BARRIERS TO PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN RURAL COMMUNITIES IN NORTH WEST PROVINCE

by

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DECLARATION

Student number: 511-630-9

I declare that **BARRIERS TO PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN RURAL COMMUNITIES IN NORTH WEST PROVINCE** is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference.

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SUMMARY

Against the background of evidence that parent involvement benefits learners, parents, schools and communities, a need has arisen for effective parent involvement strategies to be developed particularly in rural and disadvantaged communities. A literature study investigated models of parent involvement and the provision of education in North West Province. Barriers to parent involvement in schools were also investigated.

A qualitative methodology was used to investigate parent involvement in three rural schools in North West Province. Data were gathered by means of observation, semi-structured focus group interviews with parents and educators and semi-structured in-depth interviews with principals of participating schools. Thus parents and educators blame each other for lack of participation. Other findings relate to the lack of resources and facilities in schools. Guidelines for proper parent involvement were proposed.

KEY TERMS

Parent involvement: theories, benefits, barriers to, South African legislation on, participation.

Parent: biological, care-giver, grandparent, older siblings, foster parent, single parent, relatives.

Rural areas: poverty stricken, inadequate provision of resources, unemployment.

Qualitative research: participant observation, semi-structured individual interviews, semi-structured focus group interviews, data collection, data analysis, synthesis of findings, recommendations.

School register of needs: redress of imbalances, provision of resources.

School governing body (SGB): school governance, parent body, partnership education, parent involvement, home-school relations.

Caregiver: other siblings, relatives, none-governmental organisations (NGO's), foster parents.

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DEDICATION

To Mmatshwene, Mmanoko, Donald, Peter, Una and

Fr. S. Molefe.

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PROBLEM FORMULATION, AIM AND RESEARCH DESIGN

1.1   GENERAL BACKGROUND

Many researchers have listed factors which affect the provision of education in schools such as the changing nature of the education system, the socio-economic status of society, changing family structures and parents' education level (Clark 1983:1; Henderson, Marburger & Ooms 1986:17). Due to these factors, educators feel that they need the support of parents in the education of learners more than ever before (Comer 1980:28). This is particularly important when one considers the recorded benefits of effective parent involvement, such as improved achievement of learners, and school efficiency (Munn 1983:1; Henderson et al 1986:109). For this reason, educators and academics focus their attention on matters relating to parenting behaviours and attitudes that motivate learners to engage in homework activities, improve school attendance and decrease student drop-out rate (Van Wyk 1996:1). Therefore, Bastiani (1993a:104) suggests that ways should be sought to influence the professional attitudes of educators and convince both families and schools of the value of mutual co-operation.

1.1.1   Parent involvement: an overview

Exactly what constitutes parent involvement is complex and difficult to determine. But researchers have attempted to classify the various roles of parents relative to their respective schools (Van Wyk 1996:2). Pugh (1989:5) regards parent involvement as a 'working relationship' characterised by a shared sense of purpose and a willingness to negotiate. Beatie (1985:1) on the other hand sees parent involvement as emanating from the level of power sharing and participation in school governance, decision making and the rapid growth of committees and councils for parent representation. This is what Bloom (1992:23) calls 'parent advocacy' which means that parents are standing up for their rights in ensuring that learners get the best education.

However, the general feeling about the concept parent involvement is that it encompasses a broad array of activities both at home and at school as well as the parents' transmission of their own skills, knowledge, attitudes and values to learners by modelling acceptable behaviour, guiding their activities and giving direct instructions (Moles 1982:45). Traditionally schools viewed parents as 'clients' (Wolfendale 1992:15). This means that in the past parents delegated their educational responsibility wholly to educators and that educators acted on behalf of parents in matters relating to the education of learners. But now change is imminent. People involved in education recognise the paradigm shift from a 'delegation model' to a 'collaborative model' which is empowering parents and communities and is a necessity in schools (Seely 1989:46). In view of the need for parental obligation in governance, advocacy and administration in education, Epstein (1988:59) has categorised parent involvement activities into a 'typology of parent involvement' (cf. Chapter 2). Accordingly, schools are faced with the task of implementing various strategies to involve parents in the education of learners. Berger (1983:54) argues that most of these strategies rely on the open communication either through written media, personal contact such as classroom visits and back-to-school nights.

Parent involvement differs from school to school, from community to community and from parent to parent thus making it difficult to achieve the proven benefits of effective home-school relations in all schools (Chavkin 1993:7). For example, researchers have reported that parents in disadvantaged and rural communities are hard-to-reach (Davies 1988:16). This is also true of most communities in South Africa although parent involvement in schools is now recognised and the rights of learners, parents and other interested parties are upheld in educational legislation (The South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996). The realisation of the importance of parents in education by communities and the education department in this country has led to the inception of School Governing Bodies (SGB's) in most schools. In practice there are still many problems which will need to be overcome in order to establish parent involvement in a wide range of activities. Therefore, we can refer to parent involvement in schools within rural and disadvantaged communities in South Africa as a 'potential that needs to be developed further' (Dekker & Lemmer 1993:156). Moles (1982:44) concurs and sees parent involvement among disadvantaged communities as an 'untapped source' with both limitations and possibilities.

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The success of any parent involvement strategy depends on how well it matches up with parents' needs (Lyons, Robbins & Smith 1984:36; Van Wyk 1996:4). Thus it is important that educators should understand that there are obstacles that may prevent the implementation of parent involvement programmes in schools, especially among disadvantaged and rural communities (Moles 1982:47). Likewise, both educators and parents themselves may begin to review the benefits that parent involvement may bring to the school.

1.1.2 Benefits of effective parent involvement

Research has shown the advantages of positive parent involvement for both school and home. Among others, parent involvement is linked to learner achievement (Chavkin 1993:2; Bloom 1992:19; Clark 1983:2; Wolfendale 1992:10; Henderson 1987:1; Bastiani 1988:38). Other benefits include: lower failure rate, fewer referrals to special education classes, higher levels of school grades and high school completion, improved attitudes to learning (Henderson et al 1986:4), lower dropout rates, good relations with parents (Lyons et al 1982:3; Chavkin & Williams 1988:87; Rich 1987:90; Bloom 1985:19) increased parental support (Munn 1983:1) and quality of provision of resources (Jowett et al 1991:3). This also suggests that there are more benefits of parent involvement to learners in schools where parent involvement is practised. Likewise, learners from low-income homes have the most to gain (Moles 1982:46). In this regard (Reglin 1993:3) maintains the education and survival of learners from disadvantaged families depends on how well parents and educators unite in support of each other.

Teachers also have a lot to gain if their schools practise parent involvement (Van Wyk 1996:3). Schools who work successfully with parents of learners in their schools gain knowledge and understanding of learners' homes, families and out of school activities when there is positive home-school-collaboration (Swap 1993:10; Epstein 1990b:112; Bastiani 1988:38; Reglin 1993:1). Swap (1992:3) adds that educators who work successfully with parents experience support, appreciation and a rekindling of their enthusiasm for problem solving. Support may range from the enthusiasm to boost educator morale to the provision of material resources that parents donate to the school (Comer 1980:26). In other words, educators who work at

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improving or instituting parent involvement are considered better educators than those who remain isolated from families of learners they educate (Reglin 1993:18).

1.1.3 Parent involvement in different contexts

Due to the complex nature of the concept parent involvement among educators, schools and parents themselves, a dominant ideology has evolved to label parents, especially in rural and disadvantaged communities as 'lacking sufficient interest' in learners' education, inferring that they do not want to work with schools (Moles 1982:48; Rich 1987:90) and that they are 'hard-to-reach' (Davies 1988:16). Thus the ongoing debate on parent involvement among rural communities has opened avenues for research as well as attempts to redefine the term 'parent' to mean any significant family member who is influential in the learner's general development as well as his/her educational development (Reglin 1993:3).

Although parent involvement in education is encouraged in most countries, education systems in different countries address the concept of parent involvement differently. For example, Pretorius (1995:317) reports that parent involvement in Japan involves parents' willingness to fund education as well as the establishment of effective communication between educators and parents. Bondesio (1995:367) on the one hand reports that parent representation in schools in Kenya realises through management councils although such councils have limited discretionary powers to mobilise resources as all education control is centralised. Niemann (1995:399) reports that parent involvement in Nigeria mainly consists of parent representation through statutory school committees and non-statutory bodies. In addition, parents are expected to fund the education of their children. This aspect will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

1.2 RURAL COMMUNITIES AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT

1.2.1 Contemporary rural communities

Village and farm settlements clarify the common sense assumption of what a rural settlement is. In South Africa, such settlements are often significantly influenced by issues relating to the

role of local chiefs and farmers. For example, the erection of schools is largely dependent on the discretion of the land owner if it is a farm school or the *kgotla* (chief) if it is a village school. Likewise, communication between educators and parents is more complex than one would imagine as the intervention of the farm owner and headman forms a hierarchical structure that parents and educators have to overcome even on matters relating to the education of learners. In addition, rural communities are often characterised by poverty, economic and political disempowerment and lack of facilities and a limited range of employment possibilities.

1.2.2   Rural communities of the North West Province

Most people in the North West Province live within small farming and village communities that fall under the control of the farm owner and the *kgotla* or chief and are often dependent on the decisions taken on their behalf by these landowners. Another recent development is the sprawling informal settlements where people occupy unused land illegally. This type of inhabitancy is, however, not unique to rural areas as these settlements can be seen in and around urban areas as well. Characteristic of all such settlements with regards to education is the increase in the number of learners of school-going age. In addition, the people in these settlements are mostly poor, illiterate, and unemployed and are thus unable to provide their learners with the basic necessities of life. Such communities are prevalent within various districts of the North West Province such as West-Mmabatho, Tlhabane, the East-Hammanskraal and surrounding towns as well as the far South-Klerksdorp, Huhudi and Galeshewe areas.

The North West Province was formally one of the so-called 'independent states' (or Bantustans) within the borders of the Republic of South Africa and was known as the Republic of Bophuthatswana. The education system of the North West Province is still struggling to overcome problems inherited from the former regime. These include insufficient number of classrooms, poorly resourced schools, and generally poor provision of education in schools. Moreover, the Bantustans of the past apartheid system has affected the way of thinking of the Bophuthatswana people. Through its principle of 'separate development' learners of the region

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were alienated from the rest of the world's learners with the introduction of *Education for Popagano* (Sehoole 1990:49-50). This alienation has broken the bonds which would have normally linked learners, parents, educators and the communities in the former Bophuthatswana with those in South Africa and the rest of the world.

A legacy of the past is the poor academic achievement of learners in this area. For example the 1996/97 analysis of the Grade 12 results has revealed a nation wide drop in performance. The results deteriorated from 69 % in 1996 to 50 % in 1997 (Bot & Shindler 1999:10).

As this research is conducted in the North West Province (former Bophuthatswana) factors contributing to the high failure rate will be described. In this regard, researchers have claimed that low grades, learner's lack of motivation, low self-esteem, a sense of exclusion and hopelessness emphasise the need for parental participation among low-income and minority communities (Comer 1980:126). All these problems and others are critical to how educators and parents themselves view parent involvement in schools.

1.3   PROBLEM FORMULATION

Against the background of proven benefits of parent involvement in education and the difficulties experienced in implementing effective parent involvement programmes in rural communities, there exists a need to study the barriers to parent involvement within rural communities in the North West Province.

The following questions facilitate the demarcation of the problem more clearly.

(1)   What is the role and function of parents in education? How is parent involvement seen in different communities of the world with specific reference to rural communities and what barriers have been identified to hinder its implementation?

(2)   How is education provided in the North West Province (former Bophuthatswana) against the background of education in South Africa? What strategies are in place to implement parent involvement programmes?

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(3)   What barriers to parent involvement are identified by parents and educators in rural communities in the North West Province?

(4)   How can these findings assist in the implementation of effective parent involvement programmes in rural communities in the North West Province?

1.4   AIMS OF RESEARCH

The following objectives have been identified in view of the above research problem :

(1)   To provide a thorough background of the role and place of parents in education in general and within rural communities in particular by studying models and practices of parent involvement in education as they appear in various disadvantaged communities in different countries.

(2)   To investigate educational provision and parent involvement in communities in the North West Province (former Bophuthatswana) against the background of education in South Africa.

(3)   To explore barriers to parent involvement in the North West Province by means of qualitative study.

(4)   To provide recommendations for the implementation of parent involvement programmes in rural communities in the North West Province.

1.5   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.5.1   Literature study

Both local and international sources will be used to gain a better understanding of the theory of parent involvement, as well as of education provision in the North West Province. The extent and success of parent involvement in different rural communities in the world will also be studied as it is described in the literature.

