Through the application of different instruments and processes of gathering data, the researcher elicited rich and thick descriptions from the participants and document analysis.

3.8.3 Dependability

Dependability is a concept used to describe the level of consistency observed in a study conducted by different researchers over a period of time (Hays and Singh, 2012:201). It also refers to the extent to which the reader can ascertain whether the researcher's reported findings were authentic and believable (Durrheim and Wassenaar, 2002:64). Further, the dependability of research is determined by its ability to withstand the test of time (Major and Savin-Baden, 2010); hence, thorough document management, filing, and archiving of all research processes are imperative to serve as future reference which strengthens the reliability of the research. Maree (2016) contends that trustworthiness in qualitative research is attained by employing multiple methods of data collection such as interviews and document analysis.

Suter (2012:363) elaborates that dependability is strengthened through implementing qualitative strategies such as comprehensive documentation, consistent coding, and triangulation. To achieve this, the researcher of this study obtained first-hand responses, employed audio-recordings to facilitate verbatim transcriptions, and encouraged member-checking. All bias had been eliminated by repeatedly checking and reflecting on the research processes. Moreover, on completion of the interviews for data gathering, the researcher also repetitively read the transcripts to ensure their correctness. Lastly, the transcripts were returned to the participants to verify the responses, correct any inaccurate statements, remove ambiguities, and ensure transparency, in addition to allowing participants and interested parties to request for a copy of the final research report.

3.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability, which pertains to the extent to which the findings of the study can be corroborated by others, is closely related to objectivity and neutrality in qualitative research, especially when analysing data and interpreting results (Hays and Singh, 2012:201). In this study, any bias or preconception about the phenomenon under investigation was eliminated by meticulously selecting a diverse, representative sample and employing data collection procedures where neither the participants nor the data collector had knowledge of key variables (Major and Savin-Baden, 2010). Guba and Lincoln (1989) add that confirmability is established when credibility, transferability and dependability are all achieved.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

McMillan and Schumacher (2014) mention that research ethics is mainly concerned with beliefs about what is correct or incorrect from a moral point of view; in other words, it focuses on what is morally acceptable when engaging with participants or accessing stored data. The following sections pertain to how ethical considerations are upheld:

3.9.1 Gaining Access to Participants

Prior to visiting the selected primary schools, the researcher sought permission for access from the UNISA College of Education (CEDU) Ethics Review Committee by completing the prescribed application form in order to receive a clearance certificate. The researcher adhered to all ethical principles according to the UNISA Ethics Policy and Guidelines, while the supervisor provided reassurance of overseeing and monitoring the research processes by conducting regular checks. After obtaining the ethics certificate of approval (Appendix B), the researcher then proceeded to request permission for access from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZN DoE). Subsequently, the researcher received a letter of permission from the Head of Department (HOD) of KZN DoE (Appendix D). This letter was forwarded to the Director of the District and to the selected school principals to gain access to schools and the participants. Upon receipt of permission from the above parties, the researcher then visited all three schools to arrange meetings with principals and participants in order to conduct an information session (orally) on the nature and aim of the study which

were included in the research proposal – each selected participant received a copy of my research proposal.

Furthermore, the researcher (an educator) provided an outline of the research procedures. The researcher also sought (and gained) permission from the principal to involve educators and the parent component of the SGB in this research. Accessing schools was smooth - the researcher emphasised her independent role and explained that the study was a personal endeavour to complete her master's degree, as well as for recommending strategies to increase parental involvement at the selected schools. After establishing clarification on some aspects of the research, all selected participants signed the consent forms (Cohen, Lawrence and Keith, 2011:139) The letters of permission from KZN DoE, letters seeking permission from principals, the information sheet, and the consent forms were attached as appendices of this research study.

3.9.2 Informed Consent

The participants were requested to read and sign the consent form after it was explained in detail to them. The consent form also included a guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity of all information and identities of participants and sites. The consent form articulated the rights of participants clearly: the right to participate voluntarily (without risks) in the study, or the right to withdraw at any time from the study without being penalised in any way. Personal information was collected in adherence to the Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act 4 of 2013 (RSA, 2013).

3.9.3 Deception

Deception violates informed consent and privacy (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014). Deception originates when only partial information is disclosed for the purpose of the study. This may only be done when full disclosure will affect the outcome or validity of the results (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014). To avoid deception, the researcher obtained informed consent, in addition to guaranteeing the protection of privacy of participants. In this study, the researcher divulged full disclosure when explaining the purpose of the study to the participants prior to the data collection process, and after concluding of the study. Furthermore, the audio-recording of the individual interviews was executed with the consent of the participants. Lastly, the participants were

assured that they had a right to refuse to respond to certain questions if they felt uncomfortable in answering them.

3.9.4 Privacy

McMillan and Schumacher (2014) advise that the privacy of research participants should be protected by restricting all access to information pertaining to the participants' characteristics, behaviour, attitude, and responses. The researcher was able to ensure privacy by adhering to the practices of confidentiality and anonymity.

3.9.5 Confidentiality and Anonymity

McMillan and Schumacher (2014) claim that confidentiality refers to restricting access to individual data and participants' identities to the researcher only. Confidentiality is a fundamental aspect of any qualitative research which ensures the rights of participants. Credible research design requires not only the careful selection and informed consent of participants, but also adherence to research ethics. As such, information disclosed by participants in a study should always be treated confidentially, regardless of whether it is legally protected or privileged. In this study, during the interviews and in the informed consent letter, study participants were assured that the information they disclosed would be used only for research purposes and would not be revealed to anyone outside the study.

The principle of confidentiality was upheld throughout the entire process - violating it would not only infringe upon the participants' right to privacy, but this will also breach research ethics. The objective of the data collection process was to gather information about the participants' experiences related to the subject under scrutiny. This included their perceptions, feelings, and possibly their emotions about the governance of their respective schools. After this research project was concluded, all consent forms and any other relevant collected information (e.g., transcriptions) were safely stored in a password-protected electronic file in the researcher's laptop thereby ensuring the confidentiality of participants' identities and the information that they provided. The researcher followed the suggestion of McMillan and Schumacher (2014) to assign pseudonyms/codes to participants in order to guarantee anonymity.

3.10 LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

Generalising the results of qualitative research can be challenging because of several factors. Qualitative research is often based on a small sample size which limits the applicability of the data to a larger population. In this study, the use of purposeful sampling further limited the generalisability of the results - considering different geographical locations and collecting views from non-school governing body parents could generalise results. Moreover, the absence of participants from the RCL (Representative Council of Learners) and DoE District officials deprived the research of further width. The principal of School A and the Foundation Phase educator from School C fell ill on two planned occasions, leading to minor extensions in the timeframes. Their illnesses resulted in some slight delays in the originally scheduled timelines.

Further, it is worth mentioning that during the interviews conducted in schools A and C, principals preferred note-taking to audio-recording as a method of recording participants' responses. Consequently, this process extended the duration of the interviews in these schools. Nevertheless, it should be noted that despite the lack of audio-recordings at schools A and C, the interviews that were transcribed via audio-recordings still provided sufficient data.

3.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter (3) focused on the research design, methodology, and ethical considerations applied in this qualitative study. The case-study design and interpretive paradigm were considered appropriate for this empirical study. The data collection process consisted of semi-structured, individual interviews and documentation analysis, after which the thematic data analysis process was applied. The second section of this chapter described the research approach and research design which were justified on the basis of its compatibility with the research aim, objectives, and the nature of the research problem to answer the research questions. Further, the chapter explained the data collection methods - interviews and document analyses. Measures to ensure the credibility and ethics of research were also applied. Chapter four of this study focuses on data analysis and the interpretation of the information that was collected.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter (3) explained the study's research design and methodology. This chapter (4) presents, analyses, and interprets the data. The discussion which follows reveals findings emerging from the data collected from semi-structured, individual interviews and document analysis. The participants' views were presented verbatim to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. In addition, the participants' responses were probed, analysed, and evaluated by the researcher. Over a period of two months, the researcher collected data from eighteen (18) participants based on individual semi-structured, interviews with six participants from each school including two SMT members (the principal and one departmental head), two parent-component members of the SGB (the chairperson and one other member), and two experienced educators (one Foundation Phase and one Intermediate/Senior Phase).

Additionally, the perusal, as well as the detailed analysis of documents in the three selected schools in the King Cetshwayo District, was executed. The purpose of the document analysis process was to explore and understand the role of the SMT in ensuring that parent involvement activities were encouraged, and whether evidence was available (in writing) to support this. The responses to the interview questions and the notes compiled from the document analysis were transcribed, analysed, and interpreted. Further, the findings of this study were verified in line with reviewed literature and the theory underpinning this study – namely, Epstein's (2001:408-410) six types of parent involvement. The purpose of this study was to answer the main research question which was directed at the lack of parental involvement in the selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District. The following sub-questions also elicit answers that enlighten all role-players on the significance of enhancing parental involvement at schools:

- What factors impede parental involvement in the selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District?

- How are these primary schools impacted by poor parental involvement?
- What are the advantages of parental involvement in education?
- What strategies could be recommended to address the lack of parental involvement in the selected primary schools of the King Cetshwayo District?

The medium of communication used by participants was English. Prior to the commencement of data collection, the researcher obtained biographical information pertaining to each participant, thus positioning the data in a particular context ((see Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3.). To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were assigned to each participant. The participants' responses and evidence from the analysis of school documents generated four themes; namely, the level of parental involvement in the three selected primary schools, the impediments to parental involvement and their impact on education, the advantages of parental involvement for the stakeholders, and the recommending of effective strategies to address and increase parental involvement in selected primary schools. These themes, which arose within the framework of the Epstein Model, served as the pillars of this study as they were aligned to relevant literature, participants' responses, and evidence from analysing school documents.

4.2 THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

The three school principals were willing to participate in the study after being convinced that all protocols (and ethical procedures) were followed. Regarding the utilisation of technology, two out of three principals were reluctant to be audio-recorded and preferred my note-taking for themselves and their school's participants due to concerns about privacy and confidentiality-anonymity. They were also worried that audio-recordings may inadvertently reveal sensitive information, making written notes a more controlled option. Additionally, there was the fear of misinterpretation or misrepresentation when transcribing from the audio-recorder, while written notes were regarded as a source of accurately capturing the intended message. To maintain research integrity, the researcher respected the participants' preferences. Nevertheless, despite this constraint, all responses were meticulously transcribed, preserving every detail. The researcher travelled to schools situated in deep rural areas after school hours for a period of eight weeks. The principal of School A and the Foundation Phase educator of School C were unwell on two scheduled occasions

which caused timeframes to be slightly extended. Interviews were of thirty to forty-minute duration. The overall interviewing and document analysis experiences were thought-provoking, eventful, and informative which thus deepened insight into the phenomenon under investigation.
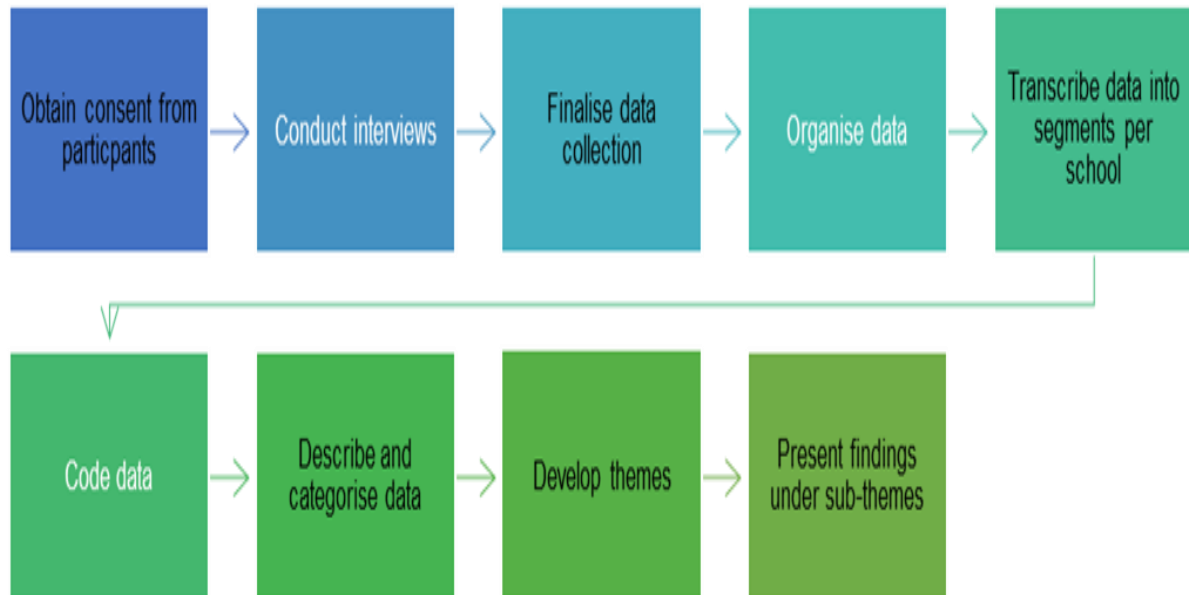
Figure 4.1: Steps in collecting, interpreting and presenting findings emanating from data collection (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014)

4.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

This section presents participants' biographical profiles based on specific characteristics. The participants, who were selected from three schools (School A, School B, and School C), represented various levels in the schools' hierarchy: principals, departmental heads, educators of the Foundation Phase (FP), educators of Intermediate (IP) or Senior Phases (SP), and parents serving on the SGB. The researcher purposively selected specific schools and participants believing that they would provide rich and in-depth information regarding parental involvement in their schools. The biographical profiles of participants from the three selected schools are presented below in Tables 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3.

The following pseudonyms were used for School A: Principal - P1, Departmental Head - DH1, Foundation Phase Educator - E1, Intermediate/Senior Phase Educator - E2, SGB parent one - SGB1, and SGB parent two - SGB2.

Table 4.1: Biographical information of School A participants

Participants	Age	Gender	Designation	Years in Current position	Total Years of Experience	Highest Qualification
P1	54	Female	Principal	02	24	Bachelor of Education (BEd)
DH1	39	Male	Departmental Head	02	16	Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE)
E1	60	Female	Foundation Phase Educator	15	35	Secondary Education Diploma (SED)
E2	27	Male	Intermediate/ Senior Phase Educator	06	07	Bachelor of Education (Honours)
SGB1	29	Female	SGB Parent: Secretary	02	02	Matric (Grade 12)
SGB2	32	Female	SGB Parent: Treasurer	02	02	Matric (Grade 12)

In School A, the principal and the departmental head (DH) had more than sixteen (16) years of teaching experience, but they have only been active in the position for two years as part of the current SMT; this indicated that they have limited experience in school management. However, both were able to provide valuable insight pertaining to the study's topic. The Foundation Phase educator possessed a Secondary Education Diploma (SED) with thirty-five (35) years of teaching experience but indicated that she left the profession for several years and then rejoined fifteen (15) years ago. The educator at Intermediate/Senior phase has seven years of teaching experience with a Bachelor of Education degree.

The first SGB parent component member was represented by the secretary in place of the SGB chairperson who was not available during scheduled interview dates. The

second SGB member participant was the treasurer - they each had two years of experience in this newly elected SGB, and both had passed Grade 12. This indicated that their level of literacy was sufficient to understand the importance of parental involvement in education which involved (among others) the need for learners to perform well to successfully complete their schooling. Both SGB members were single parents who indicated struggling to pay for their children's basic school requirements.

The following pseudonyms were used for School B: Principal - P2, Departmental Head - DH2, Foundation Phase Educator - E3, Intermediate/Senior Phase Educator - E4, SGB parent one - SGB3, and SGB parent two - SGB4.

Table 4.2: Biographical information of School B participants

Participants	Age	Gender	Designation	Years in Current Position	Total Years of Experience	Highest Qualification
P2	50	Male	Principal	05	20	Bachelor of Education (BEd)
DH2	46	Female	Departmental Head	02	12	Bachelor of Education (BEd)
E3	56	Female	Foundation Phase Educator	08	20	Junior Primary Educators Dip.
E4	37	Female	Intermediate/ Senior Phase Educator	05	06	PGCE – Intermediate/Senior Phase
SGB3	40	Male	SGB Parent: Chairperson	03	03	Matric (Grade 12)
SGB4	44	Female	SGB Parent: Treasurer	03	06	Matric (Grade 12)

The principal of school B has twenty (20) years of teaching experience and five years of management experience. He mentioned joining the profession when he turned thirty (30) – he previously was a businessman in the community, thus he had a cordial relationship with the surrounding community who trusted him for his sound advice and

astute suggestions. The departmental head (DH) had four years of experience in the current SMT position but had many years of teaching experience (twelve). Both SMT members possessed a Bachelor of Education degree - M+4 (REQV 14). The Foundation Phase educator had twenty (20) years of teaching experience. The Intermediate/Senior Phase educator also joined the profession while in her thirties and had six (6) years of experience. The SGB parent component participants consisted of the chairperson and the treasurer who were experienced and played active roles in the school community.

The following pseudonyms were used for School C: Principal - P3, Departmental Head - DH3, Foundation Phase Educator - E5, Intermediate/Senior Phase Educator - E6, SGB parent one - SGB5, and SGB parent two - SGB6.