1.5.2 Qualitative research

The methodology to be used in this research is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research is founded upon the concept of *verstehen,* which refers to the understanding of social reality from the point of view of the informant (Smith 1983:7). The researcher does not allow his/her own values to influence the outcome of the research of the phenomena under investigation but lives through and recreates the experiences of others within oneself (Smith 1987:174). For this reason qualitative research is important in research in education as it generates questions that constitute interventions into the construction of social reality.

Qualitative research generates hypotheses and theories that emerge from the data by avoiding the imposition of a previous and possibly inappropriate frame of reference on the subjects of the research. No preconceived hypothesis about reality is used. Thus, in this research project, parents and educators have the opportunity to describe their own experiences without the researcher providing ready-made solutions to their problems.

Qualitative research relates the outside world of the formalised education system to the inside world of the informants. Events are studied in their natural settings without any form of modification or construction as researchers want those who are studied to speak for themselves (Sherman & Webb 1988:5).

Research is to be conducted in three primary schools as the organisation thereof is more conducive to parent-teacher contact than in secondary schools (Wolfendale 1992:12). Data will be collected through in-depth interviews and focus-group interviews. The interviews will be preceded by a period of informant observation in the selected schools in order for the researcher to gain entry into the conceptual world of the informants (Van Wyk 1996:15). The researcher will introduce herself and get to know and identify educators who could possibly become informants during the entire investigation.

Semi-structured interviews with principals of the three schools will be conducted, three semi-structured focus group interviews with educators and three with parents/caregivers will be

included. Interviews will continue for as long as there are data to gather, in other words, until such time as the data becomes saturated. All interviews will be audio-taped and later transcribed for closer examination. The analysis and interpretation of the findings will be done simultaneously and not only after data collection (Van Wyk 1996:15). The main aim of this research is to understand and describe how parents and educators experience parent involvement from their own perspective and what they consider to be barriers to effective parent involvement.

1.6   DEMARCATION AND LIMITATION OF STUDY

As data is collected from a small sample typical of qualitative research no claim can therefore be made to say that this study is representative of all rural communities. However, this investigation will help to inform many rural communities of the need to engage in parent-school collaboration in the education of learners.

1.7   DEFINITION OF TERMS

Parent/caregiver: any older person (non-biological parent or biological parent) male/female, single/married who is responsible for raising a child, caring for a child or taking the general responsibility of a child.

Parent involvement/participation: the support of parents in school activities in and out of school for the benefit of learners' academic achievement and school effectiveness.

Rural community: disadvantaged or poor communities (not urban/semi-urban), farming or small village communities limited to their area of inhabitation by their socio-economic status.

1.8   CHAPTER DIVISION

Six distinguishable components are identified and included in the different chapters.

(1) Chapter 1 includes a background to the study as well as the aims of the research and problem formulation.

(2) Chapter 2 deals with the prevailing theories and studies of parent involvement particularly in rural communities in different countries or regions of the world. Suggestions by different experts in the field of parent involvement regarding barriers to parent involvement (as found in the literature) will be included.

(3) In Chapter 3 a review of the provision of education in the North West Province (former Bophuthatswana) is included. The experiences of the rural, village and farming communities regarding educational provision is described with special emphasis on barriers to parent involvement within these communities. As the North West Province is a part of South Africa, problems of the South African education system will be described. This will be done, among others, against the historical background of the country.

(4) Chapter 4 discusses the methodology used to investigate the barriers to parent involvement in rural communities. Both the reasons for the choice and the use of qualitative methodology will be included. Data collection strategies and the analysis of the data will be described.

(5) Chapter 5 discusses the findings of the research and will include the barriers to parent involvement in rural communities as experienced by both educators and parents.

(6) Chapter 6 gives a summary of the findings and includes recommendations on ways in which the data can be used to address the problems of parent involvement within rural communities in the North West Province.

1.9   SUMMARY

Many barriers have long impeded effective family-school relations in major areas of education - such as socio-economic and socio-cultural barriers. The danger of overlooking parents in the decision-making process in the education of learners has proven to be detrimental to both the academic progress of the learner and school effectiveness. Now is the time for schools to change their policies and include parents in the education of learners. This includes the need for educators and parents to work together in addressing the rate of absenteeism and dropout

levels in their schools. Likewise, there is a need to inform parents on what is happening in the school for the benefit of learner achievement and school effectiveness. If parents are the primary educators, then the school has to accept them as active informants in school activities, in order that their widely differing experiences, and those of the educators could be pooled to foster learning in schools.

As this research concerns the barriers to parent involvement, recommendations will be made on the implementation of parent involvement programmes (taking into account the nature of rural communities) in the North West Province.

CHAPTER 2

THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Academics often define the concept parent involvement in different ways. Likewise, the emphasis placed on parent involvement will differ from one country to the next depending on whether or not education acts have made provision for the involvement of parents. But no matter how parent involvement is defined there will always be benefits, especially if a comprehensive programme is in place. As this chapter aims at describing some of the theories of parent involvement as well as the ways in which parent involvement is approached in different parts of the world, more benefits to parents, educators and learners will be described.

The concept parent involvement intersects between the conflicting idea of whether or not communities of parents and learners should be involved. If accepted, educators should view parents of learners as equal partners in education. Likewise parents should be represented in governance structures with full participation in matters such as how learners in their schools should be taught, curriculum development of the school, safety in and around their school, fundraising and utilisation thereof. In this way, decisive power is shifted from professional authority to lay groups (parents) (Lutz & Merz 1993:1; Ryan 1976:3). However, the trend in home-school relations presently is that of engaging the collaboration among all stakeholders in order to create a better understanding of each other's role in education.

For purposes of this research, greater attention will be given to the theories and practices of parent involvement as discussed in the work of Epstein (1987, 1992, 1995 & 1997). Epstein's work reflects the necessity for the interwovenness of activities of all role players in the school in order to attain learner success. In addition to Epstein's theory the work of Swap (1992) and Comer (1980) will briefly be discussed.

2.2 EPSTEIN'S THEORY OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT/THE THEORY OF OVERLAPPING SPHERES

Epstein's integrated theory of family-school relations is characterised by a set of overlapping spheres of influence which bring together the activities of all stakeholders into an interwoven core based on mutual trust (Epstein 1987b:130). Epstein's theory asserts that schools do not exist nor function in a vacuum and that all youth, families, communities and schools must come together as partners in the process of educating the learner. The aim is to make schools more effective institutions of learning (Sanders & Epstein 1998:483). The model of overlapping spheres of influence includes both internal and external structures. The internal structure represents the pattern of interaction of the stakeholders within the area of overlap. It is within the internal structure where communication occurs. These social relationships may be studied at the **institutional level** (for example, communication between the school and all parents) and at an **individual level** (for example, parent-teacher conferences).

The external model or structure of the overlapping spheres of influence recognises that the context in which learners learn and grow - the family, the school and the community - may be drawn together or pushed apart. The external structure can be pushed together or pulled apart by three forces:

(1)   Time: which includes the historic period, age and grade level of the learners.
(2)   Philosophies, policies and practices of the family.
(3)   Philosophies, policies and practices of the school.

These three factors will determine how much and what kind of overlap occurs at any given time. Therefore the theory of overlapping influence rests on the assumption that the most effective families and schools have overlapping, shared goals and missions concerning learners (Epstein 1990:102-103). Basically, Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres is represented by two concentric circles of interaction which are determined by the attitudes, practices and interactions of individuals within each context. This is presented in the following diagram.
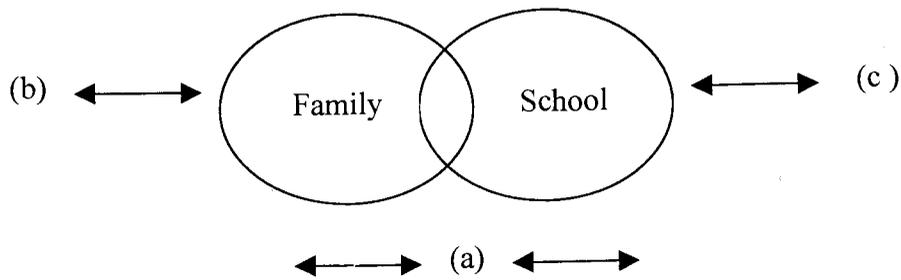
Figure 2.1: **Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres** (Epstein 1987:130).

Key: (a) time (b) policies and practices of the family (c) policies and practices of the school.

Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres assumes that families and schools have mutual interests and influences that can be more or less successfully promoted by the policies and programmes of the organisations and the actions and attitudes of the individuals in the organisations (Epstein 1987:130). In other words, it recognises the independent nature of some of the practices of families and schools as well as the shared responsibilities of parents and educators for learners development. When educators and administrators subscribe to the perspective of separate responsibilities of families and schools, they emphasise the specialisation of skills required by educators and parents for school-training and home-training (Epstein 1990a:104). With specialisation comes division of labour that pulls the spheres of school and family influences apart, decreasing overlap and restricting interaction between parents and teachers. On the other hand, when teachers and parents emphasise their shared responsibilities, they support the generalisation of skills required by teachers and by parents to produce educated and successful learners. Their combined endeavour pushes the spheres of family and school influence together and increases interaction between parents and school personnel. In other words, the area of overlapping influence increases. Furthermore the theory of overlapping influence states that the mutual interests and influences, policies and practices of all stakeholders can increase interaction and create families and schools which can help the learner to become more successful in education (Epstein 1996:214). Families that look after the educational needs of the learner by providing opportunities and support for success thus resembling the school are referred to as school-like-families and schools that resemble families by receiving parents and other stakeholders without fear of intimidation thus assisting the

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learner towards full development of all potentialities are referred to as family-like schools (Epstein 1987:131). Both family-like schools and school-like families create opportunities for tasks that involve learners' parents and educators and provide unique experiences for their learners and educators. A school-like family will, for example, recognise each child's individuality and will make each child feel special and included. A school-like-family recognises that each child is also a student and reinforces the importance of school, homework and the activities that build student skills and feelings of success (Epstein 1992:502). However, some learners may experience some discontinuity between home and school and others may have problems in adapting to the school situation when there is little overlap between knowledge, skills, attitudes and values fostered by the school and the home (Husen & Postlethwaite 1994:22-50).

Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres does not just stop at the activities of families and schools. It also considers that community institutions and agencies plus significant relatives may gain custody of learners and play an important part in their lives. Thus they should be included when programmes of home-school collaboration are implemented (Reglin 1993:3). Interactions include those at institutional level (families, learners, educators and the entire community) and at the individual level (parent, learner, educators, community-partner). Thus the model's internal structure is extended to include the community (Epstein 1997:73). With the involvement of the community in home-school collaboration, Epstein's model of parent involvement now looks as follows:
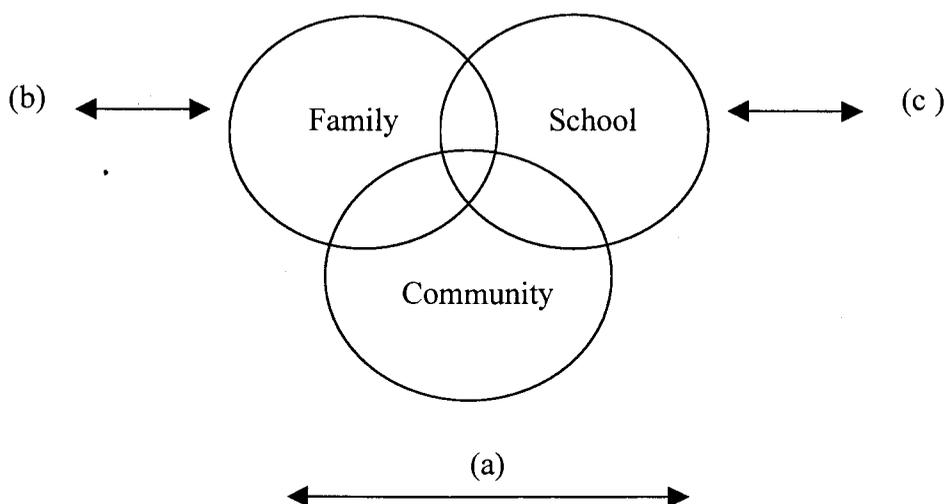
Figure 2.2: **Overlapping spheres of influence of family, community and school on learner education** (Epstein 1997:72).

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Epstein's model of overlapping spheres encourages educators and administrators to develop a wider view of parent involvement with fewer limits on the ways in which parents can participate in learner education (Chavkin & Williams 1988:165). In this model, schools can create opportunities for communities and community agencies to get involved in the education of learners by forming community relationships with parents and schools. Such schools are referred to as community-like-schools. Likewise communities which are supportive of their learners can create educational centres in which learners can be engaged in programmes of an educational nature. Such communities are referred to as school-like communities (Epstein 1996:214).