Table 4.3: Biographical information of School C participants

Participants	Age	Gender	Designation	Years in Current Position	Total Years of Experience	Highest Qualification
P3	57	Female	Principal	07	34	Bachelor of Arts (Honours)
DH3	55	Male	Departmental Head	06	33	Advanced Certificate in Education Management
E5	55	Female	Foundation Phase Educator	05	16	National Professional Diploma in Education
E6	50	Female	Intermediate/ Senior Phase Educator	29	29	Bachelor of Education (Honours)
SGB5	46	Male	SGB Parent: Chairperson	02	02	Matric (Grade 12)
SGB6	51	Female	SGB Parent: Secretary	02	02	Grade 10

The principal of School C had thirty-four (34) years teaching experience and held the position of principal for seven (7) years. The departmental head had six (6) years of experience as a member of the SMT. The educators (E5 and E6) had sixteen (16) and twenty-nine (29) years of teaching experience respectively. They made a valuable contribution in providing incisive insight into parental involvement at their school (C).

In comparison to other schools, the SGB of School C was active, functional, and experienced in school activities. The SGB chairperson, who was highly praised by the school management, had been a member for eleven years, but served as the chairperson for seven years. He is self-employed and is able to make time for school events. The second member (participant) of the SGB was the secretary who was a member for six years. She was unemployed, but ensured that she attended school events, when necessary, even though she sometimes experienced transport problems. Participants shared their personal information with the researcher with the assurance that it would remain private and confidential – pseudonyms were assigned to each participant. The following section presents the analysis and conclusions of the data:

4.4 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATIONS, AND FINDINGS

The presentation and discussion of the results of this investigation was conducted in accordance with Creswell's (2014) principle of providing a thorough description of the data analysis. Raw data from written records of semi-structured, individual audio-recordings, and document analysis were processed by using a qualitative data analysis method (see Section 1.8). Interviews were transcribed and analysed to detect emerging patterns or themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The derivation of themes and sub-themes from the raw data was based on the research questions, purpose, aim, objectives and the theoretical framework of this study. Four main themes emerged through the process of open and axial coding and categorisation (Creswell, 2015). Appropriate verbatim quotes extracted from the raw data were used throughout the discussion to highlight key findings.

Table 4.4 below displays the themes and the sub-themes. The first theme was concerned with the level of parental involvement in three selected primary schools. The second theme referred to challenges that hindered parental involvement and their

impact on education. The third theme focused on the benefits of parental involvement for stakeholders, and the fourth theme revealed strategies to address and enhance parental involvement.

Table 4.4: Themes concerning parental involvement in primary schools of the King Cetshwayo District

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
4.4.1 Theme One: The level of parental involvement in three selected primary schools	**Sub-theme 1**: The views of School A SMT and educator participants **Sub-theme 2**: The views of School B SMT and educator participants **Sub-theme 3:** The views of School C SMT and educator participants
4.4.2 Theme Two: The challenges to parental involvement and their impact on education	**Sub-theme 1:** The socio-economic status of the community and its members **Sub-theme 2:** Illiterate grandparents as guardians and primary caregivers **Sub-theme 3:** Lack of communication between the school and home **Sub-theme 4**: Negative attitudes towards parents by school staff **Sub-theme 5**: Negative attitudes towards the school by parents **Sub-theme 6**: The Covid-19 pandemic **Sub-theme 7**: Lack of facilitation of parental involvement in education
4.4.3 Theme Three: The advantages of parental involvement to stakeholders	**Sub-theme 1**: The school, SMT, and educator **Sub-theme 2**: The school, the parent, and the community **Sub-theme 3:** Improved learner-performance

4.4.4 Theme Four: Effective strategies for addressing and enhancing parental involvement	Sub-theme 1: Parenting
	Sub-theme 2: Effective communication between the school and parents
	Sub-theme 3: Parent activities through volunteering
	Sub-theme 4: Parental support with home-based tasks
	Sub-theme 5: Parental involvement through decision-making processes
	Sub-theme 6: Schools' collaboration with the community

4.4.1 Theme One: Level of Parental Involvement in 3 Selected Primary Schools

According to Holloway, Yamamoto, Suzuki and Mindnich (2008:2), parental involvement refers to the active participation of parents concerning both home-based and school-based activities with the goal of enhancing children's school performance. This theme focused on the realities of parental involvement faced by schools A, B, and C. The principal, DH, and two educators from each school were asked to share their views on the level of parental involvement in their schools. Data obtained from participants during semi-structured, individual interviews indicated unanimously the low rate of parental involvement in their schools.

4.4.1.1 Views of School A SMT and educator participants

Participants of School A shared their perceptions of by declaring unanimously that the parental involvement level was extremely low. The participants responded as follows:

P1: Parental involvement is one of the major issues we face as educators because they are not willing to work together with us as educators.

DH1: There is a low level of parental involvement in the school. Parental involvement has long since been a thing of the past. Parents have now ventured out and worked far and wide. Our area where the school is situated does not have many job opportunities.

Parents of my school are only involved at the beginning of the year. When the learners are settled in their classes some parents go back to where they work away from homes. Even if the school and the SGB invite parents for general meetings, the attendance is always poor. I would say that there is a serious concern about parental involvement at my school as it is very poor.

> E2: The level of parental involvement at my school is quite low in the Intermediate phase as well as the Foundation phase. The school management team invites parents to meetings but most of them do not attend.

The SMT members also agreed with the SMT members and educators that parental involvement was almost non-existent and they felt unsupported by the majority of the parents. This was a clear indication that the lack of parental involvement was a major concern to all participants who felt the need for better relationships between the school and parents. According to Vandergrift and Green (1992:57-59), parental involvement in education falls into four categories (Table 2.1). Most School A parents are seen as type four who are described as parents who do not support their children's formal education, ignoring everything that has to do with homework, projects, assignments, and classroom tasks. They are also inactive at school by not attending meetings, volunteering, or helping with any fundraising events. They are also apathetic towards participating in their children's formal education; for example, they disregard any communication from school.

4.4.1.2 Views of School B's SMT and educator participants

The interviews with the SMT and educators revealed similarities in responses which indicated that there was a lack of parental involvement in their school. The following excerpts provide evidence:

P2: *The parental involvement at our school is not very good. We request parents to visit school quarterly so that this can help the learners to work hard and put more effort in their work, and it also helps the school itself to see the process of teaching and learning as well as the performance of the whole school.*

DH2: *There is little or mostly no involvement of parent support.*

E3: *Parents do not involve themselves at school. They do not do their job as parents and instead we as educators carry the burden of their children; even when you call*

them to come to school they do not come. They only come when they want to insult educators and when other learners bully his or her child, or maybe there is a problem with the educator.

E4: *In my school, parents don't involve themselves in the school's activities. All they do is complain. I think the reason this is happening is because we are a public school in a rural area. Parents don't involve themselves in activities such as meetings; they do not participate at all, or they do not attend the meetings.*

The SMT and educators of school B implied that parents purposely avoided participation in school events. Parents believed that the educator must teach the child and that they (parents) should only assist their children with home tasks. When a parent does visit school, he/she criticises educators who blame them for poor results. Vandergrift and Green (1992:57-59), categorise parents of School B as type four (Table 2.1) where parent involvement lacks the following: visiting the school at least twice per year to check on learners' progress, attending meetings, supporting fundraising events, helping with homework and projects, and providing good care for their children by ensuring that they have all the basic requirements for school and home.

4.4.1.3 Views of School C's SMT and educator participants

The following extracts indicated the rate of parent involvement at School C:

P3: *My view about parental involvement at our school is that there is involvement, but only at certain times depending on the activity. When the activity is of a positive nature such as events when the kids or the parents receive goodies, then involvement is positive. They are also quite active when invited for meetings when school fees are discussed or where they can give their views and eventually start fights. They like to air their views during meetings. [After probing] My overall view is that the level of parental involvement at our school is poor. Parents just do not want to assist the school in areas of importance such as curriculum matters or progression. Parents are only willing to participate if they receive positive news or when they do not have to deal with problems.*

DH3: *The parents are not involved in the education of their kids. You can see this by the way their children wear their uniforms. It does not look like they are coming*

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from a caring home. They don't check learners' work. They take the school as a welfare organisation, and they do not involve themselves in the wellbeing of their children. If parents are asked to come to school and check the work of their children, they don't show up. Those who happen to come, the conversations with the educators is not of a parent and an educator. They act like they do not care what the educator is saying. The involvement of parents in the education of their children is very poor at our school as educators are seen as babysitters.

E5: *Parents are not involved in their children's schooling. They leave them with grandparents. Granny's only feed them. When it comes to schoolwork, they are illiterate. Learners come to school sometimes not dressed in proper school attire because parents are not involved in their lives.*

E6: *The level of parental involvement is too low. There are some parents who don't even know the educator of their children. Majority of parents shift their responsibility onto the educator, like when a child has homework, the child returns to school with homework not done and tells us that the parent says they are not educators and they are not well educated enough to help with the homework.*

The SMT of School C claimed that parents were only involved if they received good news, or if the school was planning an activity that was fun-filled; but when they were called for urgent matters, they were reluctant and preferred to not become involved, and claim that they are not able to attend to the matter by providing various excuses. Also, there was a clear indication of the lack of support, especially with curriculum-related matters. By analysing the interview responses of all twelve participants (Schools A, B and C) on the above theme, it was apparent that all participants had a sound understanding of the concept of parental involvement in their schools – they have similar perceptions and experiences in this regard. Many revealed that parental involvement was either non-existent or at a very low ebb. According to Yolanda, Ruis, Chance and Toldson, (2014:91), "The families that have dual jobs find it very difficult to participate in the school affairs of their children due to the time constraint" Similarly, all three schools mentioned parents work away and learners are left with other family members or grandparent. The education of their children is negatively affected as a result. Judging by the quality and intensity of the responses from all the participants, it was apparent that School A experienced the lowest level of parental involvement

compared to Schools B and C. Mavuso and Duku (2014:85) suggested that a significant hindrance to parental involvement was the absence of essential knowledge and skills among parents, leading to their inability to fulfil their expected roles. Interviews conducted at School A revealed a noticeable lack of proactive communication from the school regarding parents' roles and responsibilities, which subsequently contributed to parental reluctance to engage in school activities (see 4.4.2.3). The next theme discussed the barriers that obstruct parental involvement in selected primary schools:

4.4.2 Theme Two: Challenges to Parental Involvement and their Impact on ducation

Epstein's (2009) research focused on exploring the challenges associated with involving parents in their children's education. Accordingly, the researcher aimed to identify the specific obstacles faced by parents in actively engaging in their children's educational journey. The lack of parental involvement was seen to be a major challenge in most primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District of KwaZulu-Natal. There were many complaints regarding the lack of parental involvement from participants in the selected schools. The researcher's evidence when collecting data while conducting interviews indicated that many children attending schools in the King Cetshwayo District came from homes with little or no parental care; and some of these learners live with grandparents or in child-headed households.

Educators also mentioned that parents work far from home, thus homework is done unsupervised because some grandparents are illiterate. Moreover, some parents feel unwelcome in schools, have low levels of education, have language and communication barriers, or simply don't have the time to prioritise their children's educational needs. Many schools simply do not know how to deal with such situations and challenges.

The following sub-themes were found to be major contributors to poor parental involvement:

4.4.2.1 Socio-economic status of the community and its members

Financial constraints were seen by educators and parents as a barrier to parental involvement. The following articulations from participants provided evidence of this:

P1: *A factor that contributes to poor parental involvement is job hunting. Parents move away to find work because there is no work in our area. Parents leave their kids to look for jobs without thinking twice about who will take care of their young ones.*

P2: *Some projects need the involvement of parents which require money to do practical projects such as entrepreneurial skills where the learner practises buying and selling during market days. It affects our school because some of the learners aren't able to participate in the buying and selling that needs to be part of the project. I often find it difficult to get good responses from parents when they are asked to spend money. We live in a very poor community, and this could be the reason.*

DH2: *The socio-economic background of our community is mainly that people are unemployed. They experience a lot of stress due to unemployment and the inability to afford basic needs; they mainly live on social grants.*

SGB2: *Poverty also plays a role. I have mentioned I am unemployed and sometimes if the school wants donations or they have civvies clothes day and need kids to bring money, some parents like me find it difficult to support the school and be involved. In our community many people didn't finish schooling and are therefore unemployed or have jobs that do not pay them much money. We depend on Government grants to raise our kids. Some parents don't even afford to buy uniform for their children.*

SGB3: *There are no factors that prevent me from being involved in my child's education; however, as the chairperson of the school governing body I only speak on behalf of myself, but I have to mention challenges of parents. I believe that the socio-economic status affects their involvement such as money for transportation to come to meetings, electricity, and that they cannot assist children at home as parents work faraway. We live in a very poor community and sometimes parents have to walk a long distance to come to school and this is one of the reasons that parents don't come to school because they don't have transport, or they cannot afford the transport to come to school as they rather take the money and buy food to eat. I have derived this information when speaking to parents as the school governing body chairperson.*

Some parents believed that their poor financial situation immeasurably impaired their ability to engage meaningfully in their children's education. The communities where all three schools are located are poor, the unemployment rate is very high, and many find solace in alcohol and drug abuse. Thus, Munje and Mncube (2018) consider poverty to be one of the main challenges affecting the ability of parents from disadvantaged communities to become involved in their children's education, as their priority is to meet the daily survival needs of their families. Munje and Mncube (2018) add that poverty is not a single factor but precipitates multiple physical and psychological stressors.

4.4.2.2 Illiterate grandparents as guardians and primary caregivers

The limited education of parents and grandparents was apparent as a barrier to parental involvement by the SMT and educators as affirmed by the following responses:

P2: *Some parents work far away from home and arrive very late and therefore do not have time for their children or many of the learners are just thrown away or given to the grandparents to look after while they go and have other children or work far away or are still young and are finishing their studies.*

E5: *They leave them with the grandparents. Unfortunately, many of these grandparents cannot read or write. They never finished primary school or never attended school at all. This becomes very difficult as some tasks require help at home. The learner is therefore at a disadvantage as compared to a learner who receives this additional guidance at home.*

E1: *Some mothers neglect the learners after breaking up with the father of the learner. The mother of the learner finds a new partner and they have other children. The child from the first partner becomes the responsibility of the grandparent. Most of the learners do not live with their parents. They live with their grandparents.*

SGB3: *Here we are facing the problems of parental involvement and the reason is that many of our learners don't have their parents and are raised by their grannies because some of their mothers and fathers have left when they were*

very young. Some of our learners live on the school nutrition programme as
that is the only meal they eat because at home maybe there is no social grant.

SGB3: *I cannot speak for myself as I am fully involved in my child's education,*
but I believe other parents are not involved because they cannot help with home
tasks and believe that the educator should deal with it and help.

An aspect such as homework supervision was viewed by the school SMT, educators and SGB as being beyond the capacity of semi-literate or illiterate parents; hence, some parents thought that school matters were best left to educators who were trained and paid to deal with them. Also, the majority of the participants claimed that many learners live with grandparents who could not read and write which led to the lack of supervision of schoolwork and homework, a decline in meeting attendance, and living on social grants that did not cover the costs of learners' basic necessities. All these factors had a negative impact on teaching and learning.

4.4.2.3 Lack of communication between the school and home

Parents/guardians often encounter a barrier such as the lack of communication between school and home (Lawson, 2003). This caused parents to be unaware of important school events and activities which posed as a significant barrier to parental engagement. All parties (SMT, educators, and the SGB parent-component) were guilty of not communicating with each other. The following excerpts bore testimony to the communication barrier between parents and school:

DH2: I also believe there's an absence of clear communication channels between the parents and school personnel. There should be effective communication as it is another vital instrument that enhances strong relations between the school and parents. Effective communication does contribute to the smooth running of the school.

DH1: There is little communication between the school and parents; therefore, they are not aware about homework and the programme of assessment for each term. In order for parents to be aware of what their children should do at home, clear communication is necessary. Only the term progress report talks to parents.

SGB5: *Sometimes we lack communication from the school so we don't know what's going on, and this can sometimes cause a parent not to be involved.*

P2: *Yes, the school informs parents of homework, but we find it difficult when some of the learners live with grandmothers who are uneducated. We do send messages via circulars to parents; however, we find that some of these circulars do not reach the parents. We also have a problem where learners reside with illiterate grandparents or guardians who cannot read the circular or notice that we send home.*

P3: *Due to the fact that many learners live with grandparents who are uneducated or illiterate, meaning that they cannot read or write, thus homework tasks are not supervised and are often incomplete.*

DH2: *I believe illiteracy plays a major role because many parents or grandparents did not finish their schooling and were dropouts. Some parents are not confident enough to assist with simple homework tasks, therefore the child returns with unsupervised or unassisted homework or assignments.*

E3: *Some learners neglect to hand circulars to parents. It was found that school messages remain in their bags for days, if not weeks, without being checked by the parent.*

E4: *We send out notices to parents, especially if there is a parent meeting, only to discover later that the parent did not see the notice.*

E5: *Parents have numerous contact numbers and most of them are unavailable. This is very disappointing as they should be updating the school records from time-to-time. Although we communicate with parents via circulars or even verbal messages, they do not respond. This is sometimes due to the nature of the circular, especially if parents are called to school regarding a child's bad behaviour. However, WhatsApp groups with parents have been created but this tool receives the same attention as with circulars.*

P2: *Some either give us incorrect contact information or they'll change their contact numbers and not inform the school about it. This often poses a challenge. When a learner is ill we cannot get hold of the parent because the number doesn't exist. As a school, we are trying our best to engage parents in*

every step we take to help the learners. But we need parents to play their role as well.

From the above articulations on the communication barrier, it was noted that although the schools make an effort to communicate with parents, there are challenges especially concerning illiteracy as a barrier. Also, the SMT and educators mentioned that most contact numbers of parents were incorrect or did not exist. This poses as a problem when trying to reach out to a parent.

Further, it was noted that not all learners took home circulars; either it remained in the learner's bag, or they did not hand them to the parents to read. This meant that parents sometimes didn't know what the school expected of them which resulted in educators and the SMT having to deal with non-attendance and/or non-compliance which led school authorities to conclude that the parents were disinterested in their children's education.

Additionally, there was a suggestion about the use of WhatsApp groups as a form of enhancing communication. However, not all educators supported this as they felt that parents were complaining about the cost of data or they were abusing the platform by asking questions that were not related to curriculum matters, but instead complained about mistakes made by educators. Lastly, learner profiles contained contact numbers that were either incorrect or non-existent – this not only disadvantaged communication between educators and parents on academic matters, but also caused untold difficulties when trying to contact parents when a learner fell seriously ill at school.

4.4.2.4 Negative attitudes towards parents by school staff

During the one-on-one interviews the negative attitudes of educators were identified as a barrier to parental involvement. Some educators were condescending towards parents whom they considered as being uneducated and incapable of meaningfully contributing to their children's education. The following responses provided evidence to the above assertion:

> DH2: *Parents also feel nervous to face an educator due to the attitude of educators towards learners and parents. Educators often comment about parents' inadequacy when it comes to home tasks. The educators' attitude towards learner's parents hinders the level of parental involvement in schools.*

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E5: *We are scared as a school to invite parents for such events as they have caused serious problems in the past such as drunkenness. Whatever we try becomes unsuccessful. Just a few parents do support our fundraising drives.*

E2: *We tend to not have any fundraising initiatives at my school this year because we have noticed that parents are not regularly supportive. We also avoid inviting parents because of the possibility of unsavoury incidents arising.*

E4: *Yes, we do have events, but we tend to not invite parents. We only need them to assist by giving their children money to buy or to participate in activities that we arrange for fundraising. Parents struggle to support any fundraising drives of the school.*

P3: *There are instances where we had an event at school and parents were invited to attend. This was a very big mistake as alcohol was brought onto the school property and was consumed in the presence of children. Parents were behaving disorderly, and it was sad that many of us witnessed this behaviour including their own children. As a school principal, I also fear cases of rape taking place if we invite such parents to participate or be involved in events at our school.*

SGB5: *The problem of unemployment increases drug and alcohol abuse. As a result, this affects parental involvement and that is why the school is so reluctant to involve parents in activities because of the drug and alcohol abuse on school premises in front of learners.*

The SMT members and educators shared their reasons for their reluctance to invite parents to extra-mural activities or events at school because of past indiscretions perpetrated by parents. As a result, all parents are not invited for events. School staff maintain that their negative attitude towards inviting parents is because of their concern for the safety of learners during school events. Since literature indicates that one of the factors determining the school's effectiveness is the harmonious relationship between the school, parents and the learner, parental involvement is imperative; this is congruent to Epstein's (1997:3) theory of overlapping spheres of influence.

4.4.2.5 Negative attitudes of parents towards the school

The SMTs and educators also cited the negative attitudes of parents as a barrier to enhance parental involvement. These negative attitudes were manifested in several ways: there were parents who simply believed that the responsibility of educating their children belonged solely to the school; they do not support learners with home tasks; and they refuse to contribute to fundraising efforts. The following responses were indicative of such claims:

E5: *My relationship with parents had been good before, but recently it deteriorated because parents do not live with their children. There are very unreal expectations from parents. There are parents who view us as their enemies. When one educator makes a mistake, then all parents harp on that by speaking ill about educators.*

E6: *Some parents belong to the old school of thought in that their duty is to take a child to school and expect an educator to shape the child. There are parents who think they must only come to school when their children have been badly treated. They only come to school to scold and shout at educators.*

E2: *Some parents are rude towards me. They seem to have issues responding appropriately to texts. Learners' parents seem not to have enough time regarding learners' work. They want to see immediate results.*

P1: *Parents complain they are not trained to be educators, and that is why they do not have to help with homework because the Government pays us.*

E4: *Parents don't involve themselves in activities such as meetings. They do not participate at all, or they do not attend the meetings. They refuse to be a part of meetings. Because of poor attendance, parents are unaware of the activities that are occurring at school.*

P2: *Some of the factors that contribute towards poor parental involvement include parents not wanting to come to school when requested. Parents do come to school when there is a problem with their children. But some cases are not solved due to poor parental interest. They do not offer ideas but criticise the school when there are problems.*

P2: *Some educators receive letters from parents that state that they are not educators and not willing to teach their children at home, and that all work must be done at school by the educator, and not them.*

P3: *Parents are very reluctant to be involved if they are invited to address concerning issues related to progress, behaviour, or misconduct. They do not appreciate receiving bad or negative news.*

P2: *The progress of the learners in our school depends on parents being involved. So, the lack of parental involvement causes a huge problem to our school and to the learner. The educator needs to have the parent involved. A parent should assist the learners at home, especially those who are slow and who need help.*

According to the above evidence, there were instances of uncooperative parents who displayed a lack of interest in attending school events such as parents' meetings, consultation days, or open days. This suggests that some parents believe that it is the educator's job to discipline the child, and also that supervising homework is not their concern, but that of the educator. This creates conflict between the parents and school. Hence, negative attitudes of parents affect productivity in teaching and learning, including learners' progress, their self-esteem, and discipline.

4.4.2.6 The Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic forced parents to work remotely and simultaneously supervise their children's education at home (Fegert, Vitiello, Plener and Clemens, 2020). This raised concerns in resource-deficient school communities - only privileged school communities devised contingency plans by utilising online platforms. Other concerns focused on whether parents were able to take time off from work matters to care for their children at home. The following views from participants were expressed:

E1: *I have arrived at the school in 2011. The relationship was good. Attendance for parent visits used to be high. It was easy to teach parents on how to assist learners when doing homework. I think the lockdown in 2020 and 2021 made things worse. There were no class visits and learners were doing rotation learning.*

DH3: *Another factor was the Covid-19 pandemic. We as a school experienced so many problems. Learners remained home for half of the week at a time. We gave homework when they were at home, but parents couldn't care enough to assist or supervise. They didn't feel confident enough.*

SGB1: *As we know, 2020 prevented parents from coming to school for class visits. When the school called meetings during these times, they claimed that they had no transport to attend. Now that the Covid-19 rules have changed this year I am able to visit the school if I need to assist my child more. I also have a good relationship with her class educators. This benefits me as a parent as I am aware of what is going on in school and how I can help my child further.*

SGB2: *Firstly, since we were elected as the new SGB in 2021, there have been difficulties to schedule parents' meetings. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, we did not have parents' meetings for nearly two years. Therefore, this factor prevented me from being involved because if the school had more meetings, more parents will be involved.*

P2: *During Covid-19 pandemic, learners were staying at home and attending school rotationally. The school was willing to have WhatsApp groups, but parents were not confident to teach their children at home. Some claimed that they lacked the skills of technology.*

The above evidence suggests that schools with resources such as desktops or laptops were resorting to using the WhatsApp application which can be easily accessed on a smartphone or tablet. Since it is not a new application, parents have been accustomed to this online platform for many years as a means of communication prior to the pandemic. However, most parents are not confident of supervising their children at home as they see education as a specialised field (Rijali, 2018), and that not everyone can teach unless they have been trained in acquiring teaching skills.

4.4.2.7 Lack of facilitation regarding parental involvement in education

The evidence is unequivocal: when schools partner with families to facilitate learning, children tend to succeed, not only in school, but also in many aspects of their daily lives (Henderson and Berla, 1994). This study's findings revealed that all three schools defaulted regarding the minimum number of parent meetings. Moreover, through the

perusal of school records, it was established that two out of three schools did not structure homework timetables for distribution to learners and parents (see Appendix I). Also, all three schools only verbally announced to learners the programme of assessments for each term; they did not disseminate copies to parents to view, thus leaving most learners' parents unaware about the formal assessments for the term. The following articulations were relevant to the above assertions:

P1: *At the beginning of the year our school gave out the programme of assessments, but I must say that this only occurred in the first term. We do give homework; however, there are quite a few learners I teach who will either finish homework work just before the period begins or copy from other learners. There is a clear indication that homework was not done at home. We are facing a serious challenge in the sense that homework is unsupervised. Parents just do not have sufficient time to see to needs of children at home. When it comes to tests, learners seem very unprepared as they don't study.*

DH1: *There are no parents' meetings. No parents' class-visit day to check their learner's work. Looks like there are some personal issues between the new acting leadership administration and parents. There is no communication between the school and parents. Therefore, they have not been informed about homework and the programme of assessment. Parents must be aware of what learners have to do at home.*

DH2: *Yes, and no! I say this because not all educators provide homework timetables. Most learners take down the instruction themselves. There isn't a document or notice for parents to sign or acknowledge homework, or the term's programme of assessments.*

SGB4: *When the school has a meeting and I am not informed as a parent, this affects me. I will not be aware of the meeting and therefore I will attend. The school should also follow up as to whether parents have received information about meetings as learners cannot be trusted to take messages home. As a parent, what prevents me from being involved is that I am not informed about the term test programme. I want to know what is going to happen within the school with regards to curriculum issues.*

The lack of parental involvement facilitation at schools is rooted within the following: inadequate communication, lack of parent meetings, and the absence of workshops on how to help learners at home on curriculum matters. Also, the main issue identified during interviews with SMTs, educators and SGB parent members regarding barriers to parental involvement in schools was the geographical distance between some schools and learners' homes. This physical distance made it difficult for parents to actively participate in school activities. Further, the challenge of parents developing and exhibiting negative attitudes towards school personnel needs urgent intervention.

In sum, there are different reasons for a disruptive pattern to develop, but it usually stems from parents' lack of information about how they can effectively help their children to succeed. When a learner without parental guidance encounters difficulties, he/she may feel a degree of helplessness (Cosso, von Suchodoletz, and Yoshikawa, 2022). Additionally, when the school continues to communicate with a parent about a child's problems without offering guidance and support to enhance the child's all-round performance, parents (in frustration) frequently exhibit signs of withdrawal, defensiveness, denial, and hostility (Johnson and Lambert, 2011).

Significantly, Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:18) found that parents' level of education and socioeconomic status do not determine the level of parental involvement in school activities; instead, parents are more likely to become motivated to actively engage in their children's education when they discover that a school has implemented initiatives to draw them into school community programmes and/or provide guidance on assisting learners at home. Therefore, the school's culture of facilitating parental involvement is vital to enhance learners' academic performance, in addition to creating and promoting a genial school community.

4.4.3 Theme Three: Advantages of Parental Involvement for Stakeholders

Hornby and Lafaele's (2011) study found that parental involvement fosters positive parent-educator relationships while creating a more supportive school environment that benefits learners. Since parents are the first educators in a child's life, their active involvement in their children's education fosters the learning process which leads to better educational achievement (Moroni, Dumont, Trautwein, Niggi and Baeriswyl, 2015). In support, Henderson, Mapp, Johnson and Davies (2007) agree that the active participation of parents in school activities improves communication between parents

and educators, thus fostering cooperation among all role-players which leads to quality educational outcomes. After interviewing participants from the selected schools, the following benefits of parental involvement in education came to the fore:

4.4.3.1 School, SMT, and educators

The benefits of parental involvement for educators, as outlined by Epstein and Sheldon (2005:8), include gaining insight into families' backgrounds, cultures, concerns, goals, needs, and parents' perspectives of their children's schooling. In addition, the importance of parental involvement in improving the quality of teaching and learning leads to better academic performance. The following excerpts provide evidence of the benefits of parental involvement to the school, SMT and educators:

> SGB2: I believe that the educators of the school benefit when parents are involved. When parents ensure that learners do their homework and assignments are done on time, then educators are able to hand in marks on time. The school can also benefit if parents volunteer like myself. I help in the admin office and help with photocopying. It should also be noted that the school must realise that if they involve parents, the school will benefit, but unfortunately there are no activities at my school, not even parent meetings.

> SGB1: *The school benefits as I am a member of the school governing body. We assist the school in the cleaning of the school premises. This is the volunteering work that I mentioned earlier. I also believe if parents are more involved, we will have fewer cases of ill-disciplined children.*

> SGB3: *The school is benefiting a lot because they use my presence as an example to other parents, so that if they visit, they will see better results in their children. Visiting and being more involved at school, helps the learners to improve their performance as they produce better results in tests. My child is very reserved and doesn't communicate with others. I explained this to the educators, and they were very accommodating. They helped my child to feel safe and cared for. Eventually my child made friends and was more comfortable in others' company.*

Epstein et al. (1997:2) emphasise that parental involvement improves the quality of school programmes, in addition to creating a positive school climate. Epstein et al.

(1997:2) elaborate that parental involvement can contribute to the provision of family services in schools, the availability of teaching and learning resources, support for the financial, physical and intellectual aspects of the school, and promoting a better relationship and communication between home and school. Further, parental involvement increases educators' understanding of 'exceptional' children and their life circumstances via transparent parent-school collaboration. This in turn allows educators to gain valuable information about the child's personal situation, current challenges, and the family's home environment which eradicates negative communication and misunderstandings.

4.4.3.2 The school, the parent, and community

Parents, by engaging in school activities, become significantly aware of the common challenges they face as parents of learners. In addition, they receive support from both the school and other parents which increases their self-confidence, while developing a better understanding of parenting, child development, and how to create optimal learning conditions (Epstein and Sheldon, 2005:8). The following responses validate these assertions:

> P3: *There are times when I called in parents to give them advice about the way they conduct themselves, especially after the incident when we had during an event when parents were drinking alcohol on the school premises. They listened to me and were able to take my advice. The SGB also intervened and spoke to parents. Other parents were not happy with the situation, so they also had meetings with parents who committed the misconduct.*

> SGB2: *I used the opportunity to volunteer at school when the need arose. This helped me as I am unemployed, so it gives me something to do.*

Olsen and Fuller (2008:129) describe some of the following benefits of parental involvement in their children's education: parents increase the number of interactions with their children to become more responsive and sensitive to their needs of social, emotional and intellectual development; parents are more confident in their parenting skills and decision-making by acquiring more knowledge about child development; there is an increase in affection which positively reinforces the parent-child relationship such that punishment is not an option; and parents develop a better understanding of

the work of educators and the curriculum requirements. Parental involvement in the community has the advantage of bringing families and schools together. This results in benefits such as securing donations, and acquiring the services of local businesses, clinics, and the South African Police Service. Therefore, the school becomes a potent agent of the community in actively promoting the holistic development of all its children.

4.4.3.3 Improved learner-performance

Epstein and Sheldon (2005:8) suggest that recognising the role of family supervision can help build respect for parents. This in turn leads to the development of positive personal qualities, behaviours, beliefs and values. Additionally, it improves time-management skills for completing homework and other school projects. Moreover, it ingrains the importance of schooling which promotes regular school attendance and the attainment of quality learner-outcomes (Vassallo, 2001). Therefore, when parents are actively involved in school activities, there are opportunities for positive outcomes as expressed in the following comments:

> E6: *The child benefits much when a parent is involved because in this journey, it helps them to focus on their studies and all the activities that are prescribed. I believe that learners gain confidence if they see their parent being involved at school. This in turn motivates them to improve schoolwork to a higher level, meaning they will get higher marks. The child will also see that the parent cares a lot about them by being involved in school programmes, and in turn will grow up to also be a caring adult.*

> SGB2: *I believe that my child benefits greatly if I am involved. I mentioned earlier that she is experiencing problems with IsiZulu home language work. Ever since I began helping her at home, the educator said that there is great improvement. I also believe that children become more disciplined and behave well when they know that they the parent will visit school and find out about their behaviour.*

In support of the above evidence, Olsen and Fuller (2008) agreed that there are several benefits for learners when parents are involved:

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- Quality academic outcomes for learners, irrespective of their socio-economic status, ethnic/racial background, or parents' educational level;

- Learners whose parents are involved in their education are more likely to attain higher grades, improved test scores, better attendance, and 'on-time' completion of homework;

- Parental involvement contributes to learners' development of positive attitudes and maintenance of sound discipline;

- Learners whose parents are involved in their lives have higher graduation rates, and are more likely to enrol for tertiary education; and

- Learners from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to perform better when parents and professionals collaborate to bridge the gap between the cultural context at home and the learning institution.

4.4.4 Theme Four: Factors Enhancing Parental Involvement, and Strategies to Address and Increase Parental Involvement

This study sought to explore potential strategies that could be implemented to enhance parental involvement in public primary schools. These strategies were centred on Epstein's (1995:701-705) six types of parental involvement: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Epstein and Sheldon (2005:7) state that each type of practice pertains to the roles that parents and schools can play in children's education by availing opportunities for healthy interactions between educators, parents, learners, and other stakeholders across contexts.