Communities, including groups of parents working together, create school-like opportunities, events and programmes that reinforce, recognise and reward students for good progress, creativity, contributions and excellence (Epstein 1995:702). Communities also create family-like settings, services and events to enable families to better support their children. Community-minded families and schools, on the other hand, become involved in neighbourhood projects. When all these concepts combine, children experience learning communities or caring communities.

The Epstein model of overlapping spheres illustrates that at any time, in any school and in any family or community, parent involvement is a variable that can be increased or decreased by the practices of teachers, parents and community. Moreover, the theory of the overlapping spheres of influences recognises the multiple contexts and interpersonal relations of all informants.

Different types of interactions can take place within the areas of overlap between families, schools and communities. In this regard Epstein (1997) has listed six areas of involvement which have become known as the typology of family-school-community relations, each with its own challenges, definitions, expected results and practices that schools can use as strategies to lure parents into schools.

2.3 EPSTEIN'S TYPOLOGY OF HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS

As part of the comprehensive programme for family-school connections, Epstein (1990a) made known five types of parent involvement strategies. They are: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home and decision making (Epstein 1990a:113 & 1995:704). Later Epstein (1996:215) added the sixth type: collaboration with the community. Each of the six types poses challenges for its successful design and implementation. The six types of involvement as set out by Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders and Simon (1997:8-9) are as follows:

2.3.1 Type 1 - Parenting

Parenting is an activity that schools can perform in order to assist families with parenting and child rearing skills, family support, understanding learner and adolescent development and creating home conditions to support learning at each stage and grade level. In practice this entails providing information to all families who want or who need it, not just the few who can attend workshops or meetings at the school buildings. Likewise, this type of involvement includes providing families the opportunity to share information about the child's culture, background, talents and needs.

2.3.2 Type 2 – Communicating

Communication in home-school relations involves communicating with families about school programmes and learner progress by means of school-to-home and home-to-school communication. This also means that schools should regularly review the readability, clarity, form and frequency of all memos, notices and other print and non-print communications. Likewise, parents who do not speak the language used in the schools or do not read well should be considered.

2.3.3 Type 3 - Volunteering

School can encourage parents to volunteer for school activities both at home and at school in order to enhance the success of learner education. In this regard volunteers must be recruited

widely so that all families know that their time and talents are welcome. Opportunities for both working and non-working parents to participate should be provided.

2.3.4   Type 4 - Learning at home

Parents should be taught how to support learning at home by assisting in homework. Such an interaction helps to link school atmosphere with the home atmosphere of the learner. This could include designing and organising a regular schedule of interactive homework that gives learners responsibility for discussing important things they are learning and helps families stay aware of the content of their children's classwork. In addition, schools should involve families in all important curriculum-related decisions.

2.3.5   Type 5 - Decision making

Parents become real representatives with opportunities to hear from and communicate with other families. They are included in class committees, councils and governance structures of the school. Central to this commitment is the undertaking to include parent leaders from all racial, ethnic, socio-economic and other groups in the school. In addition, schools should offer training to enable leaders to serve as representatives of other families, with input from and return of information to all parents. In secondary schools, learners should be included in decision making groups.

2.3.6   Type 6 - Collaborating with the community

Schools can collaborate with the community by sharing and engaging communities in all activities of the school, as communities have a societal and cultural responsibility of caring for and socialising learners (Kallagan 1993:56). In this regard grandparents and other members of the learner's extended family may also play a role in the education of the learner and should be included when programmes of parent involvement are introduced at school (Reglin 1993:3; Kallagan 1993:56). In essence this means that the school interacts with all those people who are interested in and are affected by the quality of education and not just those parents with learners in education.

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Epstein (1996:16) contends that individual schools may tailor their practices within these six areas to meet the needs and interests, time and talents and the ages and grade levels of learners and families. Good programmes to implement or improve parent involvement will look different in each site. Many researchers agree that Epstein's six categories provide a range of ways in which families may participate in family-community-school collaboration (Osborne & De Onis 1997:20). Each of the six types of involvement poses specific challenges for its successful design and implementation and each type leads to different results or outcomes for students, parents and teachers (Epstein 1996:216). Moreover, research on parent involvement can be successfully located within this framework.

2.4   SWAP'S MODEL OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Swap (1992) has proposed three different models/philosophies of parent involvement programmes: the school-to-home transmission philosophy, the curriculum enrichment philosophy, and the philosophy of partnership-for-school-success. Swap (1993:28) further added a fourth model called the protective model.

2.4.1   The protective model

The protective model comprises minimal parent involvement and its goal is to reduce conflict between parents and educators primarily through the separation of parents and educators' functions, thus protecting the school from interference by parents. It sees parent involvement in decision making or collaborative problem solving as an interference with the educator's job (Swap 1993:28). Many educators are reported to share the attitude described by this model and thus experience all the disadvantages associated with limited parent involvement. The protective model assumes that parents delegate the responsibility of educating learners to the school and hold school personnel responsible for the results. The model also assumes that educators accept the delegation of responsibility by parents (Swap 1993:28). In this way both parties can easily point fingers in the event of learner-failure of any nature.

2.4.2 School-to-home-transmission model

The school-to-home-transmission model expects parents to support learning at home and endorses the importance of schooling by making sure that learners meet the minimum academic and behavioural requirements. Parents are also expected to create conditions at home that support this change of behaviour. Transferring the cultural capital to the learner does this (Swap 1992:58). Cultural capital comprises the ways of being, knowing, writing and talking which characterises those who are successful within the dominant culture (Swap 1992:58). Delpit (1988:285) argues that some children come to school with aspects of power in place (or cultural capital) while others do not. Such children do not have the discourse patterns, interaction styles and spoken and written language codes that will allow them success in the larger society. Schools hope that parents can in some way contribute to the cultural capital of the child. Cultural capital can be transferred by way of talking, thinking and mixing with people, particularly with parents and members of the community in which the child lives. These values and behaviours which are hypothesised to undergrid school success are, however, not necessarily confined to parents of a particular class, racial or ethnic background. Swap (1992:59) explains that middle-class parents may, for example, **not** support the mainstream values of hard work, self-discipline, self-motivation and respectful manners; yet poor people may teach these skills very successfully.

Parent involvement programmes based on the philosophy of school-to-home transmission and the transference of culture can be more effective where parents are encouraged to reinforce learner behaviour, values and attitudes which educators believe will lead to improved school achievement (Epstein 1987:120). In the school-to-home-transmission model learners whose parents feel that they can and should be part of the school's main stream, have the best chance to acquire the social skills that will lead to school and life success. Those whose parents are not so equipped, can acquire such skills if they are taught in schools where there is parental support for their acquisition and use (Comer 1980:192).

Culture can also be transferred by way of influences that parents and communities may have over learners' networks and connections that the learners may have with other informants

towards their educational success (social capital) and the support through economic provision that may be institutionalised through inheritance (economic capital) (Bourdieau 1983:186). Given the scenario of the forms of culture and transference, it becomes obvious that parent involvement is necessary to enhance school achievement. Although there are complexities underlying the use of culture, academics advise that schools should review their interest in the family after its long exclusion from the educational arena (Husen & Postlethwaite 1994:2268).

2.4.3 The curriculum enrichment model

The curriculum-enrichment model is guided by the philosophy of interactive-learning. The premise of interactive-learning is that of mutual respect between parents and educators (Swap 1992:61). The model stresses mutually developed objectives (Swap 1993:38). Two valued outcomes justify parent involvement in this model; the one is learner achievement in the mainstream and the other, the valuing of goals and beliefs of non-mainstream culture by the school (Swap 1992:61). However, the focus is on curriculum and instruction. Both parents and educators recognise the continuity between home and school and support the recruitment of more educators who reflect and value the learner's culture. This should have the effect of bringing more parents into the school in order to solve behavioural and learning problems through frequent informal communication and shared projects or volunteering in the classroom (Swap 1992:62).

2.4.4 The partnership model

Swap's (1992) fourth type of parent involvement model is the partnership-model. The partnership model views parent-school-partnership as a fundamental component of learner success and welcomes parents as assets and resources in the search for strategies that will achieve success for all learners (Swap 1992:64, 1993:50). The partnership model emphasises two-way communication, parental-strengths and problem-solving with parents. It promotes a single unifying mission that brings all aspects of school together (Swap 1993:49). Swap's (1992; 1993) model of parent involvement dwells much on the success that schools can achieve by drawing in parents' help and advice, seeking confirmation of the school's high expectations

for learners and clarifying how parents can help support learners' achievement. Effective programmes within the partnership model also draw from other resources within the community, such as business agencies and medical partnerships so that services can be offered to children in a non-bureaucratic way and needed funding and material can be obtained.

2.5   COMER'S MODEL OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The Comer model of parent involvement emphasises the empowerment of parents and educators to work in partnership with schools in addressing all the developmental needs of the learner in order that learners may succeed in school (Emmons, Comer & Haynes 1996:21). Comer's approach to parent involvement is known as the school development programme (SDP) and targets the whole school to ensure that all school decisions are made in the best interest of learners (Comer & Haynes 1991:272). In the school development programme three mechanisms or guidelines are prevalent; the school planning and management team, the parent team and the student and staff support team (Comer 1980:9). The Comer model of parent involvement emphasises the necessity of parents and educators working together in addressing the developmental needs of the learner thus improving the learner's chances of success.

2.5.1   The planning and management team

The planning and management team is the central organising body in the school and includes the principal, educators, parents and staff support representatives. This team plans staff development activities and assesses and modifies the school plan in order to improve learner achievement (Comer 1980:15; Comer et al 1996:11).

2.5.2   The parent team

The parent team involves parents' active participation in the learner's daily school endeavour, policy, management issues and general school support (Haynes & Comer 1993:168). This team bridges the gap between the home and the school and is actively involved in developing workshops for themselves and learners (Flaxman & Inger 1992:17). One such programme is the social skills curriculum for Inner City schools in the United States whose target group is

mainly the low-income and minority communities or wherever parents feel a sense of exclusion, low self-esteem or hopelessness (Comer & Haynes 1991:275).

2.5.3   The student and staff support team

The student and staff support team includes staff with learner development and mental health knowledge and experience such as the school psychologist, guidance counsellor, school nurse, special education educator and others (Comer et al 1996:12). The student and staff support team shares the learner's development and behaviour, knowledge, skills and sensitivity with parents, educators and administrators (Comer 1980:15). The implementation of the three mechanisms of the Comer approach to parent involvement is driven by three operations: the comprehensive school plan, that delineates the social and academic goals and the activities of the school; *staff development activities* designed to address the goals and activities of the school; and the monitoring and assessment that generates useful data on the programmes, processes and outcomes and recycles information back to inform programme modification where necessary and establish new goals and objectives (Haynes & Comer 1993:168).

Comer's model of parent involvement proposes several ways in which learners may develop well. Development can be in speech and language, physical, social, psychological and emotional aspects as well as the academic aspects (Haynes & Comer 1993:166). In Comer's school-reform theory, the school is a social system, which needs to be changed if it is not working well. To achieve this, the change-agent must work with the local people, school staff, parents, community members and where appropriate, with learners. In other words the school development programme is a way of conceptualising and working in schools and it completely replaces the traditional organisation and management. Haynes' (1996:xvii) remark clarifies this point :

> *Effective schooling cannot be a uni-dimensional enterprise. It must be grounded in a holistic educational philosophy and must incorporate sensitive practices of authentic teaching and learning that are implemented according to sound principles of co-operation and empowerment and that are guarded by a respect for the dignity of the learner.*

2.6   PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SELECTED COUNTRIES

Academics generally agree that schools and families are institutions that impinge directly on the learner by providing opportunities and experiences that are needed for proper development (Marjoribanks 1994:2250). The family is more prominent in the general life of the learner while the school is significant in scholastic performance for future life chances. Thus these institutions have complementary roles in educating the learner. Therefore, attempts to encourage positive family-school relationships are necessary especially in communities where parent involvement is lacking. Families prepare and reinforce the symbolic attributes required by schooling while schooling builds upon and elaborates on the symbolic resources derived from family membership (Van Crombrugge & Vandemoolenbroecke 1994:2267). Thus improved contact and communication between parents and educators is necessary to improve home-school relations (Bastiani & Goede 1989:123). The family is also entrusted with the important societal task of caring and socialising learners (Kallagan 1993:56; Jantjies 1995:289). In this way the family reinforces positive behaviour towards school.

Parent involvement differs from one country to the next. Therefore parent involvement strategies will differ depending on, among others, the developmental and literacy level of the people of that country. But no matter how different nations of the world may view parent involvement, research world-wide demonstrates that meaningful collaboration has many benefits for all informants. In this section a study of parent involvement in different countries will be briefly described. Rural communities in Africa, Europe, Asia and elsewhere in the world, will receive particular attention.

Parent involvement is affected by many factors including political dispensation, the school structure and the commitment of parents to support their children's education. A study of parent involvement among rural communities in the Republic of China has revealed that there is little or no parent participation in education due to some factors like change in family structure and the type of government in China. Communism in the Republic of China has resulted in the state sharing in everything that the people have gained for themselves thus leaving them with very little material possessions to provide a better life for their families. So

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much so that the State has gained control over all matters relating to life in general including education (King 1984:176).

Traditionally Chinese parents want their children to become "dragons", that is, college and university students. Such an event is also celebrated by the whole village as well as by the proud parents (Lemmer 1995:307). Parents are generally willing to do whatever they can to get their children through school. However, there are vast gaps between what rural and urban parents are able to spend on their children's education. Since the 1980 economic reforms, rural families have become the main economic production unit (Lemmer 1995:281) and had to depend almost entirely on themselves, receiving minimal government help. For many families labour is an acute problem and many take their children out of school to work on the lands.

Different countries view the concept parent involvement differently depending on what policies and practices are in place in their school. In Japan the culture and practice of parent involvement is dictated by many socio-cultural factors such as free and compulsory education for learners between the ages of 6 and 15. Parents are expected to pay for meals, medical care and other facilities (Pretorius 1995:347). Although parents in Japan are not represented on formal structures such as school governing bodies, their non-statutory involvement is significant and is carefully organised. Pretorius (1995:257) lists the following examples:

(1)   Parents are kept informed about school meetings by means of monthly programmes and weekly notices.

(2)   At the beginning of the year teachers are expected to hold meetings with parents to discuss the year's programme and objectives. The teacher also meets parents three times per year, when the learners are tested.

(3)   Every month there is a one hour observation period during which learners' parents can visit the school and even observe classes. Seventy five per cent of the mothers make use of this opportunity.

(4)   Parents are expected to attend sport days, cultural festivals and other special occasions.

(5)   Parent teacher association, of which there are 45 000 in Japan, play an important supportive role aimed at ensuring that the learners develop properly, both within and outside the school context.

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It is particularly the Japanese mother who plays a vital role in supporting her children's education. This involvement is strengthened by the fact that her success as a mother is often judged in terms of her children's achievements in school.

In conclusion it then seems as if the school structure, the political system and socio-cultural conditions support parent involvement in Japan much more than in China.

A study of parent involvement in primary schools in Cyprus has classified families into three types. The first type is the highly involved family, which has access to school information due to their level of education and positive individual school experiences. The second type is that of skilled labourers who contact the school only when they have specific concerns. The third type is that of the marginalised group of unskilled labourers with mothers who are generally housewives. The marginalised group has difficulty communicating with the school and often experience a sense of powerlessness before the school's position and authority (Sanders & Epstein 1998:484). The highly involved type of university graduates and professionals participates in parent groups and are happy with their learner's grades and school (Sanders & Epstein 1998:484). The group of unskilled labourers need more information and feedback from the school. They want more opportunities to become involved in school work and home work. The marginalised group is reported to be lacking knowledge, time and energy to assist learning but they feel it is their responsibility to do so (Sanders & Epstein 1998:484).

Many nations of the world have developed policies to promote family-school connections in recognition of the need for all families to have opportunities for parent involvement in education. Among others they include: parent choice of school and parent representation on school councils or decision making boards (Sanders & Epstein 1998:485). In spite of the need for parent representation in schools, some authorities still find it difficult to allow parents the choice of a school for fear it may cause social inequity. Thus those empowered often dictate policy to the detriment of others (Dimmock, O'Donoque & Robb 1996:20). In Israel for example, parent choice of schools is an option that is primarily exercised by upper middle-class families who have greater access to school information (Shapira & Haymann 1991:278). Some academics argue that disparity in information provision between family classes undermines the goal of integrating learners with diverse socio-economic status and academic abilities. They

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also argue that it does not make school choice equitable as information about school should also be extended even to lower-income parents (Shapira & Haymann 1991:279; Sanders & Epstein 1998:485).

In conclusion: Although parent involvement is seen as important throughout the world, the emphasis placed on parent involvement and the way it is practised differs. Likewise, problems related to involving parents in the education of learners will differ between developed and developing countries, as well as between rural and urban countries. Moles (1982:44) describes the state of parent involvement in many rural communities as a 'rich untapped source and an intractable problem with limitations and possibilities for parent-school collaboration'.

Although the USA and UK form part of the developed world, many rural schools and communities experience the problems typically associated with the developing world. For example, in the state of Nevada in North-East America a study of parent involvement in programmes for rural youth at risk has revealed that parents spend little time with their learner at home as they live and work a considerable distance from towns. Lack of public transportation also consumes much of their time as most parents arrive home late (Smith & Martin 1997:16). This means that due to lack of access to parents, home-school collaboration and communication becomes a challenge (Dryfoos 1990:25). Similar problems are mentioned by Stobart (1996:152) as regards parent-teacher communications in rural areas in the United Kingdom.

A study of parent involvement in rural schools in Montana has revealed that most people in that state are scattered across small communities, farms and ranches while many communities still operate small schools of one to three rooms each (Osborne & De Onis 1997:20). These and others are some of the problems that affect rural youths in general and may cause problems for learners and educators alike.

Although there are problems as far as educating learners in rural communities, authorities still believe that parents, educators and administrators are in agreement about the importance of parent involvement. Thus most believe that parent involvement is good for a school, it increases teacher effectiveness and is important for learner success (Osborne & De Onis

1997:21). In spite of this, Stobart (1996:157) reports that in the UK teachers do not always make allowances for the problems of rural families such as isolation, poor transport and the extended working hours these parents need to cope with. Given that 25 per cent of people in the UK live in rural areas (Stobart 1996:160), this could be seen as a problem. The solution seems to be a greater understanding of the particular problems associated with rural living and a commitment by schools to support these families.

Not much has been written on parent involvement in African countries as many are still grappling with the provision of schooling for all learners. However, research on parent involvement in Nigeria has reported that parents have an early interest in the education of the learner. Parents are represented in school in parent-teacher-associations (PTA's). Parents are prepared to share their expert knowledge with educators and learners in their schools. Likewise, local farmers share their practical skills at agricultural schools. Artisans such as mat-weavers, carpenters and potters assist learners with practical advice in the classrooms. In addition, learners visit construction sites and markets in the regions per invitation in order to obtain first-hand knowledge about the world of work (Niemann 1995:483).

Bondesio (1995:15) has reported on parent involvement in Kenya. Among others mention is made that parents are represented in schools in the form of parent councils but with little discretionary powers since education control is in the hands of central government. State departments, religious organisations and trade unions tend to only support non-formal education programmes (Cameron & Hurst 1983:150).

2.7   BARRIERS TO PARENT INVOLVEMENT

In spite of the internationally accepted notion of parent involvement in schools, collaboration between home, school and community is not encountered in all communities. Academics have supported the benefits of parent involvement but have also discovered that there are problems that have kept collaboration between family and school to a minimum especially among rural communities. Even in countries where legislation is in place for the inception of parent-bodies and other governance structures in schools, educators and parents themselves have not taken the initiative to engage one another in partnership relationships.

Barriers that have kept collaboration in home-school relations to a minimum include: the changing family structure (Reglin 1993:3); limited time for communication (Swap 1987:7; Moles 1982:32; Jackson & Cooper 1992:31); lack of money to support families and schools (Duncan 1992:12); lack of transportation to and from school (Jackson & Cooper 1992:31); invitations to meetings arriving late (Leitch & Tangri 1988:72; Wannat 1992:47); single and working parents' inability to participate in day-time school events (Moles 1987:143); cultural and social barriers (Davies 1987:208-209; Hamby 1992:60; Ritter, Mont-Reynaund & Dornbush 1993:31); and lack of school policies and the practice of parent involvement (Chrispeels 1991:371; Wannat 1992:64).

Problems that prevent the implementation of parent involvement programmes in different communities are varied. Among them is the lack of understanding and knowledge of what rural life entails, so that schools have labelled these parents as hard-to-reach (Davies 1987:16). This is due to the low level of meaningful contact between parents and schools which led educators to conclude that parents lack interest in learners' education (Moles 1982:42; Rich 1986:60). On the other hand research attests that parents do care and that they want to help in the education of learners (Rich 1988:91). The major goal of educators especially those working among rural and disadvantaged communities and at-risk students is to involve families and communities in the education of learners (Bermudez 1993:176).

As the barriers to parent involvement are the focus of this research, the barriers listed will be further researched and reported on in Chapter 5.

2.8   BENEFITS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The situation within rural communities clearly indicates a need for greater collaboration between home and school in addressing problems the youth have to contend with. On the other hand, the task of encouraging parents to become involved in schools and of overcoming barriers to parent involvement seems overwhelming. Some academics have asked the question as to whether the effects of improved parent involvement are worth the effort (Van Wyk 1996:36). Research on school and family environments has documented the positive effects on student development and the achievement of family conditions and practices of parent

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involvement (Coleman 1987; Comer 1980; Henderson 1987; Clark 1988; Swap 1993; Van Wyk 1996).

Among others, parent involvement has always been equated with academic achievement and a positive attitude towards school work both at home and at school (Comer 1980:15). However, in communities where parent involvement is lacking, the opposite is true. A review of literature further indicates that parent involvement is beneficial to all informants including the community in which a particular school is situated.

2.8.1   Benefits for learners

The role played by parents as educators in the welfare and development of learners is crucial and continues to call for more participation and understanding of the educational needs of learners (Bastiani 1993a:6-14). Moreover research attests that learners whose parents are involved both at home and at school become more successful at all grade levels regardless of the educational background or social class of their parents (Daubert & Epstein 1993:16; Wannat 1992:632; Dixon 1992:16; Duncan 1992:12). Loucks (1992:19) has also noted that academically successful learners tend to receive consistent support from their parents and other adults in the home. This is to say that the consistent support of parents in the education of learners is proof that both the learner who is in trouble and the one doing well can be reached (Eccles & Harrold 1996:10). Learners whose parents are involved experience approval and appreciation from their parents and teachers especially in the performance of activities of the school (Comer & Haynes 1991:276).

In a review of literature on parent involvement programmes particularly those training low-income parents to work with learners, it has been discovered that learners' language skills, performance in tests, their general behaviour and attitude towards school improved and that this enhances the learner's school achievement (Comer 1980:13-14; Comer & Haynes 1991:21).

Davies (1990:205) compares the complex environment in which learners live to an ecosystem where what happens in one part will affect the other parts. This means good co-ordination

between all parts (the school, parents and the community) will serve in the best interest of the education of the learner thereby helping him/her to develop a positive attitude towards school.

Positive attitudes are formed at home and within the community, in which the learner lives and are a product of the interactions between parents, learners and the surrounding community. When parents show interest in the learner's education and have high expectations of performance, they promote attitudes that are keys to academic achievement (Henderson 1987:4).

The fact that learners have more positive attitudes towards school, better homework habits, higher attendance, lower drop-out rates and improved behaviour is supported by well documented research (Hamby 1992:58). In a survey conducted among fifth graders regarding their reactions to practices of parent involvement and their parents at home, it was discovered that learners whose parents and educators implemented frequent parent involvement practices showed more positive attitudes towards school, better homework habits, experienced greater concurrence between school and family practices and gained more familiarity between educators and parents became more familiar with each others needs (Epstein 1990b:111; Van Wyk 1996:38). Hamby (1992:59) has also found that increased achievement is sustained across grade levels for low-income learners as well as for middle-income ones. All these factors obviously contribute towards improved student achievement.

2.8.2 Benefits for parents and the community

When educators make parent involvement part of their regular teaching practice, parents increase their interaction with learners at home. They feel positive about their own abilities to care for learners (Swap 1987:23). Parents who become involved in education develop an appreciation of their important roles, gain access to information and materials, develop the motivation to continue with their own education and strengthen social networks and contact with other parents experiencing similar problems (Davies 1988:206). Parent contact with other parents at school level creates a better position for both to discuss school work with learners and also to help with appropriate advice and support for one another as closer relationships with the schools are established (Atkin, Bastiani & Goede 1998:168-169). In schools where

collaboration with parents is valued, parents have the pleasure of knowing educators, what they do in class and how they can help with school work. Thus they increase their own abilities of working with learners at home and at school (Van Wyk 1996:37).