4.4.4.1 Parenting

Monadjem (2003:28) emphasises that parenting includes supervising children and creating a home environment that fosters the development of responsible, confident, and independent individuals who display socially acceptable behaviour and the enthusiasm to learn. Epstein (2001:408-410) contends that parenting should be facilitated through the school such that they become inspired to support their children to develop effective skills by understanding child and adolescent development, in addition to creating a home environment that is conducive to children's learning. This should be promoted through regular workshops and parent meetings where families

share information with the schools about their culture, background, children's needs, and talents that contribute to a child's success in school (Epstein, 2008:11-12; Epstein and Sanders 2006:52). Regarding parenting, participants stated the following:

P1: *Parents like to attend school if we are offering something for free. They also attend meetings where they can air their views. They also come to school to complain about an educator. They also visit school if they in the area or have transport money.*

P3: *They are also quite active when invited for meetings when school fees are discussed or where they can give their views which eventually starts fights. They like to air their views during meetings. If transport is provided or sponsored, then parents are able to come to school.*

DH1: *Parents are motivated in attending school meetings to discuss matters involving their learners' education, behaviour, welfare and school programmes. Parents mostly like to see their children performing educational or cultural activities during the course of the meeting. They enjoy nice meals after the meeting.*

P1: *I believe, as the principal of the school, we should put the parents and the school first, including the curriculum. Teaching and learning are key in all what we plan. We should manage the curriculum in terms of educators' work and learners working through the curriculum monitoring tool.*

E3: *Although the school provides opportunities for parents to come and visit, I believe that this should be provided more frequently so that parents who did not have time to come previously can come during another scheduled date - we should have two dates per term for parent visits.*

E4: *For parents who do not show up when called, there should be a strict policy that should be developed, discussed and applied with no favours. The school should have quarterly meetings to remind parents of their role as parents by briefing them of the expectancies of the school and highlighting their importance.*

E6: *The school should make sure that parents commit themselves by signing and stating that they will be involved in all parent activities at school. The SMT*

must make sure that parents are present during meetings and must sign the attendance registers. Parents must account for not being involved. Opportunities for parents to visit school anytime to check learners' progress should be allowed.

P2: *The role of the SGB is to govern the school. They make sure the teaching and learning is effective at all time. They make sure that the use of school funds is appropriately utilised to maintain the school's facilities. They assist the school in resolving conflicts that the school faces.*

P3: *I would say that my relationship with parents and the community is smooth. We have an open relationship. We have a good relationship with our SGB, especially the chairperson who is always willing to assist the school, whether it's disciplinary issues, funding issues or issues with parents. My doors are always open for them. Parents tend to trust my opinion, my advice, and the way I run the school.*

SGB1: *I must admit there are not many meetings taking place at the school, so if there is a parents' meeting I can ask for an opportunity to address other parents and encourage them to support their kids. I can also encourage parents to volunteer at our school.*

SGB2: *Raising awareness towards benefits of parental involvement as a school governing body is not easy. I am not granted a platform to raise awareness. I think that the school needs to firstly have parents' meetings and actually invite parents to attend these meetings.*

SGB3: *I always encourage parents as the SGB chairperson to come to school to look at their children's work and their behaviour towards their educators. Also, parents should be a part of all the activities that the learners participate in at school and show support to the school. Some do support this request, but unfortunately most do not. Parents simply do not have the time. There is also the feeling that they are just not that interested and have too many problems of their own to deal with.*

SGB5: *The school can also have more one-on-one meetings with parents, especially when learners are performing badly, or in cases when learners misbehave.*

SGB6: *As a member of the SGB, I can contribute to raising awareness during parents' meetings, that's if parents attend the meetings because most of the time parents are not attending meetings. I can also raise awareness during community gatherings such as in church and in community meetings.*

Cosso, von Suchodoletz and Yoshikawa (2022) found that parents can only be effective partners if educators pay attention to what they say, heed their needs, and if parental input is taken seriously. For example, schools can encourage parental involvement by communicating clear information through meetings, discussions, notices, messages, or parent activities; but consideration must be given to parents' commitments such as work. Schools should also respect parents' different cultures, beliefs, values, needs and goals by initiating awareness programmes for parents (Project Appleseed, 2008:6).

Since SGB's in South Africa afford parents the opportunity to become actively involved in their children's education, they play a vital role when it comes to encouraging greater parental involvement. In this regard, School B and School C were enjoying a fruitful experience with their SGBs through commitment, transparency, trust and attempts at facilitating parent engagement. Although School B and School C have some reservations about their SGBs' effectiveness, the general support displayed by the SGB parent members overshadows these indiscretions. The SGB of school A was newly appointed and needed further development to ensure more productivity. According to Van Deventer (2016), the role of the SGB is imperative in the school-parent partnership in terms of the overlapping spheres of the social community that unite all the stakeholders. Hence, the SGB liaises and mediates between parent and school in conflictual situations. The study also revealed that schools urgently need committed parents to participate fully in their children's formal education in order to enhance the quality of education in schools. Both educators and other key stakeholders bear significant responsibilities in imparting essential parenting skills to families. This, in turn, can facilitate effective teaching and learning within the classroom.

4.4.4.2 Effective communication between the school and parents

According to Epstein (1995:704), schools and families should cordially interact during school programmes to enhance learner-performance via home-to-school and school-to-home communications through printed messages (among others) to accommodate non-English speaking and/or illiterate parents. The following responses elaborate on the value of effective communication between the school and parents:

SGB4: *The school is active when it comes to communication. Educators ensure that my child receives a circular or notices about school matters. They also go as far as to stick posters up on the local clinic and shops to ensure that the community reads these notices. Learners are given the programme of assessments to write down at the beginning of every term. I do recommend that the school makes copies of these programmes of assessments to ensure us parents sign it as acknowledgment of receipt.*

P3: *Yes, in the Foundation Phase we do distribute a schedule and parents are supposed to sign it as acknowledgement of the homework for the week; however, very few parents actually do sign the homework timetable in the message-book. We do give out circulars or notices. We should also have a platform such a school WhatsApp group.*

DH1: *Parents meetings provide a valuable forum for parents to raise their concerns and offer ideas to assist the school. The following are systems I have in place to communicate with learners' parents: the school organogram (channels of communication), school newsletters, parents' communication book per learner, notification letters, Emails, SMSs and telephone call records (for emergencies).*

P2: *Yes, we planned as a school to give out each term's programme of assessment, but we have not done so yet. By giving out the programme of assessment, parents will be aware of tasks that need to be done at home. If parents visit school or call telephonically, they will receive all the information that is needed to know about their child so that they can assist the learner at home. As a school, we insist that parents notify us when a child was absent by sending a note with the child when they return to school or instances when the*

child is absent for a prolonged period of time, the parent should contact the school. I do believe that we should improve our communication systems by updating learner-profiles.

DH2: *We do disseminate circulars about school activities. We also make posters and stick them on the wall of the school buildings. When there is a parent meeting, we relay messages. Unfortunately, we haven't had a sufficient number of parent meetings. We also rely on our SGB to talk to parents. To improve communication, we should consider digital platforms to communicate with parents. I recall reading about a study about how much time people spend on social media in a day. They say on average a person spends about two hours a day. I believe that using a social platform is a way of improving our situation regarding communication with parents.*

E2: *I have grown to realise that when communicating with parents, one needs to be calm and respectful at all times. If you involve parents regularly, then learners' progress increases. I believe that the SMT needs to structure a composite parents' meeting roster for the year. They need to devise new effective communication modes such as the writing of short messages, establishing WhatsApp, or opening a Facebook account.*

SGB4: *I believe that the school must improve their strategies of communicating with parents in order to enhance parent involvement, especially with those who are illiterate and cannot grasp what was said.*

Epstein and Sheldon (2005:5) found that most communication between parents and schools was directed from the school to the parents, and that such communication usually happens when there is a behavioural issue, or a child is experiencing learning difficulties. However, sometimes parents contact educators when they express an interest in helping their children (Epstein and Sheldon, 2005: 5).

Further, the language barrier prevents parents from engaging in communication involving school matters. If parents are unable to understand the language used in school communication, their level of involvement is likely to decrease (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011; Murray, McFarland-Piazza, and Harrison, 2015).

Murray, McFarland-Piazza, and Harrison (2015:1033) emphasised that constant communication between the child, the educator, and the parent allows the parent to inform the educator about the child's wellbeing, while the educator can elicit information from the parent on how to better understand the learner's academic needs. Therefore, continuous reciprocal communication between educators and parents is critical. In support, Van Zyl (2013:239) agrees that the need to improve and support parental participation via effective collaborations between all role-players is essential to remove barriers to participation which will raise parental awareness of children's strengths and weaknesses.

In sum, the above responses made it apparent that for parents to engage effectively in school matters, the importance of understanding the content of communicative messages was crucial. Once the need to communicate effectively to all parents is recognised, introducing visionary communicative intervention strategies would become a reality.

4.4.4.3 Parent activities through volunteering

Monadjem (2003:32) states that volunteering is aimed at obtaining and organising support from parents to assist educators in the classroom, during educational trips, at fundraising events, and performing library duties. Parents engage in such activities at the invitation of the school and educators (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997).

> SGB3: *The school must organise open days when learners practise buying and selling skills, and they can sell to parents to increase their entrepreneurial skills for EMS. Also, the school must organise games and invite parents to come and support their kids during these games.*

> DH2: *They should invite parents to become more involved. They should educate the parents on the rules of an event so that we will not have the problems that we've had in the past.*

> P2: *I try to involve the parents in our sporting events and excursions. It should be noted that the SGB may not always be present at school due to their personal commitments, but most times they do show up when we need them the most. I also believe that we should try to come up with strategies to attract parents to come to school and be part of their children's fun days or sport days.*

They can support their children so that they can see the need to uplift them psychologically.

E2: *The school should invite parents to the annual sports day. Our school is reluctant to invite parents. However, if there is a strict parental involvement policy in place stipulating rules, conduct, and behaviour, I don't see a problem arising at future events.*

E1: *The school should create opportunities to entice parents to be part of the school by giving them small tenders like renovating the school.*

SGB 5: *Parents need to step forward and work together with the educator, and not against the educator to ensure that their child is getting the best education. There should be more collaboration such as at fundraising drives. The school should allow more participation from parents during fundraising drives. For example, each class may have a market day, and a group of parents can come to school to assist in selling the products in order for the school to have a more open and better relationship with parents whilst the school is gaining more income.*

The above responses are aligned to Epstein's (1997:9) Model of Parental Involvement Type 3 (Volunteering) which advocates that parents should be more involved in assisting schools with extra-curricular activities, cultural events, and fundraising.

4.4.4.4 Parental support with home-based tasks

One of the important forms of parental involvement is assisting learners with school tasks at home. According to the DoE (RSA, 2016:8), the home environment is key for children to learn, grow, and reach their full potential. In conducive home conditions, children acquire knowledge, develop skills, and undergo personal and intellectual development. By creating supportive and enriching home environments to facilitate children's holistic development, parents positively shape children's educational journeys. The following articulations described the lived experiences of participants regarding the role of parents in supporting their children with home-based tasks:

P3: *If parents were actively involved at home, they would ensure that their learners are studying. Reading is a big problem. There are local libraries in neighbouring towns, but parents do not take their children to the library to*

borrow books. As the principal of the school, I should have more regular meetings with educators who are encountering parental involvement problems so that we can address these problems right at the beginning before they get overwhelming.

E1: *I believe that only ten per cent of parents actually take the time to support their children with homework tasks and Life Skills projects.*

E6: *There are learners who should have improved academically if parents were cooperative and supportive. If parents helped with homework, the level of passing will be high. At the moment the pass-rate is low because parents do not support learners with homework.*

E3: *We do give a homework timetable, but most parents do not acknowledge it.*

SGB3: *Educators should do a check once per week to see if parents did receive the homework timetable – the beginning of every week.*

The above articulations suggest that the school should be accountable for the lack of regular parent meetings. Such issues such as homework could be addressed at these forums to conscientise parents on the value of homework, and that they must see to it that learners complete their homework on time. Further, it was recommended that the school should distribute a homework timetable for parents to acknowledge and sign. Epstein (2001:409) supports the notion that effective and efficient home learning is promoted by providing families with information and guidance to assist learners with homework and other curriculum activities. According to Project Appleseed (2008:8), the benefits of home-schooling are that learners have the opportunity to do their homework, develop a positive attitude towards schoolwork, gain confidence in their own abilities as learners, and improve their skills and test scores.

4.4.4.5 Parental involvement through decision-making processes

Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) describe the process of decision-making which involve parents of learners as an inclusion that develops parent leaders and their representatives. Parents participate in school decision-making when they become part of school governance committees such as the SGB. Other forms of decision-making participation include parents belonging to collectives in a school such as the parent-

educator-association, book clubs, fundraising committees, field trip organisers, school-club coaches, and advisory councils.

Parents need to be convinced that the school needs them to enhance their children's education. Hence, for schools to be successful in their attempts to engage parents, there must be a welcoming and harmonious school environment to attract parents to become part of the school community. In congruence, Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins and Closson (2005) found that the practices of schools to involve parents influence parents' decisions about whether to become involved in one (or more) type category of school engagement (Table 2.1). The following three extracts testified to the above assertion:

> DH1: *The school governing body has been deprived of the opportunity to perform their duties deliberately. As I alluded to earlier, there is no SGB meeting, so the SGB is not doing anything. The SGB members do not perform their duties because they are not called often to do their work that they are supposed to do. According to me, our school needs to encourage parental involvement in matters of decision-making, issues concerning the functionality of the school, and in all educational journeys of the learners as per the South African School's Act no. 84 of 1996. The parents should elect a strong school governing body with well-educated chairperson.*

> P2: *The duty of the school governing body in our school is to govern the school. They must ensure that teaching-learning is effective at all times. Also, the use of school funds must be monitored to ensure that funds are appropriately distributed to maintain the school's facilities. They must also assist the school in diffusing conflicts that arise at school. The school governing body must also play a role when it comes to the enrolment of new learners in the school in terms of available spaces in buildings and securing furniture that is needed for comfortable seating.*

> DH2: *We have a good functional SGB. Members assist our school and are very willing to solve problems. They are assertive and do avail themselves when needed. They agree on appropriate arrangements and reporting to parents in conjunction with the school principal. These include providing information to*

parents about learners' results. They assist in making sure the curriculum is strictly followed by liaising with parents during meetings.

Schools B and C have more functional SGBs than School A. The reason is that School A's SGB was newly elected in the midst of the 2021 Covid-19 pandemic which affected the provision of guidance regarding their roles as SGB members of the school. Therefore, the departmental head (DH) of school A recommended that the school cooperate with the SGB by organising regular meetings, encouraging participation in fulfilling their respective roles, inviting participation in decision-making processes to promote transparency, and creating forums where parents can share insights on important school decisions with the community.

4.4.4.6 Schools collaborating with the community

Collaboration with the community assists in identifying, integrating, designing, and accessing resources and services to strengthen school programmes, changes negative family practices, and improves children's learning and development (Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders and Simon, 1997:9). A collaborative or teamwork arrangement cements relationships between the school and community entities such as local businesses, religious organisations, community clubs, parents, colleges, neighbouring schools, and relevant others. The intended objective is to share resources, achieve common goals, promote educational performance, stimulate all-round improvement, and initiate reforms.

Community involvement and Role-player involvement are also used to describe the cooperation between education and community structures (Lemmer and Van Wyk, 2014). Besides teaching children, schools also provided several other services for their communities. School A provided water from their tanks when there was a shortage of water in households and other institutions. School C donated food hampers annually to underprivileged community members. In turn, the school also received help from the community. The excerpts below elaborate on the aspect of school-community collaboration:

> P1: *I have been a principal of the school for many years, and I have developed this bond with the majority of the parents in the community. Financial issues are well monitored by the SGB. Parents are very keen to come to school and to*

listen news from the community, especially when the school has received some kind of donation; for example, from the farmers in the community helped the school by donating and entire set of uniform from shoes to clothes for ninety (90) learners. Many learners do not have proper school uniform and come dressed in various colours of jerseys or jackets when it is cold. So, this donation has pleased the parents very much.

E6: *The community as a whole should be taught about channels of being involved in school matters because the school belongs to the community. The school should invite parents to participate in activities such as gardening at the school to avoid spending money on cutting grass.*

E1: *The SMT must make sure that they canvass for active and responsible parents within the community to be elected onto the School Governing Body. There is no use in having inactive members who are simply there for the title.*

E6: *The local police officers stop by and deliver talks to the children about various issues such as violence and bullying at schools. The local nurses from the clinic also offer services such as health checks for the learners as well as the parents.*

Henderson and Berla (1994) prioritise collaboration between the school and the community as this increases positivity amongst parents. For instance, when the community renders services of value to the school, this motivates parents to become more active community members. Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017:149) maintain that the main purpose of community collaboration is to assist in satisfying the unique needs of the community, building trust, encouraging positive interactions, and increasing parent-school communication, promoting the healthy development of children, and ensuring safe school communities.

4.5 DATA COLLECTED THROUGH DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Triad (2016) states that documents can serve as valuable sources of additional data and background information for ongoing research. Thus, document analysis is beneficial and useful in supplementing the understanding of the phenomenon under study. In this study, the researcher perused, interpreted, analysed, and recorded salient points from the school documents that would strengthen the validity of the

research findings in line with the stated research problem. The documents were obtained from the school principals of the selected schools. The checklist (Appendix L) utilised to dissect the information from the relevant school documents provided incisive insight to understand the problem of poor parental involvement at schools. The evidence extracted from these documents revealed the kind of activities that were (or not) performed at the three selected schools.

Pursuant to the semi-structured interviews at the three selected schools, the process of document analysis was conducted with the assistance of principals as a form of data collection. The checklist included minutes of parent meetings, records regarding workshops for parents, notes of meetings involving educator-parent one-on-one interactions, notices/circulars/newsletters to parents, policy on parental involvement, a year-plan for parents' involvement in school events and activities (meeting dates, extra-mural events, fundraising drives, excursions, social days, post event meetings etc.).

4.5.1 Parent Meetings and Development Workshops (Attendance Registers)

- School A: There was no evidence of attendance registers for parents' meetings. It was mentioned by the principal (P1) that only 20% of the number of parents attend meetings. The attendance registers for parent meetings have not been updated since pre-Covid-19.
- School B: Registers were kept in a file; only 25% of the total number of parents attended meetings according to the attendance registers.
- School C: Registers were kept in a file; only 30% of all parents attended meetings according to the attendance registers.

It should be noted that because of lockdown restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic, schools restricted the visitation of parents, and minimised the number of meetings. No meetings took place in 2020 and 2021. This did affect teaching and learning and communication with parents.

4.5.2 Minutes of Meetings with Parents

Schools A, B and C presented evidence of meetings by producing minutes that were kept in a file. Since minutes of meetings are proof of decision-making, their importance

as school records is invaluable; hence, the researcher decided to analyse them to supplement evidence collected from the semi-structured, individual interviews.

4.5.3 Record of Educator-parent Meetings

- School A: No record of one-on-one meetings between parents and educators
- School B: No record of one-on-one meetings between parents and educators, but educators kept records in their educator files under 'parent visits'.
- School C: No record of one-on-one meetings between parents and educators, but there were registers for parents to sign when they visit the school to check on their children's progress, among others.

4.5.4 Notices/Circulars/Newsletters to Parents

Schools A, B and C sent notices, circulars, and messages (learners' notebooks and telephone calls) to parents. This is in keeping with Epstein's (2008:11) typology of parental involvement Type 2 (communication). It was noted that only a limited number of educators communicated with parents via WhatsApp. None of the school utilised emails or short message services (SMSs). When telephonic calls are made, the listed numbers do not work.

4.5.5 Policy on Parental Involvement and the Annual Parent Activity Plan

School A: There was no evidence of a parental involvement policy. The school planned to structure and implement such a policy in the future. There was also no evidence of a parental involvement year-plan. This will be planned for the following year.

School B: There was no evidence of a parental involvement policy and a parental involvement year-plan. The school will design and implement these the following year.

School C: There was evidence of a parental involvement policy, but there was no evidence of a structured parental involvement year-plan. However, parental involvement activities were recorded in the school's year-plan.

Only one out of the three schools (School C) developed a written policy on parental involvement, which specified the roles they wished parents to play, as well as how the school would encourage and support the involvement of parents. This school also had a parental involvement committee in place.

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4.5.6 Involvement of Parents in Extra-Mural Activities: Post-event Minutes

School A, B and C provided evidence of post-event meeting minutes. Schools A and C were reluctant to allow a multitude of parents onto the school property for events because of unsavoury incidents that occurred in the past. Although conflict with parents sometimes occurs at school events, the SMTs were aware that encouraging parental participation has a positive impact on learner-achievement. Since the environment is a powerful element that influences behaviour, creating rich, inviting, and conducive environments for parents to visit schools may be challenging, but possible with will and effort from school officials (Gonzalez-Mena, 2010). Gonzalez-Mena (2010) suggests that from the outset the school must create a sense of belonging for parents, learners, and the community to ensure that the school environment is welcoming. All SMTs members mentioned the possible developing of policies that parents should adhere to, especially rules and regulations concerning parents' conduct at school events.

4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided the analysis of data and findings on the involvement of parents in the selected primary schools of the King Cetshwayo District. The data was collected from semi-structured interviews, and by analysing school documents. Codes were generated to categorise the information, and a rigorous thematic analysis was subsequently applied to systematically examine and draw insights from the coded interview scripts. Verbatim interview responses and findings from the analysis of documents were presented according to themes and sub-themes. This process allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the data, facilitating a deeper understanding of the underlying themes and patterns that emerged from the interviews. The selected participants shared their lived-experiences by providing insightful information regarding the level of parental involvement at their schools.

Following a thorough analysis of the collected data, the researcher engaged in a thoughtful interpretation process aimed at addressing the research questions initially presented in section 1.4 of the introductory chapter. Through this interpretive phase of answering the research questions, the researcher established that there was a lack of parental involvement at all three schools, various challenges that hindered parents from actively and effectively participating in their children's educational journey, and

the impoverished communities around the three schools lacked the resources necessary for children to thrive in their academic pursuits. This chapter also revealed that parental engagement enhanced communication, improved the learning environment, and boosted learner-performance. Furthermore, it was emphasised that there was an urgency to invite and conduct workshops for parents on the topic of parental involvement. The study's findings were in line with those of current relevant literature, and answered all the research questions (Epstein, 2018). The findings ultimately provided a comprehensive response to the research inquiries as indicated in the next chapter (5) which presents the summary, the conclusions, and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter four presented, analysed, evaluated, and interpreted the collected data. The main aim of this study was to examine the quality of parent involvement in the selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District. In an attempt to answer the main research question in line with the study's aim and sub-questions as stated in Chapter One and Chapter Four, the researcher utilised a qualitative case study approach, an interpretive paradigm, purposeful sampling of three primary schools using semi-structured interviews and document analysis, followed by coding and the thematic analysis for the data.

This chapter provides an overview of the study, and then presents the key findings based on the emerging themes based on the thematic analysis process. It also summarises the investigation process which led to determining the level of parental involvement, in addition to exploring effective strategies to enhance parental involvement in the selected schools.

5.2 SYNOPSIS OF THE STUDY

This section of the study outlines the main aspects of chapters one to five:

- *Chapter one* presented the following: introduction to the study, the background, purpose, the research problem, the main aim and objectives, the main research question and sub-questions, an overview of the literature review and theoretical framework, the research design, methodology, significance of the study, and the clarification of concepts.

- *Chapter two* discussed the relevant literature study based on the subject of parental involvement and parental engagement in the schooling system. This included investigating perceptions of SMTs, educators and parents. Additionally, the role of the SGB, involvement of parents in times of the Covid-19 pandemic, the use of modern technology, challenges and advantages of

parental involvement, and strategies to address and improve parental involvement were explored. Lastly, the theoretical framework aligned to Epstein's (2018) theory of parental involvement was explained.

- *Chapter three* described the qualitative interpretative case study design and the methodologies applied in the study. The sample size involved six participants per school by employing the purposive sampling procedure. Semi-structured interviews and document analysis were utilised as data collection instruments. The data analysis was guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase process of thematic analysis. To ensure trustworthiness, the study adhered to the principles of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The researcher was also guided by ethical considerations in terms of obtaining permission to conduct research from the relevant institutions and individuals. Principles of informed consent, minimal risk, anonymity, and confidentiality were assured. Lastly, the limitations of the study were listed.

- *Chapter four* focused on the data collected from semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Interpretation, discussions, and conclusions were drawn from the collected data. The participants' views were presented verbatim to enhance the study's trustworthiness. In addition, the researcher probed, analysed, and evaluated the participant's responses which were categorised into themes and sub-themes. Also, data gleaned from perusing and analysing school documents supplemented data collected from the interviews. Lastly, the findings were presented in relation to reviewed literature and Epstein's (2001:408-410) six types of parent involvement.

- *Chapter five* provides the synopsis of the study, the major findings, as well as recommendations aimed at improving parental involvement in the selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District of KwaZulu-Natal. The chapter also outlined the limitations and implications for further research. Finally, the conclusion of the whole study was provided.

5.3 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY'S FINDINGS

The findings of this study were drawn from semi-structured interviews conducted individually by the researcher and document analysis. The research findings were shaped by the study's research questions and objectives and themes. To ensure that the study achieved its purpose, the researcher restated the main and sub-questions posed; the main research question explored the quality of parental involvement in the selected primary schools of the King Cetshwayo District, while the following sub-questions dissected the phenomenon in-depth:

- Which factors impede parental involvement in the selected primary schools of the King Cetshwayo District?
- How are these selected primary schools impacted by poor parental involvement?
- What are the advantages of parental involvement in education?
- What effective strategies could be implemented to address the lack of parental involvement in selected primary schools of the King Cetshwayo District?

In summarising the findings of this study, the researcher outlined four themes that emerged from the data analysis processes. These themes also precipitated conclusions based on the data. The four themes included: Theme One - The level of parental involvement in three selected primary schools; Theme Two - The impeding factors of parental involvement and the impact on education; Theme Three - The advantages of parental involvement for its stakeholders; Theme Four - Factors leading to improved parental involvement and effective strategies for increasing parental involvement. These themes play a crucial role in research as they assist in extracting meaningful information from data, organising it, and facilitating the process of addressing research questions effectively. They are valuable for researchers to make-sense of complex datasets to draw meaningful conclusions.

5.3.1 Level of Parental Involvement in Schools A, B and C

Participants of Schools A, B, and C all voiced similar opinions that parental involvement was extremely low in their respective schools. This was a clear indication of an urgent need to build better relationships between parents and the school. Lara

and Saracostti (2019) found that increased parental involvement corresponds to learners' higher educational achievement. Therefore, without greater parental involvement, children may not receive essential support to focus on their studies, thus leading to sub-standard academic performance and decreased motivation.

The participants from Schools A and B reported that parents display a blatant disregard concerning their children's educational journey by not providing assistance and guidance with homework or by not attending parent meetings, fundraising events, and not responding to any communication from the school. As a result, the educator becomes solely responsible for the learner's understanding of the subject material, completion of assignments, and daily homework because learners are left unsupervised at home and thus return to school with incomplete tasks.

Similarly, the SMT and educators of School C expressed their frustration at the lack of parental involvement at their school regarding curricular matters and assistance with learners' homework, Parents believe that it is the duty of the educator to teach the learners to pass without parental assistance. Nonetheless, many parents do attend meetings due to the strong and functional SGB which is respected, trusted, and industrious. Moreover, parents who are cognisant of the need to become more involved in volunteer services at school, become motivated to assist in other areas of school life such as being part of the team to organise sports and social events.

Furthermore, without adequate parental supervision, children may be hindered or demotivated to access quality educational resources such as books, technology, or after-school services, thus leading them to play catch-up with their peers. Additionally, children devoid of parental guidance in their education forego important life skills. Also, the lack of meaningful interactions between parents and their children leaves them incapable of developing valuable communication and problem-solving skills, thus making them underprepared for the challenges of adulthood.

5.3.2 Challenges to Parental Involvement and their Implications on Education

Parental involvement in a child's academic and social development is imperative. Disappointingly, the three selected schools faced several obstacles that impeded parents from being fruitfully engaged in their children's education. The following factors act as barriers to effective parental involvement at schools:

5.3.2.1 Socio-economic challenges of parents and the school community

A review of the literature by Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009) indicates that parental involvement is especially wanting in low-income areas and in the surrounding communities because of many challenges arising from poverty. The researcher's experience when conducting interviews indicates that many children attending schools in King Cetshwayo District come from homes with little or no parental care. Some of these learners live with grandparents or in child-headed households. These impoverished communities surrounding all three schools have inadequate housing, high unemployment rates, limited access to healthcare, and insufficient educational opportunities. These communities, which often lack the resources that enable children to succeed, are further imperilled by drug and alcohol abuse.

Additionally, the problem is compounded by the lack of transport and financial resources - parents who would rather spend it on food rather than transport which leaves many learners and parents to walk long distances to reach school. In addition, nutritious food and clean drinking water are unaffordable which results in high rates of illnesses due mainly to malnutrition. Moreover, high unemployment rates have leads to increased crime and violence levels, thus creating an even more precarious environment for these communities. According to Munje and Mncube (2018), poverty has had a devastating effect on parents from underprivileged backgrounds as it prevents them from being actively involved in their children's education.

5.3.2.2 Illiterate grandparents as guardians and primary caregivers

The majority of participants claimed that many learners live with grandparents who are barely literate; this is the reason for unsupervised homework, poor meeting attendance, and not acquiring learners' basic necessities as grandparents mainly survive on social grants. This has a negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Without the support of an educated adult in the household, it can be difficult for learners to understand and apply the concepts they learn in school.

Also, many households do not have access to technology or resources needed to support their children's learning which can lead to learners performing well below par or falling behind their peers. Lastly, without a knowledgeable adult to link the home to

the school, communication between both entities could be adversely affected which results in decreased learner-performance.

5.3.2.3 Lack of communication between school and home

All role-players recognised that inadequate communication was a major barrier to parental involvement. All parties (SMT, educators, and SGB parents) were guilty of not communicating effectively with parents. The study found that communication with parents occurred through written communication (letters) and parent meetings. Letters or circulars were mainly sent to parents through their children which became a challenge in many cases because sometimes messages did not always reach parents, thus rendering communication as being ineffective. Also, insufficient information-sharing via school policies, events, and written notes, may not be adequately communicated to all parents and other role-players. This leads to confusion and uninformed decision-making. It was evident that there was an absence of clear and effective communication channels between the parents and school personnel regarding the homework timetable and the programme of assessment for each term. The dissemination of this information was crucial in order for parents to be cognisant of what their children should tackle as homework, and to monitor their study schedule in preparation for the term assessments. Only term progress reports are given to parents.

Alarmingly, parents do not provide the correct information in the registration application forms or in learners' profile files. Incorrect contact details make it difficult to reach parents. In most cases, communication is usually from school to home as parents do not communicate with the school of their own accord. While some educators utilised WhatsApp groups, not everyone endorsed it as a means of effective communication. Certain educators encountered issues when parents excessively contacted them, considering it disruptive and encroaching on their personal time, especially during late hours. Such behaviour was deemed impolite and intruded on educators' family time at home. Furthermore, not all parents had access to the data required for participating in these chat groups. Moreover, the investigation revealed that all three schools lacked utilising effective and consistent methods of keeping records of communication between parents and school personnel. Schools solely

depend on the minutes recorded during parent meetings and the 'reply slips' signed by parents indicating the receipt of a letter or circular.

5.3.2.4 Negative attitudes towards parents by school staff

Some negative attitudes towards parents by school staff included being dismissive and blaming the parents for their children's sub-standard academic performance. Other forms of negativity included criticising parents for their non-involvement in school events, giving preferential treatment to affluent parents, and acting condescendingly towards parents of different cultural backgrounds and values. The SMT and educators provided reasons for their reluctance to invite parents for extra-mural activities or events due to past indiscretions; not all parents are invited to school events. School staff assert that their negative attitude towards inviting parents to school events and activities stems from previous conflicts (e.g., drunkenness and violence) and their concern for the safety of learners. These negative attitudes make parents feel unwelcome, intimidated, and misunderstood, thus making it difficult to be actively involved in their children's education.

5.3.2.5 Negative attitudes towards the school by parents

Some negative attitudes by parents towards the school included accusing the school personnel of not caring for their children. They felt ignored by being excluded from school activities, and that their concerns were generally dismissed. Parents also blamed the school for their children's poor academic performance by remarking that educators were incapable of providing for their children's educational needs. Additionally, parents indicated that the school staff did not have their children's best interests at heart, and that the rules and regulations were too strict or too lenient. There were parents who simply believed that the responsibility for education belonged solely to the school and believed that they should only visit the school when their children have been badly treated which resulted in hurling accusations and blame on educators. Parents are also uncooperative to assist in fundraising events which puts a financial strain on the school. These negative attitudes lead to mutual feelings of resentment and distrust which may cause conflicts between the school and the parents.

5.3.2.6 The Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on parental involvement in school affairs. Many parents had to swiftly adapt to assist in their children's learning. Despite the limited face-to-face interaction, parents became increasingly involved in curriculum planning, teaching their children, and assisting with virtual learning. Additionally, because of social distancing requirements, parents ensured that their children remained connected with their peers, often through online platforms. During the pandemic, many schools switched to online learning which included daily check-ins and virtual parent-educator conferences which kept parents involved and informed.

However, virtual teaching-learning opportunities were not evident in the selected schools because of their resources were limited; most parents from the chosen schools did not have access to online teaching and learning, thus making it difficult to assist their children with homework. For most of 2020 and 2021, learners remained home but gradually returned to schools on a rotational basis – a strategy that confused illiterate grandparents. Lastly, the lockdown in 2020 prevented parents from accessing schools which further diminished their involvement in their children's education - it was difficult for parents to stay updated and supportive of their children's education.