Jackson and Cooper (1992:38) have found that parents are always ready to help learners in matters relating to education in order to improve partnerships. Moreover, many parents state a feeling of improved self-worth. This point is well illustrated by what was discovered in one major breakthrough in research on parent volunteer projects, particularly on the programme: senior motivators in learning and educational services (SMILES) whose aim was to attract volunteers among older citizens back into schools to serve in different activities that can uplift the educational achievement of learners in their districts (Decker & Decker 1988:5). It was discovered that in districts where educators and parents frequently used SMILES programmes, the self-esteem of parents themselves and other adults in the community was heightened (Decker & Decker 1988:5). Thus parents and other community members who become engaged to serving in parents' volunteer projects reduce the fear of isolation in their school and offer their expertise and vocational skills in the upliftment of the learner's education (Swap 1990:27; Swap 1993:11; Chrispeels 1991:55).

Projects to improve parent/school partnerships also help to improve communication between parent and learner and between parent, learner and school (Jackson & Cooper 1992:36). One parent reported, "I believe that my son really knows how much we care about him. He sees us attending meetings each week" (Van Wyk 1996:41).

Parents and other community members can benefit in a number of ways from their own participation in schools through serving in different committees, being part of parent-teacher-associations (PTA's) and other advisory committees or school management councils. In management councils parents can experience ownership of the learner's schools, can help work out solutions to obstacles that limit their own participation and become frequent and effective informants in school (Comer & Haynes 1991:273). However, Epstein (1990b:108) acknowledges that the vast majority of parents want to be involved with learners at home rather than serve on school committees.

Parents with learners who experience similar problems have a chance to meet and discuss learner progress at school level. In this way parents gain increased access to school resources and facilities, improved services and support from other parents both at home and at school (Davies 1990:206; Jackson & Cooper 1992:23). Thus parents benefit by being alerted to different and more effective ways of creating learning opportunities and stimulating experiences for learners through parenting programmes (Wolfendale 1992:9).

Henderson (1987:17-18) sums up the many benefits of parent involvement by arguing that parents who are actively involved in learner education develop more positive attitudes about school and school personnel, help gather support in the community for parent involvement programmes, become more active in community affairs and develop increased self-confidence.

2.8.3 Benefits for educators and the school

Research demonstrates multiple benefits of parent and community involvement for educators and schools where increased parent involvement is practised. Educators' work is made more manageable, educators are rated highly by parents and educators themselves are appreciative of their own efforts at working with parents of learners in their school (Davies 1988:206). Thus in programmes where parents and educators are successfully working together, educators experience support from parents and a rekindling of their own enthusiasm for problem solving (Swap 1993:10; Leitch & Tangri 1988:7). Moreover, educators get to know and understand parents better (Hamby 1992:59). Educators therefore gain a better understanding of learners as families become ready to provide them with valuable information in handling specific learners (Van Wyk 1996:38). Leitch & Tangri (1988:72) add that educators who involve parents in the education of learners develop positive feelings about education and about their schools.

Educator-parent collaboration in school is important as it broadens the perspective as well as increases the sensitivity to varied parent circumstances. It increases the mutuality of interest among all stakeholders in the school (Swap 1993:10). Thus educators who frequently involve parents (in schools and at home) are reported to rate parents, including the less educated, the economically poor, disadvantaged and single parents as helpful (Epstein 1990:112). In this

way, educators' expectations of parents as partners are raised. Leitch & Tangri (1988:73) quote an educator to illustrate how educators begin to appreciate parents in an environment where parents and community involvement is practised by saying that;

All parents care, their response depends on how you approach them. Parents say they know I care because of the way I talk to them.

Schools which practise parent involvement gain in a number of ways. For example educators and staff members who do not live in the neighbourhood in which they teach, are better positioned to learn of community perspectives to planning and management activities. Educators are able to plan age and culturally appropriate social and academic programmes in the classroom, by referring to information supplied by parents about needs and experiences of learners in the same community (Comer & Haynes 1991:273).

In short, when parents are involved, barriers between home and school are broken down. Parents and educators get to know each other better than where the focus of concern is only on the learner's progress and behaviour.

2.9   BENEFITS OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF INVOLVEMENT

In accordance with the decision to work within the typology of parent involvement the following benefits or results of the different types of involvement are provided. Table 2.1 illustrates the benefits of parent involvement to learners, parents and educators respectively.

Table 2.1: **Expected results for students, parents and educators of the six types of involvement** (Epstein 1997:10).

RESULTS FOR STUDENTS

Type 1 Parenting	Type 2 Communicating	Type 3 Volunteering	Type 4 Learning at home	Type 5 Decision making	Type 6 Collaborating with community
Awareness of family supervision, respect for parents	Awareness of own progress and of actions needed to maintain or improve grades	Skill in communicating with adults	Gains in skills, abilities and test scores linked to homework and class-work	Awareness of representation of families in school decisions	Increased skills and talents through enriched curricular and extracurricular experiences
Positive personal qualities, habits, beliefs, and values, as taught by family	Understanding of school policies on behaviour, attendance, and other areas of student conduct	Increased learning of skills that receive tutoring or targeted attention from volunteers	Homework completions	Understanding that student rights are protected	Awareness of careers and options for future education and work
Balance between time spent on chores, on other activities and on homework	Informed decisions about courses and programmes	Awareness of many skills, talents, occupations, and contributions of parents and other volunteers	Positive attitude toward school-work	Specific benefits linked to policies enacted by parent organisations and experienced by students	Specific benefits linked to programmes, services, resources, and opportunities that connect students with community
Good or improved attendance	Awareness of own role in partnerships, serving as courier and communicator		View of parent as more similar to teacher, and home as more similar to school		
Awareness of importance of school			Self-concept of ability as learner		

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Table 2.2: **Results for parents** (Epstein 1997:10).

Type 1 Parenting	Type 2 Communicating	Type 3 Volunteering	Type 4 Learning at home	Type 5 Decision making	Type 6 Collaborating with community
Understanding of and confidence about parenting, child and adolescent development, and changes in home conditions for learning as children proceed through school	Understanding school programmes and policies	Understanding teacher's job, increased comfort in school, and carryover of school activities at home	Know how to support, encourage, and help student at home each year	Input into policies that affect child's education	Knowledge and use of local resources by family and child to increase skills and talents, or to obtain needed services
Awareness of own and others' challenges in parenting	Monitoring and awareness of child's progress	Self-confidence about ability to work in school and with children, or to take steps to improve own education	Discussions of school, classwork, and homework	Feeling of ownership of school	Interactions with other families in community activities
Feeling of support from school and other parents	Responding effectively to child's problem	Awareness that families are welcome and valued at school	Understanding of instructional programme each year and of what child is learning in each subject	Awareness of parents' voices in school decisions	Awareness of school's roles in community, and of the community's contributions to the school
	Interactions with teachers and ease of communications with school and teachers	Gains in specific skills of volunteer work	Appreciation of teaching skills	Shared experiences and connections with other families	
			Awareness of child as a learner	Awareness of school, district, and state policies	

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Table 2.3: **Results for teachers** (Epstein 1997:10).

Type 1 Parenting	Type 2 Communicating	Type 3 Volunteering	Type 4 Learning at home	Type 5 Decision making	Type 6 Collaborating with community
Understanding families backgrounds, cultures, concerns, goals, needs, and views of their children	Increased diversity and use of communications with families in new ways, including those who do not volunteer at school	Readiness to involve families in new ways, including those who do not volunteer at school	Better design of homework assignments	Awareness of parent perspectives as a factor in policy development and decisions	Awareness of community resources to enrich curriculum and instruction
Respect for families' strengths and efforts	Awareness of parent talents and interests in school and children	Awareness of parent talents and interests in school and children	Respect of family time	View of equal status of family representatives in committees and in leadership roles	Openness to and skill in using mentors, business partners, community volunteers, and others to assist students and augment reaching practice
Understanding of student diversity	Greater individual attention to students, with help from volunteers	Greater individual attention to students, with help from volunteers	Recognition of equal helpfulness of single parent, dual income, and less formally educated families in motivating and reinforcing student learning		Knowledgeable, helpful referrals of children and families to needed services
Awareness of own skills to share information on child development			Satisfaction with family involvement and support		

Where it may be shown that a particular type of involvement is absent in a school or district, the lack of the specific benefits as set out above will also be apparent. This is of significance in rural areas where barriers to parent involvement may deprive all stakeholders of the many benefits of effective home-school-community relations.

2.10 SUMMARY

Parent involvement differs from country to country. However, academics have agreed that the inception of comprehensive programmes can have lasting benefits for all informants. Parent involvement is hampered by all sorts of barriers. In schools where educators have made it their priority, many successes have been recorded. In many developing countries, however, parent involvement is found to be still lacking.

In South Africa, research shows a complete lack of parent involvement in certain communities while in others parents have always been involved. The situation is, however, not hopeless as studies are underway to redress the imbalances that occurred prior to 1994 with regards to the involvement of parents in the education of the learners.

For purposes of this research, Comer's model of parent involvement, Swap's model of parent involvement and Epstein's model of parent involvement have been described as well as their implications for the inception of parent involvement programmes in school.

CHAPTER 3

EDUCATION AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE
NORTH WEST PROVINCE
(FORMER BOPHUTHATSWANA)

3.1   INTRODUCTION

The North West Province, formerly the Republic of Bophuthatswana, belonged to a formation of four nominally independent homelands prior to 1994 (Claassen 1995:454). Bophuthat-swana's independence from South Africa meant the so-called country could run all its affairs, including education beside the matric examinations, which remained under the auspices of the Department of Education and Training (DET) of the Republic of South Africa until 1994 when democracy was attained for all the peoples of South Africa. Well-known factors that hindered Bophuthatswana in matters of education included among others: the illiteracy level of the people of the region, the lack of financial resources and limited capacity to run educational matters. In addition lack of school buildings and facilities in certain areas, made education of learners difficult. Other reasons why the former Bophuthatswana could not run all its education matters effectively included the exodus of school-going youth to South Africa for further study. A contributing factor to this was the implementation by South Africa of the Tswana system for learners of the Bophuthatswana who lived and worked in South Africa (Ruperti, Badenhorst, Stone & Vos 1978:8-9). Such an open system implied that the former Bophuthatswana was to make full use of the educational facilities offered by South Africa instead of duplicating them at great expense within the 'country' (Ruperti et al 1978:9). Many learners chose to study in South Africa as the education system of the former Bophuthatswana was known to be beset by inefficiencies, under-resourced schools, unqualified and under-qualified teachers, low educator morale, absenteeism, and lack of facilities and finances for the efficient running of schools (Holele 1987:2).

This chapter deals with education and parent involvement in the North West Province. However, the prevailing conditions regarding parent involvement among rural communities

with reference to the past and present for all South Africans will be described. The understanding is that the phenomenon of education and parent involvement in the North West Province (former Bophuthatswana) cannot be understood apart from the rest of South Africa.

3.2   THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.2.1   General

The South African population is extremely heterogeneous. Educationists have long been battling to accommodate the issue of cultural diversity, particularly within education (Claassen 1995:449). During the apartheid era, one way of accommodating this diversity was the establishment of different education departments, each with its own powers, for different racial groups. However, general education provision was seldom equal (Pillay 1990:30). The standard of black education was characterised by the inadequate supply of resources, overcrowded classrooms, poorly qualified educators, poor examination results and high drop-out rates while that of whites was comparable to that of other modern education systems in other developed countries (Squelch 1993:176). In order to understand the current situation in the North-West Province, events relating to the education provision and parent involvement (past and present) will be described.

3.2.2   The period 1948-1976

This period falls within the 'apartheid area' where racial separation was the dominant ideology of the government in power. The Eislen Commission of 1949 produced a blue print for education of 'natives' as a separate race. Published in 1951, its guiding principles were the restructuring and adaptation to modern requirements of Bantu culture, increased community involvement through parent committees and increased expenditure on education. Central to this were the dictated syllabi for black learners which aimed at skills appropriate to a subordinate role in the economy of the country. Black social expectations were to be oriented to the reserves (Lodge 1984:267).

The Bantu Education Act of 1953 included the suggestions made by the Eislen Commission (Samuel 1990:17). Hendrik Verwoerd, the then Minister of Native Affairs strongly advocated that black learners should receive schooling which was different from that of white learners. He was of the opinion that missionary education provided black learners with a basis of confidence for political demands and as such was unacceptable to the government (Maree 1990:148). Dr Verwoerd's ideals were entrenched in the ideology of preserving white education for white learners and 'Bantu education' for black learners. His ideals were realised with the passing of the Bantu Education Act of 1953. Thereafter the education for blacks was shaped to meet the labour needs of whites and to socialise blacks to accept their subordinate position by restructuring content to include the values of Christian National Education (Wolpe & Unterhalter 1991:4).