5.3.2.7 Lack of facilitation of parental involvement in education

Schools often provide structure and guidance to encourage parental involvement in their children's education, but budget constraints prevented virtual parent-educator conferences during lockdowns which resulted in the lack of communication between schools and parents. Without the direct involvement of educators, parents became unaware of their children's progress and growth which created a disconnection between home and school. Also, this study found that all three schools did not call parent or follow-up meetings to discuss issues related to school. Further, two out of the three schools showed no evidence of encouraging parents to attend such meetings.

This study also found that both educators and parents were not schooled in the principles and methods of effective communication. Further, the finding from document analysis revealed that all three schools lacked a parental involvement policy as well as a year-plan for parent engagement. These documents are meant to provide clear

guidelines on how to communicate, set expectations, and schedule dates for important meetings and events. In the absence of these documents, multiple obstacles may arise that can limit parental involvement in their children's education. Financial restrictions and resource shortages may result if parents remain disengaged. The solution may be to implement astute strategies and practical support systems to enlist parental participation to foster learners' success. The impediments of parental involvement in education highlight the need for proactive measures to bridge the gap between schools and families. These obstacles, such as time constraints, lack of knowledge, or communication barriers, underscore the importance of creating a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. Addressing these challenges and fostering meaningful parental engagement can lead to improved learner outcomes, stronger school-community relationships, and a more enriching educational experience for all.

5.3.3 Benefits of Parental Involvement for Stakeholders

5.3.3.1 School, SMT, and educators

Research indicates that parental involvement has a number of benefits for schools and educators. According to the National Education Association (2019), increased parental engagement helps to create a climate of collaboration and trust between educators and parents, reduce multiple administrative tasks associated with teaching and learning, improve learner achievement, and create a sense of community within the school. In support, the Cohen Commission on Excellence in Education (Cohen, 2013) adds that there is a positive effect on educator morale and less strain on the school's resources when parents are involved in sustainable and meaningful ways.

This study found that parental engagement improved communication between educators and parents, created a better learning environment, and led to better learner-performance. Further, parental involvement can reduce educators' workload stress by parents effectively supervising children's homework, in addition to assisting the school identify various sponsors and donors to supplement educational resources. Moreover, parental involvement reduces learner-absenteeism by creating a sense of belonging within the school. When parents are involved in the education of their

children, it helps to create a collaborative relationship between home and school, which can benefit both parties.

5.3.3.2 Parents

Research reveals that parental involvement produces several benefits for parents. The National Education Association (2019) maintains that parental engagement aids in fostering an understanding of and respect for the value of education, increases communication between home and school, and improves the academic and social development of learners. This study found that when parents are actively involved in their children's education, it develops a strong bond with the school, thus creating opportunities for mutual support, clear communication, and transparency. Additionally, parents stay up to date with their child's progress which gives them a better understanding of learners' individual needs. Lastly, it allows parents to learn more about the school system such that they can select opportunities to become involved with the school community.

5.3.3.3 Learners

This study confirms that parental involvement has a significant positive impact on the academic success of learners (National Education Association, 2019). Research demonstrates that increased parental involvement leads to better grades and improved test scores, reinforces learning at home, and strengthens the relationship between parent and child (National Education Association, 2019.). Also, parental involvement in children's schooling contributes to an improved school climate, reduces disciplinary problems, fosters regular school attendance, and allows frequent communication with educators. Hence, learners are motivated to perform at a higher level academically, exhibit self-confidence, and successfully navigate the challenging areas of their lives.

5.3.4 Factors Encouraging Parental Involvement

The enhancement of parental involvement is stimulated by elements such as incentives, donations, awards, and clear communication channels. Parents appreciate receiving free items from schools and being notified of positive aspects of their children's schooling. It was discovered that attendance at meetings to discuss school

fees or electing a new SGB was significantly higher than when discussing curriculum-matters. Lastly, and importantly, providing a platform for parents to express their opinions and concerns also promotes greater parental involvement in children's education.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools play an important role in encouraging parental involvement to promote children's education. Research indicates that when parents are involved in school matters, learners tend to achieve higher educational outcomes (Derrick, 2017). This can be fostered by creating a welcoming and positive environment through clear communication, collaboration, and inclusion. The following are suggested recommendations:

5.4.1 Recommendation 1: Communication Between School and Home

Sound communication is crucial to strengthen the relationship between school and home (Epstein, 2018). The tone and quality of the school's communication methods with parents determine whether parental involvement in school activities will be encouraged or not. According to Parmaswar (2014:56-59), ineffective channels of communication between the school and the home are major hindrances to the effective participation of parents in the education of their children. It was evident that schools need to improve the way they communicate with parents. According to Cozett and Roman (2022), in addition to the traditional way of using letters and home visits, it may sometimes be necessary to:

- Use media such as WhatsApp, email, SMS and local newspapers to announce important school events to invite parents. Advertisements through such media can reach a significant number of parents, even those who are difficult to contact.
- Schools may also use notice boards to communicate with parents (as practised by School B). These notice boards should be placed in areas that will be visible to most members of the community.
- The schools should also use homework books, message books, and learner-diaries as quicker means to communicate messages to and from school.

- All communication should be recorded in the learner's file which will be kept throughout the child's stay at the school. Records must include all the learner's personal information, as well as records of communication between the school and parents.

- The administration office of the school should keep a communication logbook to record details all telephonic calls and visits by parents, in addition to an attendance register and minute book for all parent meetings.

- The school principal, together with other SMT members, should develop a policy of communicating efficiently with parents which should be explained and reinforced at a development workshop.

5.4.2 Recommendation 2: Collaborating with the Community

Schools can involve the local community by opening their doors to the community, creating programmes and activities that bring the community to school, and providing opportunities for collaboration between parents and educators. Schools should reach out to the community with clear communication channels such as circulars and posters about ways in which the community can assist the school. Additionally, they should provide activities and events that are open to community members, such as family nights, field days, and science fairs. Finally, schools should focus on creating a platform for parents to express their opinions and concerns in order to foster open dialogue between the school and its community.

By implementing this recommendation, schools can create a stronger and harmonious relationship with the local community which will lead to higher levels of parental involvement. Also, the principal may consider enlisting the services of local councilors, church eldership, and traditional leaders to communicate with the community, especially to encourage greater parent involvement in education. This approach has the potential to reach a wider range of parents, including those who are usually difficult to contact.

5.4.3 Recommendation 3: Educator Training

The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 aimed to foster greater collaboration between parents and educators in order to increase parental involvement; a goal yet to be achieved in many schools. Educators may be qualified to teach but lack the skills

needed to effectively manage problems related to parental involvement. To address this, schools (and the DoE) should design in-service training programmes to prepare educators to deal with issues related to poor parental involvement. These in-service training programmes may include:

- Parental Education and Awareness Campaigns: The DoE can launch campaigns aimed at educating parents about the importance of their involvement in their children's education. These campaigns could include workshops, seminars, and informational materials in various languages to reach a diverse population. They should emphasise the positive impact of parental engagement on learner-success and provide practical tips for getting involved.

- School-Community partnerships (Epstein, 2001): Encourage schools to establish partnerships with local community organisations, businesses, and NGOs. This is based on the Epstein Model of Six Typologies of Involvement (see Chapter 2: theoretical framework of the study) and focuses on equipping educators with strategies to effectively engage families in the educational process. It covers topics such as building strong home-school partnerships, communication strategies, and involving parents in decision-making.

- Educator training on family engagement: The DoE can design educator training programmes to include content on family engagement strategies. This would prepare educators to build meaningful relationships with parents, communicate effectively, and involve them in their children's learning. It should also address cultural sensitivity and diversity to ensure inclusivity.

5.4.4 Recommendation 4: Implementing a School Policy on Parental Involvement, and Devising a Year-Plan for Parents in School Decision-Making

Research by Epstein (1995) revealed that a well-structured school policy on parental involvement increases the level of parental involvement. Unfortunately, the findings in this study revealed that schools did not have a policy on parental involvement. A major advantage of designing such a policy is that it sets clear goals and expectations concerning parents. Planning a policy, as well as compiling an annual parent involvement plan, will increase the confidence of parents to support their children's education, both at home and at school. The programme should promote the

importance of parental involvement in children's education, the awareness of their rights and responsibilities as learners' parents, and an understanding of various policies, particularly those regarding communication decorum, channels and principles.

Furthermore, schools should provide parents with the knowledge, skills, and tools they need to facilitate learning at home. In addition, parents must be included in school decision-making processes in order to allow them to express their opinions and/or present innovative ideas. Since findings revealed that parents were interested in being involved in their children's education, obstacles such as their lack of skills and knowledge should create an awareness among school officials to remedy the situation. Therefore, parents should be workshopped on programmes (presented by experts) concerning parental involvement. This will improve their skills and ability to engage meaningfully with educators, and with their children's learning.

5.5 CONSTRAINTS OF THE STUDY

- *Access to all parents:* Only the SGB parent component members were interviewed. These are parents who are involved in their children's education. The study lacked the input of parents who were not active in their children's schooling. They were not requested to participate in this research project in consideration of their work and family commitments. A larger parent sample would have produced a more incisive insight into reasons pertaining to the lack of parental engagement in schools.
- *Access to all school staff members:* Since only two SMT members and two educators were interviewed by the researcher because of time-constraints, non-availability of some participants after-hours, and burdensome workloads, the results of the study lacked width for generalisability. A greater number of SMT members and educators would have possibly produced other or deeper insights into the reasons for the lack of parental involvement.
- *Limited resources and funding:* Research on parental involvement with school staff and SGB members often requires resources such as time and money for data collection and analysis. The available time and financial resources were limited, thus narrowing the exploration of the phenomenon under investigation.

A longer duration coupled with a greater financial capacity would have possibly provided richer and expansive results.

- *Privacy and confidentiality:* Although staff members were assured of confidentiality, research on parental involvement involved them sharing sensitive information which made them uncomfortable. The principals and educators of two schools asked not to audio-record their interviews. Therefore, the researcher wrote down their responses which increased the duration of each interview.

- *Bias:* Considering the fact that some staff members experienced conflictual attitudes and experiences exhibited by parents, research on parental involvement requiring school staff members' opinions may evoke responses that could possibly be biased.

5.6 STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

- *Targeted Intervention Opportunities*: The investigation was able to pin-point specific areas within the realm of parental involvement where deficiencies exist, thereby offering precise focal points for future interventions.

- *Emphasising Parental Engagement's Significance*: By elucidating the repercussions of diminishing parental involvement, the dissertation highlighted the importance for parents to be involved in their children's education and growth by explaining the harmful effects of non-involvement.

- *Influencing Educational Policy and Practice*: The research findings can serve as a catalyst for informing policymakers to revise educational policies and practices to include innovative and astute strategies aimed at augmenting parental participation within schools, and consequently strengthen learner-achievement.

- *Facilitating Enhanced School-Parent Communication*: The study's outcomes can encourage educational institutions to enhance their modes of communication with parents, ultimately fostering more robust partnerships that have a positive impact on learner outcomes.

- *Inspiring Community Involvement Initiatives*: Within the broader community, the study's insights can engender heightened awareness and urgency regarding

the issue of parental involvement. This, in turn, may motivate community-driven initiatives and collaborations designed to support and actively engage parents in their children's educational journeys.

5.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study which only involved three primary schools, requires large scale research on a district, regional or national level to provide in-depth insight to assist DoE officials, educationists, policymakers, teaching personnel staff, parents, and other relevant stakeholders about enhancing parental involvement in all categories of schools. Accordingly, a greater number of schools including involving non-SGB parents, learners, community members (e.g. the religious leaders) should be considered for gaining a broader perspective of this phenomenon. Such a broad-scale project should also consider school demographics, size, and location as these could all have an impact on parental involvement. Recommendations emanating from a study of this expansive nature could benefit schools and their role-players immensely. In sum, since the results of this study cannot be generalised, it is essential to draw more accurate conclusions that can be applied to a wider range of contexts.

5.7 CONCLUSION TO THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to explore the extent to which parents were involved in the selected primary schools of the King Cetshwayo District of KZN. The study was successful in that the aim was achieved, and answers for all the research questions were obtained via data collection processes which allowed possible salient findings that encourage further research on this subject. Since literary scholars maintain that parental involvement plays a major role in enhancing learners' academic performance, there is a need for broader studies to unearth creative and sustainable strategies to promote parental involvement in school activities. The results of this study indicated that poor parental involvement continues to be a worrying issue in South African schools, despite the stipulations of the Schools Act 84 of 1996 (RSA,199). In order to effectively address barriers, it is essential for schools to prioritise creating a welcoming, unbiased, and inclusive environment to encourage parents to involve themselves in their children's education. Increasing the quality and modes of communication, initiating educator in-service training sessions on encouraging

parental involvement, and organising workshops for parents to grasp school policies would benefit the whole school community. Hence, all stakeholders will function in harmony in an atmosphere of collaboration and respect which will lead to higher levels of parental involvement, and quality educational outcomes for all children. Furthermore, all schools must ensure that they have a structured policy on parent involvement which illustrates clear guidelines and boundaries for parents and educators. With proper guidance and support, parents can be agents of change who can engender tremendous benefits towards their children's educational journey, and for the school community as a whole. It is envisioned that this study, as well as future national research projects on this phenomenon, leads to an educational system that encourages all role-players to become committed to create a better South Africa, lest we become a nation at risk.

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APPENDIX A: PROOF OF REGISTRATION

UNISA | university of south africa

1159

MOODLEY S K MISS
P O BOX 399
GINGINDLOVU
3800

STUDENT NUMBER : 42370930

ENQUIRIES TEL : 0861670411
            FAX : (012)429-4150
eMAIL : mandd@unisa.ac.za

2023-02-07

Dear Student

I hereby confirm that you have been registered for the current academic year as follows:

Proposed Qualification: MED (EDUC MANAGEMENT)   (98405)

					PROVISIONAL	EXAMINATION
CODE	PAPER	S NAME OF STUDY UNIT	NQF crdts	LANG.	EXAM.DATE	CENTRE(PLACE)

Study units registered without formal exams:
@ DFEDU95   MEd - Education Management   **   E
  DFEDU95   MEd - Education Management   **   E
@ Exam transferred from previous academic year

You are referred to the "MyRegistration" brochure regarding fees that are forfeited on cancellation of any study units.

\# Your application for the transfer of certain credits has not yet been finalized. Confirmation of the result of
   your application will be sent to you as soon as possible.
\# Your attention is drawn to University rules and regulations (www.unisa.ac.za/register).
   Please note the new requirements for reregistration and the number of credits per year which state that
   students registered for the first time from 2013, must complete 36 NQF credits in the first year of study,
   and thereafter must complete 48 NQF credits per year.
   Students registered for the MBA, MBL and DBL degrees must visit the SBL's ESOnLine for study material and other
   important information.
   Readmission rules for Honours: Note that in terms of the Unisa Admission Policy academic activity must be
   demonstrated to the satisfaction of the University during each year of study. If you fail to meet this requirement
   in the first year of study, you will be admitted to another year of study. After a second year of not demonstrating
   academic activity to the satisfaction of the University, you will not be re-admitted, except with the express
   approval of the Executive Dean of the College in which you are registered. Note too, that this study programme must
   be completed within three years. Non-compliance will result in your academic exclusion, and you will therefore not be
   allowed to re-register for a qualification at the same level on the National Qualifications Framework in the same
   College for a period of five years after such exclusion, after which you will have to re-apply for admission to any
   such qualification.
   Readmission rules for M&D: Note that in terms of the Unisa Admission Policy, a candidate must complete a Master's
   qualification within three years. Under exceptional circumstances and on recommendation of the Executive Dean, a
   candidate may be allowed an extra (fourth) year to complete the qualification. For a Doctoral degree, a candidate
   must complete the study programme within six years. Under exceptional circumstances, and on recommendation by the
   Executive Dean, a candidate may be allowed an extra (seventh) year to complete the qualification.
\# Your study material is available on www.my.unisa.ac.za, as no printed matter will be made available
   for the research proposal module.
   Study material can be accessed on the Unisa website. You must register on MyUnisa (https://my.unisa.ac.za/portal/)
   for this purpose. You are also reminded to activate your myLife email address since all electronic correspondence
   will be sent to this email address.

BALANCE ON STUDY ACCOUNT: 0.00

Yours faithfully,

Prof M S Mothata
Registrar

0108 O 00 0

APPENDIX B: ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

UNISA | university of south africa

UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2022/09/07

Ref: **2022/09/07/42370930/07/AM**
Name: Ms SK Moodley
Student No.:42370930

Dear Ms SK Moodley

Decision: Ethics Approval from
2022/09/07 to 2025/09/07

Researcher(s): Name: Ms SK Moodley
E-mail address: 42370930@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 078 4291810

Supervisor(s): Name: Prof S.S. Khumalo
E-mail address: ekhumass@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 084 6124257

Title of research:

Examining the participation of parents in selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo district, KwaZulu-Natal

Qualification: MEd Education Management

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 2022/09/07 to 2025/09/07.