The features of this Act seemed attractive to a number of black parents, because the Act provided access to education, formation of school boards and school committees which, in a way, provided an illusion of school accountability to parents. In fact missionaries lost control of black schools to the Department of Native Affairs (Lodge 1984:268; Christie & Collins 1990:160). By 1959 all black schools except Catholic schools came under the control of the Native Affairs Department (Christie & Collins 1990:162). All educational appointments, syllabi, examinations and school buildings were to be controlled exclusively by the state (Christie & Collins 1990:171). One result of the Bantu Education Act was that schools were flooded with a massive increase of learners in primary schools (Samuels 1990:18). Black schools could not accommodate this increase and many schools resorted to double sessions and shortened school days due to a shortage of educators and classrooms (Christie & Collins 1990:177; Mncwabe 1992:59).

Another major feature of Bantu Education was the separation of schools along tribal lines which became a part of the homeland policy of the 1970's (Christie & Collins 1990:174; Samuel 1990:19). This resulted in increased financial obligations for African communities. Parents were forced to buy uniforms, stationery and textbooks for their school-going learners (Lodge 1984:268; Samuel 1990:20). Many were unable to do so which contributed to the high

failure and dropout rate particularly in lower grades thus increasing the rate of illiteracy among black populations in South Africa.

By 1976 many black learners, even those that had previously been in school, had reverted to illiteracy due to their discontinued schooling (Samuel 1990:20). Poverty among black communities saw many learners forced into the labour market prematurely as they could not afford the purchase of school necessities. Because of all these factors many black populations became disillusioned and rebelled against Bantu education (Lodge 1990:284). For example, one liberation movement announced the Resist Apartheid Campaign in 1954 – a move that saw many of the organisation's leaders put behind bars, while others left the country for fear of reprisals (Lodge 1984:274). Given the history of the provision of education in South Africa before 1994, one simple deduction can be made: education provision for black learners was not adequate and did not fulfill the expectations of the community.

3.2.3   The period 1976-1994

The political events leading up to and including 1976 were the turning point in the South African history. Tensions developed in schools, as demands for better education and for the supply of books and stationery heightened. The South African government retaliated by putting behind bars leaders of many liberation and student organisations countrywide which heralded the beginning of future events.

The National Party government had introduced a policy whereby Afrikaans was to be made the medium of instruction in half the number of high school subjects as from 1976. This was unacceptable to black learners and many black liberation organisations. Many saw the move by the government as a way to impede the acquisition of English, thus cutting ties completely with the outside world (Lodge 1984:268). Angry responses were evoked from both school communities and the public. A march to Orlando Stadium culminated in many civilians and learners being injured or killed and incalculable damage to state and private property was recorded (Behr 1984:195). The Soweto riots of 17 June 1976 sparked angry reactions from different quarters of the community. Debates surrounding issues affecting black education in

South Africa were held while school boycotts continued to force the government to succumb to the demands for a better education.

By October 1977 many learners had dropped out of school for political reasons with numbers reaching as high as 196 000 (Davies 1990:350). The State responded by closing many schools and hostels, arresting learners and educators, expelling and banning black consciousness movements, among them the Education and Cultural Advancement of the African People of South Africa, the South African Student Movement (SASM) and the South African Student Organisation (SASO) (Davies 1990:351). Both the Bantu Education Act of 1953 and the Bantu Special Act of 1964 were replaced by the Education and Training Act of 1976 (Behr 1984:200). The Act included provisions for, among others, the replacement of the word 'Bantu' with the word 'black'; the declaration that education would be compulsory; the involvement of parents and communities in the education system and the provision that home language be used up to standard 2 as medium of instruction (Mncwabe 1992:59). The Act also suggested the introduction of compulsory education in certain areas provided that parents agreed with the Department regarding the resumption of schooling that had stopped as a result of the Soweto riots of June 16, 1976 (Davies 1990:351). Many education groups such as the African Teachers Association of South Africa (ATASA) and the Transvaal United African Teachers Association (TUATA) approved of certain provisions of this Act but all black consciousness movement groups rejected clauses such as the division of education along racial lines, retribalisation of education and the retention of a separate department of education for black learners (Davies 1990:352). On the other hand, the government pushed forward with the issue of compulsory education thereby shifting the responsibility for getting learners to school to the parents as a way of containing learner unrest (Davies 1990:357). In spite of this, the boycotts continued as both educators and learners felt that the Act did not go far enough in addressing issues affecting black education (Samuel 1990:25). In the 1980's the government attempted to revise the education system in the country. A commission under the chairmanship of Prof. De Lange was appointed to inform government on better ways of restructuring education in South Africa. The report brought about more changes in black education as resistance groups or black consciousness movements and learners vowed to work for the betterment of education.

The De Lange Report of 1981 aimed at providing new forms of educational control and provision as well as attempting to negotiate the racial component of state ideology in education (Chisholm 1990:386). The De Lange Report suggested that there should be one Department of Education. However, the government set up its own parliamentary committee which rejected this recommendation (HRSC Report 0-1, 1981:138).

Government response to the De Lange Report brought about the release of the White Paper in November 1983 in which many of the recommendations of the De Lange Commission were ignored. The White Paper recommended that education be administered as general affairs and own affairs in line with the interim constitution of 1983. Own affairs referred to matters affecting a national group, the retention of its identity, upholding and advancement of its way of life, culture, tradition and practices. Therefore education as an own affair meant that people of a particular national group ran their own affairs (Van Schalkwyk 1988:4). General affairs referred to matters reflecting all groups such as financial standards, salaries and conditions of employment of staff which were to be handled by the new Ministry of Education and were considered general affairs (Samuel 1990:26). Some critics, however, viewed this gradual shift as an attempt to offer a range of opportunities to some middle-class blacks while asserting more stringent control over the majority (Kallaway 1990:34).

The crisis in education for blacks intensified in the mid 1980's. Protest against apartheid education resulted in the imposition of the state of emergency in 36 magisterial districts on July 21, 1985 (Samuel 1990:27). Waves of boycotts, school take-overs and police harassment, detentions and killings and vandalism swept the country (Murphy 1992:370). Seven hundred persons involved in education saw the Soweto Parent Crisis Committee convening a meeting on education with all stakeholders and the government in December 1985 (Hartshorne 1990:174). Among other solutions it was agreed that learners would go back to school at the beginning of the 1986 academic year. However, the agreement was not without conditions. For example, examination dates were to be shifted, the state of emergency lifted in all areas, all educators and learners released from jail, withdrawal of the army from all townships and the establishment of the democratically elected Students Representative Council (SRC's) (Samuel 1990:28). The Soweto Parents Crisis Committee agreed to hold talks with the government although highly sceptical of the authenticity of such meetings. By the end of 1988 almost all

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leaders of the Soweto Parent Crisis Committee had been detained (Hartshorne 1990:170). Unrest in schools continued throughout the eighties and into the early years of the nineties.

3.2.4   The period after 1994

Following the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994, all former nominally independent regions (including Bophuthatswana) were re-incorporated in the country. The country was divided into nine provinces each with its own provincial education department headed by the Minister of the Executive Council (MEC) and different heads of departments (see Figure 2). MEC's report under the Minister of National Education. This means that each province runs educational matters under its jurisdiction save for matters that require national consideration such as the remuneration of educators and others (D.E. 1995:1).

PROVINCES OF SOUTH AFRICA
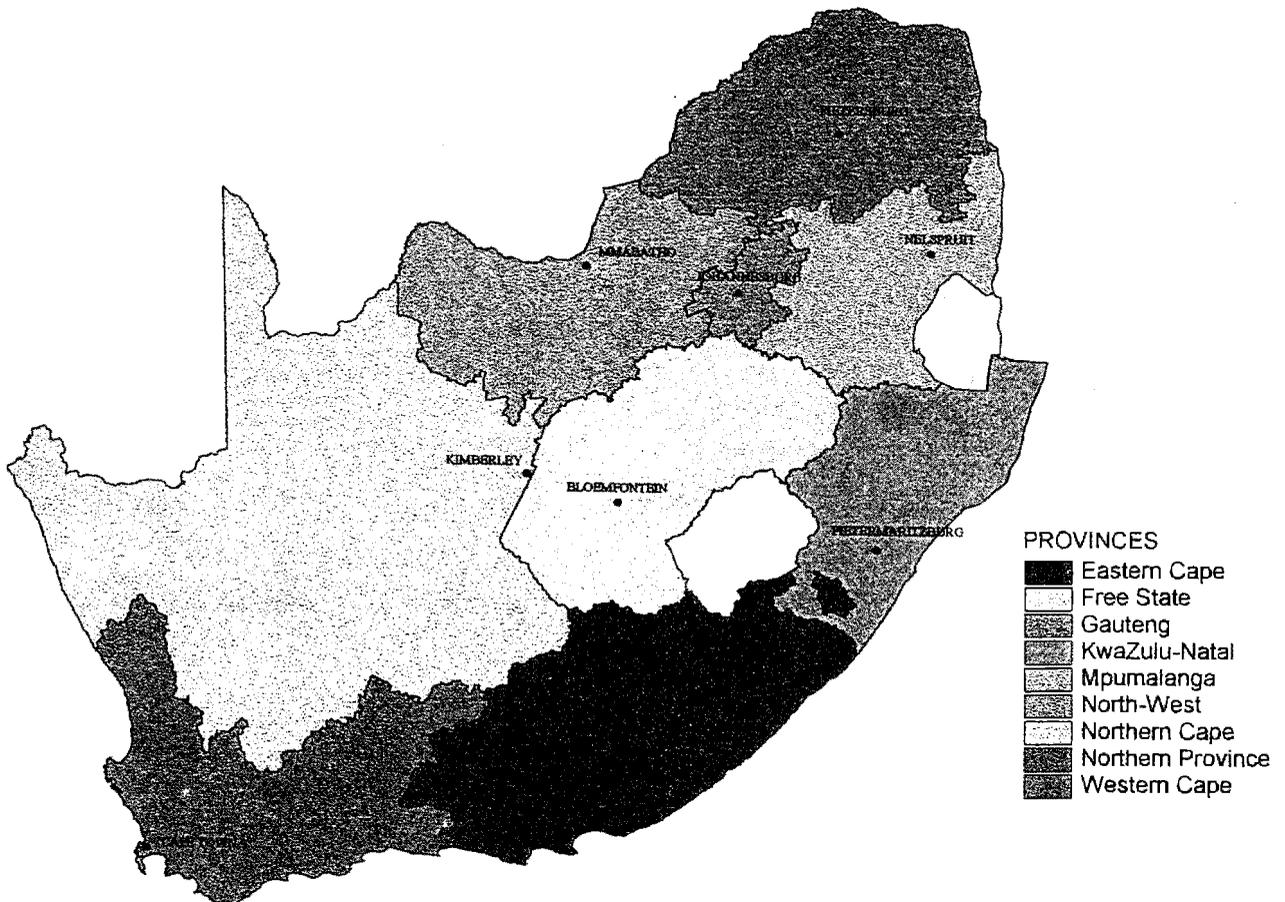
Figure 3.2:   Provinces of South Africa (South African Yearbook 1998:1).

Many acts and policies which guide the current provision of education in South Africa were passed in parliament after 1994, although those relating to parent involvement have been selected for purposes of this research. They are the White Paper on Education and Training of 1995 and the South African Council of Educators Act, Act 31 of 2000 and the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (SASA).

- *The White Paper on Education and Training (1995)/The Education Policy Act No. 26 of 1996*

Released in March 1995, the White Paper On Education and Training describes education as a basic human right and acknowledges the inalienable right of parents to choose the form of education which is best for learners. The Act also promises access to education and training of a good quality for all South Africans and redress of past imbalances (D.E. 1995:21). The principles of the White Paper on Education and Training of 1995 were taken up in the *Education Policy Act No. 26 of 1996*. This Act emphasises the constitutional right of people to education and the fact that no learner may be denied the right to education on the grounds of his/her parents' inability to pay school fees (D.E. 1996:21).

- *The South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (SASA)*

The South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 came into effect in 1997. Its objective is to provide for uniformity in organisation, governance and funding of schools (D.E. 1997:103, HSRC 1995:51-58). It further makes provision for compulsory education for all learners up to age 15 and proclaims the responsibility of parents for learners' school attendance. The Act also makes provision for public and independent schools (the only two categories permitted in the new education dispensation). The South African Schools Act (SASA) upholds the rights of learners, parents and educators and promotes their acceptance of responsibility for governance, and the funding of schools in partnership with the state.

The achievement of democracy in South Africa in 1994 has brought to an end a system of education which was based on racial inequality and segregation. The establishment of a new national education system for schools as provided for in the National Education Policy Act no. 27 of 1996 has seen democratic principles in education instituted.

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3.3   THE HISTORY OF BOPHUTHATSWANA AND ITS EDUCATION SYSTEM

3.3.1   The origin and history of Bophuthatswana

Retribalisation and the emergence of self-governing territories such as Bophuthatswana was a product of the political fragmentation imposed by the apartheid administration of South Africa in its policy of 'divide and rule' (Sehoole 1990:1). This was so due to the promotion of the principles of the then Bantu Self-government Act No 46 of 1959 which led to the emergence of self-governing territories and definition of eight Black National Units (BNU's) officially called 'homelands'. Among them were the Tswanas in Tswanaland whose area was named Bophuthatswana in 1977. Bophuthatswana means "where Batswana are gathered". The name suggests the ethnic nature of its occupants (Sehoole 1990:10&38). The eight black national units also made provision for Northern Sotho (Lebowa) South Sotho (Qwaqwa) Zulu (KwaZulu) Xhosa (Transkei) Tsonga (Gazankulu) and Venda (Vendaland) (Sehoole 1990:10). For the area set aside for Batswana see Figure 3.1.

BOPHUTHATSWANA, 1978
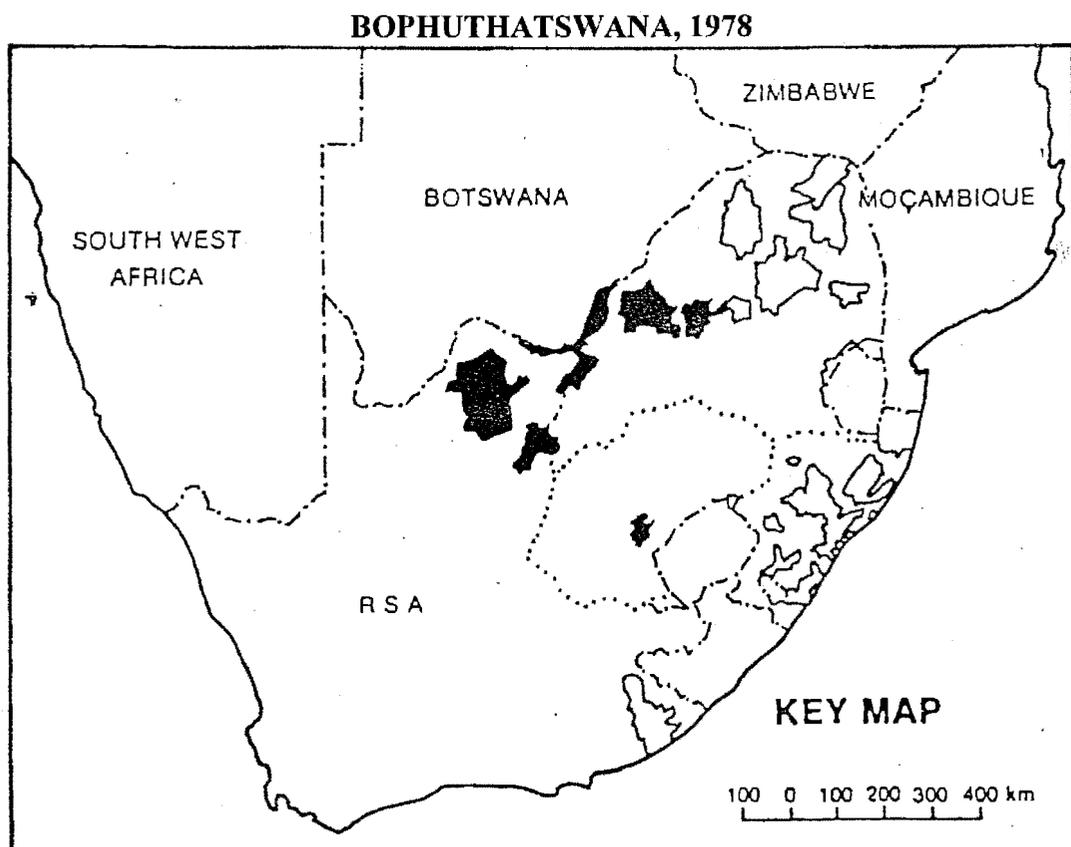
Figure 3.1:   Bophuthatswana, 1978 (Lekhela Commission Report).

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Before independence, Bophuthatswana was known to be inhabited by different cultural groups, mainly Sotho speakers and the Ngunis who undoubtedly relocated from neighbouring regions during apartheid's forced removals of the 1950's and 60's. Some like the Amandebele-a-Lebelo tribe have lived there since 1944 under the chieftainship of Chief Johannes Karel Kekana (Van Warmelo 1944:13). Although the history of this tribe was recorded during the 1940's, allegations that they may have lived there even earlier cannot be disputed. But since Bophuthatswana's independence in 1977 the Amendebele-a-Lebelo tribe has become victim of many losses. From the deposition of one chief after the next to closure of their own schools by the Bophuthatswana Government Authorities. This is discussed fully in paragraph 3.3.2.

From its inception, Bophuthatswana promoted an ideology based on alleged Tswana national identity with the hope of creating a basis for political stability and legitimacy for the Bantustan and used schools and related social institutions in the process to dominate other black people according to their race and ethnicity (Sehoole 1990:1).

Many people were not in favour of separating South Africa into Bantustans. Among those who resisted the independence of Bophuthatswana was chief H. Maseloane of the National Seopasengwe Party (NSP) (the official opposition party in Bophuthatswana). In his reaction to the processes and procedures leading to the independence of the territory, chief Maseloane said:

> *It is criminal to fragment South Africa into many governments. We want a single united South Africa where people of different groups and languages will come under one banner and join hands in preparing the destiny of their children. We need South Africa which we shall call ONE FATHERLAND* (Mahabane 1978:15).

Bophuthatswana's state sovereignty was an important one, since in Setswana, the concept of 'Kgotla'/royal kraal/ruling body, is not equivalent to the concept 'state'. Thus the modern state in Bophuthatswana had incorporated chiefs, headmen and other traditional social forces

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to assume a political role suitable for modern politicians. Therefore traditional leaders constituted two thirds of the members of parliament (Sehoole 1990:28).

Historians explain the process of state formation in Europe as a result of internal economic and social developments, after a certain group of people began to appropriate the surplus from direct producers using the political and military resources available. A state emerged as the appropriators of surpluses become the ruling class. In Bophuthatswana, the process of state formation was different, as a result of a systematic political decentralisation of South Africa's social formation which was becoming increasingly integrated (Sehoole 1990:28).

Bophuthatswana's self-governing status lacked two essential elements: democracy and sovereignty. Mandela & First (1965:71) argue that a democratic state allows for the free choice of leaders and representatives of the people, whose mandate must be renewed at periodic democratic elections and the leadership must be representative of the people. But the history of elections in Bophuthatswana was marred by reports of fraud and manipulation by the government during elections (Sehoole 1990:28).

The mid 70's saw the formation of the opposition party in Bophuthatswana (National Seoposengwe Party - NSP) under the leadership of Chief Pilane after the election of the first cabinet of the Bophuthatswana Legislative Assembly (BLA). The elections did not go unquestioned, as Chief Pilane accused the ruling party of late notices for nominations in outlying districts like Mankwe, (the stronghold of the National Seopasengwe Party (NSP), the holding of nominations before they have been authorised by legislation and the sudden holding of elections without prior notice (Sehoole 1990:29). Obviously the people went to the polls not knowing what to do. In his motion of no confidence, Chief Pilane accused the ruling party of not educating the Batswana which he considered to be important as the Batswana had no experience of voting (Sehoole 1990:26). Repeated allegations of fraud, non-representativity and malpractice in the second elections of 1987 reportedly led to the aborted coup in February 1988.

On first March 1988, the Bophuthatswana government offered a reward of R50 000 for information leading to the arrest of Malebana Metsing the commander in the Bophuthatswana National Defence Force (BNDF) and alleged leader of the coup. Calls for the death penalty were then made for any person found guilty of high treason. As a result many people were silenced. Among others was the chief of the Barolong tribe, Chief Molotlegi Lobone who allegedly supported the coup attempt. Stricter measures were put in place. Amendments to the constitution included 90-day detentions without trial for acts of high treason, which silenced all opposition party attempts to rectify government laws which did not represent the will of the people thus enforcing a culture of silence. This obviously made Bophuthatswana a 'one party state' (Sehoole 1990:43).

Mandela and First (1965:73) further argue that sovereignty implies that the government in place must be free to legislate and act as it deems fit on behalf of the people, not subject to any limitations upon its powers by any alien authority. Neither of these two essentials was present in the Bophuthatswana government. In terms of the provisions of the Bantu Homeland Constitution (Act no. 26 of 1970), Bantustan legislative authorities were not allowed to pass laws which were incompatible with statutes of the South African parliament.

Critics saw the general formal legislative and constitutional structure of Bantustanisation as lacking common sense especially among the Batswana who still saw themselves as South Africans who lived in a country that may be termed 'an extension of the apartheid system'. (Sehoole 1990:29).

Studies have shown that Bophuthatswana struggled for economic, political, cultural identity and legitimacy as historically both the international and local communities did not recognise Bantustans. In order to legitimise their independence the Bophuthatswana authorities decided to change their course of action. Chief Lucas Mangope, leader of the ruling Bophuthatswana Democratic Party (BDP) (for seventeen years in succession prior to 1994), was reported as having said that his 'country' had opted for independence because 'we wanted to win a place in the sun for our people, but that means not only for the Tswanas, but for all the black people of South Africa' (Mangope 1978:48). The Bophuthatswana government authorities tried to

justify their option further by claiming to 'eradicate racial discrimination'. However, the world was aware that the Bophuthatswana state was a product of apartheid. In his reaction to this accusation, Chief Lucas Mangope argued that the statement was only true in the restricted sense that Bophuthatswana was born out of a reaction to apartheid and that it was committed to overcome totally and forever the inequity of apartheid (Mangope 1978:48). Sehoole (1990:30), however, questions the practicality of embracing the principles of non-racialism outside the borders of South Africa as this would upset the 'social order' that the National Party government envisaged.

The political struggles and unrests of the 1980's in Bophuthatswana indicated that the peoples of that territory were not happy with the oppressive laws of the country and they threatened to end the rule of President Mangope of the Bophuthatswana Democratic Party (BDP). For example some angry police had joined the resistance march in GaRankuwa (Odi) and were reported to have burnt their uniforms in protest against security forces firing on peaceful protestors (Sehoole 1990:62). In the Moretele Region residents had decided on a consumer boycott which lasted for the whole month from 14 March to 14 April 1988 to retaliate against the imposition of the state of emergency, the withdrawal of the South African Defence Force (SADF) from townships and villages, the re-incorporation of Bophuthatswana into South Africa, the release of detainees and political prisoners and the right to freedom of expression (Sehoole 1990:63). Dissatisfaction was also recorded in other government departments and the business sectors as both public and civil workers demanded worker formations (unions) that would represent their needs in different workplaces but were strongly prohibited by government. Many civilians were detained. Chiefs and headmen in the territory were caught in the crossfire between the government (to whom they had subscribed) and the community, who, by virtue of their subordination, were expected to be loyal to their chiefs and in turn to the Bophuthatswana government. But the politics of the territory took a different direction. In Marapyane, the people called on their chieftains to resign as members of parliament of Bophuthatswana. At Nokaneng businesses belonging to headmen and government officials were burnt as well as the Circuit Office for education in that area while four civic leaders of the Temba Civic Association amongst them the late Mr. Tladi (the then Manager of Pep Stores - Temba) were detained under the state of emergency rule for allegedly inciting the people and

learners in schools (Sehoole 1990:63). Many people were detained as others fled to seek refuge in the nearby South Africa (Sehoole 1990:63).

The unrest which swept Bophuthatswana in the 1980's was part of the wider political mobilisation in South Africa which aimed at undermining the apartheid system and the Bantustans and was a strategy to call on all Bantustan leaders to resign from the wider apartheid system (Sehoole 1990:65).

3.3.2   The education system of Bophuthatswana

3.3.2.1   *The Lekgela Commission*

Prior to the independence of Bophuthatswana in 1977, education provision for the people in the area was in line with that provided in the Republic of South Africa. However, after independence the leaders in Bophuthatswana attempted to put a unique slant to education provision in the region. In the case of Bophuthatswana this meant *Education for Popagano.*

Education for Popagano was a product of the Lekgela Commission of 1978, a commission that was led by Professor Lekgela in conjunction with the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) to develop a model of education that was suitable for Bophuthatswana's independence.