The medium risk application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2022/09/07 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 risk s 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 **2025/09/07**. Submission of a completed research ethics pro gress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number **2022/09/07/42370930/07/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
motlhat@unisa.ac.za

Prof Mpine Makoe
ACTING EXECUTIVE DEAN
qakisme@unisa.ac.za

Approved - decision template – updated 16 Feb 2017

APPENDIX C: LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION FROM THE HOD OF KWAZULU-NATAL DOE

UNISA | university of south africa

Ms S. K. Moodley

P.O. Box 399

Gingindlovu

3800

Cell.:078 4291810

E-mail: sarahmoodley@yahoo.com

Date: 08 September 2022

The Head of Department, KwaZulu-Natal DoE

Mr G. N. Ngcobo

247 Burger Street (Anton Lembede Building)

Pietermaritzburg
3200

Dear Sir

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF THE KING CETSHWAYO DISTRICT

1. I, Sarah Kesandari Moodley am conducting research towards obtaining a Master's of Education degree under the supervision of Professor S. S. Khumalo, in the Department of Educational Leadership and Management (College of Education) at the University of South Africa (UNISA). My research topic is: Examining the participation of parents in selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District, KwaZulu-Natal.

2. The main aim of this study is to examine the extent of parent involvement with regards to their children's schooling in the selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District. The objectives of the study are:

- To determine which factors impede parental participation in the selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District;

- To investigate the impact that poor parental involvement has in the selected primary schools;

- To explore the advantages of parental involvement in education;

- To establish and recommend effective strategies to address poor parental participation in the selected primary schools.

3. I have chosen the qualitative methodology, which will entail conducting research in three primary schools.

4. The research involves semi-structured interviewing of three SMT members consisting of the principal and two departmental heads, two educators (one per phase) and two SGB members who will represent parents from each school. Additionally, documents such policies and minutes meetings (among others) will be perused for analysis. The interviews will be approximately of forty (40) minute duration and will be conducted after school hours at a time most convenient for the participants. This will ensure that optimal teaching and learning can still take place with no interruptions.

5. This study has received the written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of Unisa (Ref: **2022/09/07/42370930/07/AM).** A copy of the approval letter/certificate can be obtained from the researcher if required.

This study will contribute significantly to the professional development of educators and principals who will gain invaluable knowledge and understanding regarding reasons for parents' reluctance to be involved in school-based activities. Further, the implications of parental involvement or the lack thereof could be addressed and communicated to parents. This will create an awareness on the importance of parents to be more involved in school events. Other schools could also benefit from implementing strategies and approaches as guidelines at their own schools to enhance parental involvement.

I thank you in anticipation.

Yours in education

ℰℐ. _____

Ms S. K. Moodley

MEd Learner (UNISA)

APPENDIX D: PERMISSION FROM THE HOD OF KWAZULU-NATAL (DOE)

KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
Tel: 033 392 1051

Email: Buyi.ntuli@kzndoe.gov.za

Enquiries: Mrs B.T. Ntuli   **Ref.**:2/4/8/7340

Miss Sarah Kesandi Moodley
P.O. Box 399
GINGINDLOVU
KWAZULU-NATAL (ZULULAND)
3800

Dear Miss Moodley

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"EXAMINING THE PARTICIPATION OF PARENTS IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE KING CETSHWAYO DISTRICT:"**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the
   Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from **26 September 2022 to 31 March 2025**.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

_____

Mr GN Ngcobo
Head of Department: Education
Date: 26 September 2022

APPENDIX E: REQUEST LETTER FOR PERMISSION TO SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

UNISA | university of south africa

Ms S. K. Moodley

P.O. Box 399

Gingindlovu

3800

Cell: 078 4291810

E-mail: sarahmoodley@yahoo.com

Date: 5 October 2023

The Principal

(School's address)

(Confidential)

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

I, Sarah Kesandari Moodley am conducting research towards obtaining a Master's of Education degree, under the supervision of Professor S. Khumalo, in the Department of Educational Leadership and Management (College of Education) at the University of South Africa (UNISA).

I am required to complete a dissertation (research) and your school has been selected to participate in the study. My research topic is: Examining the participation of parents in selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District, KwaZulu-Natal.

The main aim of this study is to examine the extent of parent involvement with regarding their children's schooling in the selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District. The objectives of the study are:

- To determine which factors impede parental participation in the selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District;

- To investigate the impact of poor parental involvement on the selected primary schools;

- To explore the advantages of parental involvement in education; and

- To establish and recommend effective strategies to address poor parental participation in the selected primary schools.

In order to meet the above-mentioned aim and objectives, I have to conduct research at schools where the lack of parental involvement is evident. The study will entail semi-structured or virtual (video or telephonic call) interviewing of two school management team members (the principal and one departmental head), two educators (one Foundation Phase and one Intermediate or Senior Phase) and two parent-component members of the school governing body (SGB) in order to garner information regarding parental involvement. The analysis of data will allow me to draw conclusions based on the relationships, patterns and themes that will be identified in the collected data from individual interviews and document analysis pertaining to parent meetings, records of communication with parents, and attendance registers for parent meetings. The total number of participants from your school will be six (6). The interviews will be of approximately forty (40) minutes in duration and will be conducted after school hours at a time most convenient to the participants. This will ensure that optimal teaching and learning can still take place with no interruptions.

This study will contribute significantly to the professional development of educators and principals who will gain knowledge and understanding about why parents are reluctant to be involved in school-based activities. The implications of parental involvement or the lack thereof could be addressed and communicated to parents. This will create an awareness on the importance of parents being actively involved in their children's education. Other schools could also benefit from implementing these strategies and approaches at their own schools to enhance parental involvement.

In order to minimise the risk of harm or discomfort, the following will be adhered to:

- All Covid-19 protocols will be practised, including screening, the wearing of face masks and social distancing. It should be noted that the researcher is fully vaccinated with the additional booster dose.
- Obtaining informed consent from the participants.
- Protecting the anonymity and confidentiality of participants by using aliases and codes.
- Avoiding deceptive practices
- Informing the participants of their right to withdraw at any time from the research process without being penalised in any way.

This study has received written approval from CEDU Ethics Review Committee, Unisa (Ref: **2022/09/07/42370930/07/AM).** A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if required.

The findings of the study will be available via electronic mail, or printed and hand delivered to each participant. Alternatively, please contact Ms Sarah Moodley on

Mobile number: 078 4291810 and e-mail: <u>sarahmoodley@yahoo.com</u>. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact my supervisor Professor S. S. Khumalo on mobile number 084 6124257 and e-mail: ekhumass@unisa.ac.za

I kindly await your favourable response.

Yours in education

Ms S. K. Moodley

MEd Learner (UNISA)

APPENDIX F: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND INFORMED CONSENT

UNISA | college of education

Date: 7 October 2022

Title of research: Examining the participation of parents in selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District, KwaZulu-Natal

Dear Prospective Participant

I, Sarah Kesandari Moodley am conducting research towards obtaining a Master's of Education degree, under the supervision of Professor S. S. Khumalo, in the Department of Educational Leadership and Management (College of Education) at the University of South Africa (UNISA).

I am required to complete a dissertation, and your school has been selected to participate in the study. I obtained your contact details from the Mthunzini Circuit Management Centre (CMC). My research topic is: Examining the participation of parents in selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District, KwaZulu-Natal.

I am currently employed at a primary school in the Mthunzini Circuit in the King Cetshwayo District. Regarding children's education, many parents in the King Cetshwayo District are not supportive at home and are not active at school. I have derived this understanding after engaging in multiple conversations over the years with colleagues from my school and neighbouring schools. There are approximately eighteen (18) participants from three (3) different schools who are participating in this study.

The study involves audio-recordings of semi-structured interviews. You will be asked to respond to semi-structured open-ended questions concerning the above topic. The intended interview will last approximately forty (40) minutes.

The aim of this study is to examine the extent of parent involvement with regards to their children's schooling in the selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District. The objectives include the following: to determine challenges that impede parental participation; to investigate the impact that poor parental involvement has in your school; and to establish and recommend effective strategies to address poor parental participation in the selected primary schools.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

I was referred to your school by colleagues of the teaching profession. My study includes interviewing participants and perusing school documents from the three selected primary schools in the Mthunzini Circuit.

A total of six (6) participants from each school will be interviewed – they comprise of two school management team members (the principal and one departmental head), two educators (one Foundation Phase and one Intermediate or Senior Phase) and two parent component members of the school governing body (SGB). You have been purposively selected as one of the participants of the school because you possess experience and knowledge on the subject being investigated which will be beneficial to the study.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The study involves semi-structured and/or virtual interviews (video or telephonic calls) depending on the preference of the participant. The interviews will be approximately forty (40) minutes in duration and will be conducted after school hours at a time most convenient to the participants. This will ensure that optimal teaching and learning can still continue with no interruptions. The interviews will be audio-recorded, if signed consent has been obtained.

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

Participating in this study is purely voluntary, and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you decide to participate, you will be given the information sheet to read, ask clarifying questions, and if satisfied to sign the attached consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason, and without being penalised in any way.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF PARTING IN THIS STUDY?

This study will contribute significantly to the professional development of educators and principals who will gain knowledge and understanding of why parents are reluctant to be involved in school-based activities. The implications of parental involvement or the lack thereof could be addressed and communicated to parents. This will create an awareness on the importance of parents to be more involved in their children's education. Other schools could benefit from using these strategies and approaches to enhance parental involvement.

ARE THEIR ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

No negative consequences/potential risk or discomfort is envisaged by participating in this study, provided that the researcher ensures the following:

- All Covid-19 protocols will be observed, including screening, sanitising, the wearing of face masks, and social distancing.

- Obtaining informed consent from the participants.

- Protecting the anonymity and confidentiality of participants by using alphanumeric pseudonyms.

- Avoiding deceptive practices.

- Providing the participants with the right to withdraw or be excluded at any time from the research process.

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

The interviews will be confidential and anonymous. Your name will not be recorded anywhere, and no one (apart from me) will be able to connect you to this study. To ensure anonymity, your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym. You will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings. All audio-recorded interviews will be shredded after being transcribed.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

Hardcopies of your answers will be securely stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked filing cabinet for future research or academic purposes, and electronic information will be stored in a password-protected file in the researcher's computer. The typed interviews will NOT indicate your school or your name. The typed transcriptions, hardcopies of responses (if applicable), and notes from document analysis will also be kept in a password-protected file, and all information will be destroyed after five years.

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

This study does not provide any reward in cash or kind; participation is purely voluntary.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?

This study has received written approval from the CEDU Ethics Review Committee, Unisa, Ref: **2022/09/07/42370930/07/AM.** A copy of the approval letter/certificate may be obtained from the researcher on request.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

The findings of the study will be available via electronic mail or printed and hand-delivered to each participant. Alternatively, please contact Ms Sarah Moodley on 078 4291810 or e-mail: sarahmoodley@yahoo.com. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact my supervisor Professor S. S. Khumalo at 084 6124257 or e-mail ekhumass@unisa.ac.za

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and hoping that you agree to participate in this study. I kindly await your response by completing the attached consent form.

Yours in education

_____ *signature* _____

Ms S. K. Moodley

MEd Learner (UNISA)

University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

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CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY (Return slip)

I, _____ (participant's full name), confirm that the researcher asking for my consent to participate in this research has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits, and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had it explained to me) and understood the study's details and processes in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask clarifying questions that prepared me to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential, unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the audio-recording of the semi-structured and/or virtual interview, and the usage of information conveyed by myself to the interviewer.

I have received a signed (by the researcher) copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant's Name and Surname : ……………………………………………

Participant's Signature : ………………………….… Date…………………...

Researcher's Name and Surname: Sarah Kesandari Moodley

Researcher's signature: *(signature)* Date: 07 October 2022

APPENDIX G: SEMI-STRUCTURED, INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

1. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM (SMT)

TITLE OF DISSERTATION: Examining the participation of parents in selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District, KwaZulu-Natal

1. What is your view regarding the level of parental involvement at your school?

2. What factors contribute towards active parental involvement?

3. Which barriers hinder parental involvement?

4. What are the challenges you encounter when dealing with parental involvement?

5. As part of the school management team, how do you perceive your relationship with the parents of this school and community?

6. Describe the role of the school governing body in terms of their effectiveness in assisting the school.

7. Does your school inform parents of homework, and give out the term's programme of assessments in order for parents to be aware of tasks learners will do at home?

8. How does the lack of parental involvement affect teaching and learning at your school?

9. What strategies and methods do you implement to communicate effectively with parents? How can you improve your communication systems to contribute better parental involvement?

10. What are the best leadership and management structures that should be installed to achieve greater co-operation between the school and parents?

2. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LEVEL ONE EDUCATORS

TITLE OF DISSERTATION: Examining the participation of parents in selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District, KwaZulu-Natal

1. What is your view regarding the level of parental involvement at your school?

2. How would you describe the relationship you have with parents since you became an educator at this school?

3. What factors contribute to poor parental involvement?

4. In your experience, what are the main challenges you have encountered when communicating or reaching out to parents?

5. Has your years of training and experience equipped you to manage parental involvement and its challenges? Substantiate.

6. How does the level of parental involvement at your school affect/enhance teaching and learning?

7. Does your school have events such as fundraising initiatives, and are parents invited to assist? If yes, what are their responses, and can you describe the extent of support received?

8. Is there any evidence from parents of their support and assistance with their children's homework?

9. In your opinion, what can the SMT do to manage parental involvement more effectively?

10. What opportunities can your school provide, and how can present systems be improved for parents to be more actively involved in school activities?

3. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE PARENT COMPONENT MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

TITLE OF DISSERTATION: Examining the participation of parents in selected primary schools in the King Cetshwayo District, KwaZulu-Natal

1. What is your designation in the school governing body, and how long have you been a serving member of the school governing body?

2. How have you been involved in your child's schooling?

3. What are some of the opportunities that motivate you to be involved in parent activities?

4. What are some of the chalenges that prevent you from being involved?

5. How does your child benefit from your involvement as a parent?

6. How does the school benefit from you being more involved in school activities?

7. Describe the socioeconomic background of this community and how it affects the the quality of parental involvement?

8. What present operational communication system(s) does the school have to communicate with parents?

9. As a member of the SGB, how can you contribute to raising awareness regarding the benefits of parental involvement?

10. How can the school improve its operations, systems, and plans to enhance parent involvement?

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APPENDIX H: TRANSCRIBED SAMPLES OF INTERVIEWS

TRANSCRIPT SAMPLE: SMT
SCHOOL B PRINCIPAL (P2)

1. **Interviewer:** What is your view on the level of parental involvement at your school?

Interviewee*: The parental involvement at our school is not very good. We request parents to visit school quarterly so that this can help the learners to work hard and put more effort on their work and it also helps the school itself to see the process of teaching and learning as well as the performance of the whole school. Our school involves parents in discipline issues, and we allow them to be part of their children schooling specially to teach our learners about discipline and made awareness campaigns within the school to teach the learners about abuse, drug abuse etc. Parents do attend the meetings but there are instances where parents are not involved when it comes to homework projects or assignments to do at home.*

2. **Interviewer**: Which factors promote parental involvement?

Interviewee: *When learners do well this encourages parents to be more involved at school. I would say the passing rate involves parental involvement. The behaviour of learners at school also helps involve parents. Failing of learners also involves parents to come to school in order to query about why their learners failed and perhaps how they can help their learners to perform better. Sometimes learners do not have enough stationery, or they'll lose their books and then the school calls the parents to come to school and solve the problem. Bullying of learners especially learners who are new at school leads to parental involvement as both parents come and meet with the school management team to talk about the issues and strategies that must be taken against the bullies.*

3. **Interviewer**: What barriers hinder parental involvement?

Interviewee: *Some of the factors that contribute towards poor parental involvement is when parents do not want to come to school when the school asked the parents to come to school because there is a problem with his or her child. Therefore, some cases are not solved due to poor parental involvement. When the school writes the*

invitation letter for parents, most of the parents do not express their views and ideas in order to take the school to a higher level. They do not give ideas but instead they will criticise the school when there are problems. The one problem is that when the school governing body agrees about something then parents come to school and ask questions about it. Parents didn't want to be part of sporting events within the school including special days that the school has. They are always against what the school plans. During Coronavirus pandemic, learners were staying at home and attending rotationally. The school was willing to have WhatsApp groups, but parents were afraid to teach their children at home. Some claimed they lack the skills of technology. When it comes to teaching and learning some parents don't help their kids with homework they are given by the educator because some parents work far away from home and arrive very late and therefore do not have time for their children or many of the learners are just thrown away or given to the grandparents to look after while they go and have other children or work far away or are still young and are finishing their studies. We find that quite often learners come to school copying other learners work because there is no support at home.

4. Interviewer: What are some of the challenges you encounter when managing parental involvement?

Interviewee: *It is difficult to manage parental involvement at my school, but I try all the time to make parents to understand the importance of involvement at school because there's a lot of things that has happened at school and it needs parents especially when it comes to teaching and learning and the progress of the learners. Some projects need the involvement of parents because it will need some money to do practical projects such as entrepreneurial skills where the learner practice buying and selling such as market days. It affects our school because some of the learners aren't able to participate in the buying and selling that needs to be part of the project. I often find it difficult to get good responses from parents when they are asked to spend money. We live in a very poor community, and this could be the reason. We sometimes have a huge problem with water at school. There are often times that the school is without water for two weeks. Unfortunately, the parents don't want to help us in this regard. We often have big challenges when it comes to parents' meetings whereby a lot of the parents do not attend meetings when called. They only appear at school when he or she wants to admit the learner but after that they are nowhere to*

be found. Some either give us incorrect contact information or they'll change their contact numbers and don't inform the school about it. This often poses a challenge even when a learner is ill, we cannot get hold of the parent because the number doesn't exist. I sometimes try to manage parental involvement by telling parents that I will not give report cards to the learners they will only be issued to the parent when the parent visits the school at the end of a term.

5. Interviewer: As part of the school management team, how do you perceive your relationship with the parents of this school and community?

Interviewee: *Despite there being challenges with parental involvement the relationship with the parents and community as the stakeholders and I is good. The parents trust me as I grew up in this community. We do work well together sometimes but some of the school governing body members are also working and not available at all times when we need them. I try to involve the parents in our sporting events and excursions. The community has no problem as we work hard together to nurture the children of our black people. There are no problems with the community. They even helped the school at night time to keep an eye on the assets of the school. The communication and understanding between the parents of the school community and as the principal of the school is managed well. I am able to handle relationships with parents during parental meetings. I run through issues pertaining to curriculum, conduct and progress. I often discuss and analyse the results with parents when we issue report cards. So yes, I would say that our relationship is good from most time.*

6. Interviewer: Describe the role of the school governing body in terms of their effectiveness in assisting the school.

Interviewee: *The role of the school governing body in our school is to govern the school. They make sure the teaching and learning is effective at all times. They make sure that the use of school funds is appropriately distributed to maintain the school's facilities. They assist the school in playing a role when it comes to the conflicts that the school faces. The school governing body also played a role when it comes to the enrolment of new learners in the school through buildings that will be occupied by the learners and secured furniture that is needed as the school. They address parents about the activities happening in the school, what needs to be done at school, what are the obstacles that the school is facing, and they fulfil what they plan to do although*

they are very busy at times. The school governing body governs the norms and standards that they use for the school's needs. The school governing body assists in analysing of results before addressing the results in the parents' meetings and they keep all the records of meetings that they have had end the records of financial usage in the school to produce to the parents' meetings and for the purposes of auditing. It should be noted that the school governing body may not always be present at school due to their commitments but when it comes to helping the school, but they do show up when we need them the most.

7. Interviewer: Does your school inform parents about learners' homework tasks, and the term's programme of assessments for parents to be aware of tasks learners will complete at home?

Interviewee: *Yes, the school informs parents of homework, but we find it difficult that some of the learners who live with grandmothers that are uneducated. Some educators receive letters from parents that state that they are not educators and not willing to teach their children at home and that all work must be done at school by the educator and not them. So on that note of homework, we are finding it difficult because we live in rural areas. Yes, we planned as a school to give out the terms programme of assessment, but we have not done so yet. By giving out the programme of assessment parents will be aware of tasks and those tasks that need to be done at home. Some of the learners do it well but others don't. I think it's a cause for concern and it is the same problem I raised previously. Those learners who are doing well is clear to see that those learners are helped by their parents honestly. As the school we are trying our best to engage parents in every step we take for the learners. But we need parents to play their role in helping us.*

8. Interviewer: How does the lack of parental involvement affect teaching and learning at your school?

Interviewee: *The lack of parental involvement affects the teaching and learning at our school because some activities need parents' involvement such as sokkies (dance/singing) and civvies' day, Entrepreneur Day, and sports events. all these activities require support from parents. The progress of the learners in our school depends on parents being involved. So the lack of parental involvement causes a huge problem to our school and to the learner because it helps the educators in some*

of the problems they are facing in the classroom such as the performance of the learner in class needs the educator to have the parent involved so that the parent plays the role as a parent should at home especially for the learners who are slow and who need. Added assistance at home to finish home tasks. If parents visit school, they will learn all the information that is needed to know about their child so that they can assist the school at home.

9. Interviewer: What systems do you have in place to communicate with parents?

In your opinion, (if applicable) how can you improve your communication systems to contribute to the improvement of parental involvement.

Interviewee: *We do send messages via circulars to parents however we find that some of these circulars do not reach the parents. We also have a problem where parents reside with illiterate grandparents or guardians, and they cannot read the circular or notice that we send home. I do believe that we should improve our communication systems by updating learner profiles. I also believe that we should try to come up with strategies to attract parents to come to school and be part of their kids even if it's fun days, sport days etc. to come to school and support their kids so that they can see the need of supporting their kids at school. I also think they will be happy to come to school for parents' visits and maybe if I called the parent and invite them for high tea after they visit the school to say thank you for coming. I think it will improve the communication system and improve parental involvement. In other words, we should offer incentives for parents to come to school.*

10. Interviewer: What are the most effective leadership and management structures that should be installed to achieve greater co-operation between the school and parents?

Interviewee: *I believe as the principal of the school we should put the parents and the school first and the curriculum. teaching and learning is the key in all. What we plan. we should manage the curriculum in terms of educators work and learners working through the curriculum monitoring tool. Compiling of registers for the whole school when we invite parents each and every term to analyse results and issuing of report cards. Being transparent to the parents about the functionalities within the school.*

TRANSCRIPT SAMPLE: ORDINARY LEVEL ONE EDUATORS

SCHOOL A: FOUNDATION PHASE EDUCATOR (E 1)

1. Interviewer: What is your view on the level of parental involvement at your school?

Interviewee: *Parents of my school are only involved at the beginning of the year. When the learners are settled in their classes some parents go back to where they work away from homes.*

Seventy percent of parents leave their kids with relatives and grannies. Even if the school and the SGB invite parents for general meetings, the attendance is always poor. Some parents even ask neighbours to attend the meetings on their behalf.

Some parents leave their kids with older children who are in higher grades like example in my grade two class the learner is taken care of by the brother who is in grade five. The mother is in Durban. I tried to call about the poor performance of the learner in my class. She said she will be back after completing her invitation of being a Sangoma (A religious calling).

(Probing) Interviewer: What is your concluding comment regarding parental involvement at your school?

Interviewee: *I would say that there is a serious concern about parental involvement at my school and it is very poor.*

2. Interviewer: How would you describe the relationship you have with parents since you became an educator at this school?

Interviewee: *I have arrived in the school in 2011. The relationship was good. Attendance for parents' visits used to be in high numbers. It was easy to tach parents on how to assist learners when doing homework.*
I think the lockdown in 2020 and 2021 made things worse. There were no class visits and learners were doing rotation learners.

(Probing) Interviewer: Can you describe the rotational timetabling at your school during 2020 and 2021?

Interviewee: *learners will come to school in groups. group A in one week and group B the following week. Alternating. Recently the problems are caused by the newly Elected School governing body who doesn't go along with the Acting Principal. There are no meetings at all. It's now became difficult to meet with parents.*

3. Interviewer: What challenges generally contribute to poor parental involvement?

Interviewee: *There are cases whereby the parents of the learners are not married. The learner moves from her mom's home at any time and stay at the home of the father's side. From the family of the father, sometimes there's no-one interested to assist the learners with homework.*

In some families both parents are not staying with their children. The problem is that they find they are both drinking liquor in front of the learner. They even introduce liquor to a learner as young as eight years old. I believe this sort of social ills is the main cause of poor parental involvement.

4. Interviewer: In your experience, what are the main obstacles you have encountered when communicating or reaching out to parents?

Interviewee: *Most unfortunately many learners are enrolled in school by the relatives or friends of the parents. There is a certain family not far from school. The granny and the mother of the learners are partially mentally disturbed. The learners are having serious challenges with schoolwork. It is so difficult to discuss with people with mental illness matters educational concerning their children. I cannot advise or assist them about steps to be followed such as getting help from the department of Education (SNES) Due to these kinds of situations the learners from the family ended up being dropouts. Some of the parents neglect the learners after breaking up with the father of the learner. The mother of the learner finds a new partner and they have other children. The child from the first partner becomes the responsibility of the grandparent.*

5. Interviewer: Has your years of training and experience equipped you to manage parental involvement and its challenges?

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Interviewee: *No. Time has changed. Years of training and experience doesn't match the way of life during this era. The reason being that most of the parents of this time are young are young and single. Some go back to school to complete matric and leave the kids with their parents. The grannies as well have their responsibilities because they have their own children who are still attending school. It becomes difficult for them to look after their kids as well as their grandchildren.*

6. Interviewer: How does the level of parental involvement at your school affect teaching and learning?

Interviewee: *The lack of parent involvement at school really affects teaching and learning in different ways. Without co-operation between the parents and the educator the learner cannot be properly educated.*

(Probing) Interviewer: Can you provide an example of how learning is affected?

Interviewee: Reading is a great challenge. Because the learners live mostly with grandparents that cannot read themselves, they cannot help the learner to read and they cannot assist with homework.

7. Interviewer: Does your school have events such as fundraising initiatives, and are parents invited to assist? If yes, what are their responses? Can you describe the extent of support received?

Interviewee: *In our school there is no strong relationship with the governing body parents. The fundraising committee tried to fundraise on some special days like Valentine's Day and Spring Day. Some learners won't participate or support the fundraising because parents refuse to give them an amount as little as R2 towards the event.*

8. Interviewer: Is there any evidence from parents regarding their support and assistance with learners' homework?

Interviewee: *I believe that only ten percent of parents actually take the time to support their children with homework and Life Skills projects.*

9. Interviewer: In your opinion, what can the SMT do to manage parental involvement more effectively?

Interviewee: *The school Management Team must make sure that they recruit active and responsible parents within the community to be elected in the School Governing Body. The reason being is that parents live in the same community, it's easy for them to form WhatsApp groups whereby they will discuss about school matters positively. The SMT will also be a part of the WhatsApp group.*

10. Interviewer: What opportunities can your school provide, and what systems should be improved for parents to be more actively involved?

Interviewee: *The school should create opportunities to entice parents to be part of the school by giving them small tenders like renovating the school. Unfortunately, they are only interested in job opportunities. I say this as they are not interested in their children's classwork.*
The SMT must Insist that parents avail themselves for school related events such as meetings and it should be indicated that the school prefers to see the parents and not just the guardians. They may be excused for genuine reasons but must schedule a date and time to be present. If this policy is adhered to, we may overcome some challenges.

Parents meetings are the only system that can be used. Unfortunately, the parents that attend the school activities are usually the same parents attending. Some parents only participate when there are graduations for grade R's and Grade 7's.

The interviewee thanked the interviewer for such a study being conducted and finds these questions intriguing and eye opening. The interviewer thanked the interviewee for their participation and input.

TRANSCRIPT SAMPLE: SGB PARENT COMPONENT MEMBERS

SCHOOL C SGB PARENT (SGB 5)

1. Interviewer: What is your designation in the school governing body, and how long have you been a serving member of the school governing body?

Interviewee: *I am the chairperson of the school governing body. I am also a member of this community. I have been serving as a member of the school governing body since 2011. I have served various roles since then. But as from 2015 I was elected as a chairperson to date.*

2. Interviewer: How have you been involved in your child's schooling?

Interviewee: *Firstly, I am a parent of a child at the school. It is my duty to make my child respectable and avoid absenteeism at school. I also help my child with homework. As a chairperson of the school governing body I am invited often to come to school and deal with matters. Some of these matters do affect my child's schooling.*

3. Interviewer: What are some of the opportunities that motivate you to become involved?

Interviewee: *I am involved as I am a member of this community and due to the fact that I am a parent. I may add that I am a very concerned parent and due to me being concerned this makes me involved. Unfortunately, not much can be said in this regard with most of the parents at the school because I am fully aware of their lack of involvement. it is my responsibility to observe the progress of my child at school and communicate with the school educators but it is also my duty to encourage parental involvement. I do believe the SGB and the school can improve on this.*

4. Interviewer: What are some of the hindrances that prevent you from being involved?

Interviewee*: I cannot speak for myself as I am fully involved in my child's education but I believe other parents are not involved because of the way they conduct themselves, the school is reluctant to invite such parents because of behaviours such as drinking alcohol on the premises while attending an event that the school was having. Parents who are just not interested in their children's schooling are not*

involved. Sometimes we lack communication from the school and we don't know what's going on and this can sometimes cause a parent not to be involved.

5. Interviewer: How does your child benefit from your involvement in school activities?

Interviewee: *I believe that my child will always maintain good behaviour because they know that if I am also present at school they should behave or else the educator and the principal can complain to me. My child also works harder knowing that I'm involved. They want to impress me because I am very interested in their work but if I am not involved then I don't ask questions then my child will do bad like the other children in the school. As a member of the school governing body I hear many stories from parents and from the school about lack of parental involvement. I sometimes hear how parents live far away and only see their children maybe once a year and this is really concerning. A child will feel unloved and a child feels demotivated to do well knowing that my parent is not interested in my education.*

6. Interviewer: How does the school benefit from your involvement in school events?

Interviewee: *As a member of the school governing body for 11 years now and I'm the chairperson of the governing body for seven years, the school has benefited a lot from my presence at school. I am a problem solver and the school always involves me in all the conflicts or problem solving needed. I ensure that the matter is handled first inside the school I tried to solve it and then I give advice if it is needed then I report it back to the parents. I am a mediator. The educators benefit when I am involved as I help with homework and reading and writing so that my learner performs well in class and this lightens the load of the educator.*

7. Interviewer: Can you describe the socioeconomic background of this community, and how it contributes to the lack of parental involvement?

Interviewee: *Most of the parents of my community are unemployed. We live in a very rural and poor area. They use grants to support their young ones to eat and have clothes and come to school. The problem of unemployment increases drug use and alcohol abuse. As a result, this affects parental involvement and that is why the school is so scared to involve parents in activities because of the drug and alcohol abuse on premises in front of learners.*

8. Interviewer: What communication system does the school have in operation to communicate with parents?

Interviewee: *The school sends letters as a form of communication to the community and there are announcements sent through learners. Parents receive invitations to come and discuss learner's progress. The school also use parents' meetings as a platform to send out messages to parents.*

9. Interviewer: As a member of the SGB, how can you contribute to raising awareness regarding the benefits of parental involvement?

Interviewee: *I do my best to communicate to parents through parent meetings. I also have random conversations with members of the community and I encouraged them to visit the school even if they are unemployed and see how they can volunteer their services to the school.*

10. Interviewer: How can the school improve its operations and management to increase parental involvement?

Interviewee: *The school is doing well in terms of communicating to parents however there are few educators who have the message service such as a WhatsApp group and I believe if more educators utilised this platform it will help. The school can also have more one-on-one meetings with parents especially when learners are performing very badly or in cases where behaviour is very poor.*

APPENDIX I: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM: SCHOOL B

DOCUMENTS	AVAILABLE ON RECORD		COMMENTS
	YES	NO	
Parent meetings and development workshops' attendance registers	✓		• Registers were kept in a file and up to date. • Only 25 % of parents usually attend meetings according to the registers.
Minutes of meetings with parents	✓		• Minutes of meetings are kept in a minute book and up to date.
Educator- parent interaction meeting minutes		✓	• No record of one on one meetings minutes between parents and educators but the educators do keep records of interaction in the educator files under parent visit or correspondence.
Notices/ circulars/ newsletters to parents/ Homework and Programme of Assessment timetables	✓	✓	• Parents do receive handouts of circulars pertaining to important messages. No messages are sent electronically (SMS/Email) • No evidence of homework timetables. It was indicated that learners write down homework instructions in their books per subject. • The Programme of Assessment was only sent out in the first term of 2023. There was no evidence of this for the second term of 2023.
Policy on parental involvement		✓	• No evidence of a parental involvement policy. The principal indicated that the does not have one and will develop and implement the policy in the following year.

Parental involvement plan for the year		✓	• There is no evidence of a parental involvement year plan. To be implemented the following year.
Involvement of parents in extra-mural activities/events: attendance registers/ post event meeting minutes	✓	✓	• Parents are involved in extra-curricular activities at school for the exception of the SGB parent component members. • Some parents contribute by supporting the school with donations and fundraising by sending money with their children • No registers of parent supporting the initiatives at school, however, there are post meeting minutes of events that take place at school.

APPENDIX J: PROFESSIONAL EDITING CERTIFICATE

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CERTIFICATE FOR LANGUAGE EDITING A DRAFT MASTER'S DISSERTATION

EXAMINING THE PARTICIPATION OF PARENTS IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE KING CETSHWAYO DISTRICT, KWAZULU-NATAL

by

SARAH KESANDARI MOODLEY

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This certificate confirms that the above-mentioned student submitted her draft master's dissertation to me for language-editing, which included correcting in-text citations and the list of references. This was duly edited and returned to the student for revisions as per suggestions from me. I make no claim as to the accuracy of the research content. The text, as edited by me, is grammatically correct. After completion of the language editing, the student has the option to accept or reject suggestions/changes prior to re-submission to the supervisor for content-checking. I will not be held responsible for any additions to content (without being informed) after the completion of my editing.

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ID: 5606255134081

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CERTIFICATE FOR LANGUAGE EDITING A MASTER'S DISSERTATION (POST- EXAMINATIONS)

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B.Naidoo ID: 5606255134081
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APPENDIX K: TURNITIN OVERVIEW ORIGINALITY REPORT AND DIGITAL RECEIPT

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File size:	4.24M
Page count:	183
Word count:	50,800
Character count:	293,083
Submission date:	23-Jul-2023 09:45PM (UTC+0200)
Submission ID:	2135489013