3.3.2.2   *Education for Popagano*

The term '*Popagano*'/moulding/formation comprises education, teaching and habit formation within the impact of environmental influences on the maturing child in a life-world in which he/she shares and takes voluntary possession of (Van Rensburg & Landman 1988:404). In their application of the term '*Popagano*/moulding the government of Bophuthatswana, through their education system, idolised and directed the spirit of *Popagano* as the highest aspiration of the Batswana people (Sehoole 1990:45). Therefore the concept *Popagano*/moulding emphasised moulding the physical, moral and spiritual well-being of an individual from birth to adulthood. It aimed at changing the mindset of the people to view themselves as being

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different from the rest of the people of South Africa and elsewhere in the world (Sehoole 1990:46). Sehoole (1990) further calls it education that was based on nationhood ideology and a breakaway from Bantu education to a new system.

Education for Popagano as it existed for Bophuthatswana was developed in such a way that it had to mould the immature learner towards self-reliance within the community in which he/she lived. Educational goals thereof were envisaged as group co-operation in activities that benefited both the individual and their communities and the nation as a whole, hence the concept nationhood ideology (Sehoole 1990:49). However, *Education for Popagano* disregarded the multi-cultural nature of the territory by advocating Tswana traditions and Tswana ways of life. In a way it created a platform which Tswana people used to look down upon other cultures. It was alleged that non-Tswana learners whose parents did not possess Bophuthatswana government identity documents were denied bursaries and entry into institutions of higher learning within the territory. The type of music in school also expressed the Tswana traditions and cultural competitions were held at '*Garona*' meaning 'our place, the Tswana place' (a complex, housing all Bophuthatswana government departments) (Sehoole 1990:38). *Education for Pogagano* therefore was used as a tool to inculcate the Tswana national identity among the peoples of Bophuthatswana. In addition to nationhood building, however, there was emphasis on preparing learners for the world of work.

Education for Popagano did not take place unproblematically as some communities did not wish to bow to the pressure of using Setswana instead of their own languages even though the issue of Setswana as medium of instruction in schools came close to the heart of the Bophuthatswana authorities.

An illustration which follows is an assessment and analysis of the internal workings of the community of the Amandebele-a-Lebelo in terms of materialising the Bophuthatswana government's intentions to foster the idea of a Tswana nationhood identity, as recorded in the tribe's books by Chieftain Kekana. In an interview (28/11/2000), Chieftain Kekana spoke in no uncertain terms of the seven schools (five primary and two secondary schools) which were closed in the mid 70's for allegedly 'disrespecting' a ruling that all schools use Setswana as

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medium of instruction under the Bophuthatswana Department of Education. As pressure mounted, some educators and principals in these schools gave in to the demand, much against the wishes of the community. She continued to say that "the community made numerous claims to legitimise their standpoint". Among others they claimed ownership of schools as these had been built through tribes funds and on tribal land. This, they argued, gave them the right to use the language of their forefathers in educating learners. The Bophuthatswana government retaliated by withdrawing the salaries of educators who did not abide by the ruling that Setswana be used in all schools. Chaos erupted in these schools among educators and parents and educators and the community as all parties wanted to protect what was rightfully theirs.

The Chieftain went on to say that the withdrawal of salaries resulted in most educators opting to be seconded to other schools within Bophuthatswana thus creating a loophole for the government to impose, stricter measures such as bringing in new educators and principals to replace the former ones. The replaced educators were left without pay as the 'tug-of-war' continued between the community and the government authorities. Among documents that the chieftains was ready to share is an extract from the minutes of a meeting held at their tribal office on the 26 September, 1976 in which the tribe unanimously agreed that their schools should continue to teach in Sepedi and not in Setswana, as prescribed by the Bophuthatswana government.

Bophuthatswana gained independence in 1977. Before then preparations were long in process for the big event, hence some events were documented long before 1972. Preparations involved among others, changing the mindset of the people to accept the Tswana national identity and changing the old education system to *Education for Popagano*. Changes in education affected the view that some communities had of themselves and their schools particularly when parents in those schools felt they could not defend the language policy of their schools.

See Appendix A for more information on how the Amendebele-A-Lebelo represented their case on the language issue to the Bophuthatswana Government.

The Chieftainess went on to say that the issue of language medium did not end with the closure of their schools but contributed to her being deposed for being 'stubborn'. Thus Bophuthatswana's decision to enforce the Tswana practices and virtues upon other people is seen as a duplication of apartheid's principle of separate development (Pillay 1990:30).

Different ways and means were developed to nurture the Tswana national identity and to inculcate the national consciousness through *Education for Popagano*. For example, the revised school structure introduced three levels of education, primary schools (Grade 1-6) middle schools (Grade 7-9) and high schools (Grade 10-12). The first external examination was written at the end of Grade 9 under the Bophuthatswana Education Department (BED) (Sehoole 1990:49).

Education for Popagano provided schools with two options: either to write the Joint Matriculation Board (JMB) examinations or that of the Department of National Education (DNE). The decision implied that the Bophuthatswana Education Department held examinations and prescribed syllabuses from Grade 1-9 while at the same time they had to follow syllabuses of the Department of Education and Training (DET) in order to prepare for the Grade 12 examinations (Sehoole 1990:49). Sehoole (1990) further notes the ambiguities that this type of education presented for the people of the region. Among others, schools in the territory where not allowed participate in cultural activities with schools in South Africa, educators were forced to join the Bophuthatswana Teachers Association (BTA) (an association virtually controlled by the government) and learners and students had to join the Bophuthatswana National Youth Association (BOTHANYA) through the prefect system of their respective schools. These and others were measures used to 'forster' a Tswana national identity through an education system that evolved to express its syllabuses and curricular in a way that would identify the Tswana learner as being completely different from his/her counterpart in South Africa and the world. The search for a Tswana identity was also enforced in tertiary institutions. Students and lecturers at the University of Bophuthatswana (UNIBO) (now the University of the North West) were prohibited from becoming part of any broader non-racial sports culture which was built in some South African universities (Sehoole 1990:51). Thus *Popagano* as it existed for Bophuthatswana was meant to isolate the learners from the

rest of the world. Moreover, it was a means to inculcate an ethnic, political and subservient consciousness among the Batswana (Sehoole 1990:51).

3.4   PROVISION OF EDUCATION IN THE NORTH WEST PROVINCE (FORMER BOPHUTHATSWANA)

3.4.1   General powers and responsibilities of the North West Province's Department of Education

Following the 1994 elections, all former department of education were consolidated into one national department of education (D.E.) assisted by nine provincial departments of education at regional level.   The former Bophuthatswana and its department of education were transferred to the North West Provincial Education Department (NWPED).   Like all other provinces, the North West Province has been granted autonomous power in some matters relating to education, although the implementation thereof should be in line with the requirements of the constitutional laws of the country.

Education laws regarding school governance, financing and pupil enrolment are in line with the requirements of the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996, a document that governs the running of schools at national level.   The Act provides for the formation of school governing bodies (SGB's) with full voting powers.

The provision of education in the North West Province has a history of back-logs inherited from the previous apartheid system which had divided the country into Bantustans. There was virtually no proper division of resources and regional education thus suffered. Therefore it has become the responsibility of the education department in this region to redress past imbalances.

3.4.2   Educational needs in the North West Province - The School Register of Needs of 1997

Many schools in townships, rural communities and on farms still lack adequate resources and facilities when compared with those schools which catered for Whites, Indians and Coloureds.

This state of affairs created a need to conduct a survey to highlight the state of poverty that prevails in schools and to find solutions as to how the backlog can be addressed (D.E. 1995:15). The product of this survey was a School Register of Needs compiled by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and the Education Foundation in 1997 (Bot 1996:13). The objective of this report was to enable the government to provide education of a progressively high quality for all learners on an equitable basis, and to combat racism and sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance in education (RSA 1996:1). Therefore a geo-referenced database of all primary and secondary schools in South Africa was compiled (Bot 1996:13).

The School Register of Needs survey of 1977 revealed through a provincial comparison of school facilities that schools in the North West Province lack the necessary facilities and resources for effective education in the province. Among others the report says that only 13% of schools have telephones, only 19% have laboratories even though many of the schools include science and biology in their subject streams. At the time of the survey 8% of schools needed major repairs, only 17% had library facilities while 7% had no water on site and only 14% had electricity supply (Bot 1997:1-4). The North West Province now has to find funds to address these problems particularly among rural communities.

3.5   PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

3.5.1   Parent involvement in South Africa prior to 1994

Apartheid education led to each racial group in South Africa having virtually a separate education system. In addition, the homeland policies of the government led to the formation of six self-governing territories and four nominally independent homelands (Claassen 1995:454), each with their own education departments. This fragmentation also impacted on the extent and type of parent involvement.

In the pre-democratic era, allowance was made for two types of formal parental involvement: a statutory body (usually called a management council or school committee) and a non-

statutory body (usually called a parent-teacher association or a parent-teacher-student association). The statutory parent body had certain powers given to it by law and functioned in most traditionally white schools, but was not well established in black schools (Van Schalkwyk 1988:88). Moreover, Mkwanazi (1993:53) argues that the school committees in black schools were seen by apartheid government as providing a means of forcing black communities to subsidise the kind of cheap mass education which the state was aiming at.

However, there were more differences between formal parent involvement in white and black schools. In the case of schools providing for black learners only four of the six school committee members could be elected by parents. The rest were state appointed (Hyslop 1989:205). In addition school committees of black schools had limited powers. The main power was vested in **school boards**. These boards served on **district level** and represented a number of school committees. In the case of black communities the Department of Native Affairs appointed all the members of the school boards (Hyslop 1989:205). The school boards had considerable power over local schools and educators. From 1955 all African educators' salaries were paid as subsidies to the school boards, which meant that the boards effectively controlled hiring and firing of educators. In 1976, parents in Soweto began to establish their own representative committees, precisely because they felt that the school committees and school boards were not representing them properly (Mkwanazi 1993:55).

3.5.2 Parent involvement in South Africa after 1994

Following the 1994 democratic elections, a non-racial education system based on the principle of equity was instituted. To accommodate this, a national Department of Education and nine provincial departments of education were established. In addition, the rights of parents to be involved in school governance was acknowledged in the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa (RSA) 1996:14). In accordance with this Act the professional management of public schools is to be undertaken by the principal, while governance is to be vested in its governing body.

According to the South African Schools Act (1996:14) the membership of governing bodies should comprise elected members, the principal and co-opted members. In all cases the number of parents must be in the majority. Of equal importance, given the South African context, is the fact that 'parent' is broadly defined and includes a person who is the learner's guardian, or is legally entitled to custody of the learner, or who has undertaken to fulfil the obligations of a parent or guardian towards the learner's education (RSA 1996:14).

Subject to the South African Schools Act (RSA 1996:20) the governing body of a public school must, among others, fulfil the following functions

- develop the mission statement of the school;

- adopt a code of conduct for learners of the school after consultation with the learners, parents and educators of the school;

- determine the admission policy and language policy of the school, within the framework laid down in the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 and the South African Schools Act (1996), and any other applicable provincial law;

- after a fair hearing, suspend learners from attending the school as a correctional measure for a period not exceeding one week;

- recommend to the head of department the appointment of teaching (and other) staff at the school;

- supplement the resources supplied by the state in order to improve the quality of education provided to all learners of the school. In this regard parents may be asked to pay school fees. The amount must be agreed upon by the majority of parents, and such funds must be administered by the governing body. The governing body must also prepare a budget each year which shows the estimated income and expenditure of the school for the following year.

Although this list does not include the full range of responsibilities of governing bodies, it sufficiently illustrates the pivotal role of the school governing body and the indispensable link it forms between the school and the community it serves. However, in disadvantaged communities, many parents have had no prior experience of school governance and initially

need help. Capacity building programmes for governing bodies are therefore necessary, and the state has determined that these are to be provided out of funds appropriated for this purpose by provincial legislature. Thus, by virtue of the Act as well as the capacity building initiatives, the state hopes to build a framework for the governance of schools characterised by a sharing of power among parents, teacher and the community in a way that will support the core values of democracy (Van Wyk 1998:21). However, the implementation of these ideals remains a challenge pivotal to the government's quest to transform education in South Africa. For, as Pendlebury (1998:333) warns: "Neither policy nor practice is ever written on a clean slate." Another issue the government has to contend with is that policies are developed and implemented within the context of particular sets of values, pressures and constraints. Because of these factors, much can go wrong between conceptualisation of a policy, its formulation and implementation.

3.5.3 Parent involvement in the North West Province (former Bophuthatswana)

The current positioning of parent involvement in the North West Province can better be understood in the light of the previous historical homeland policy of South Africa, where Bophuthatswana had to develop its own ideological system of education - *Education for Popagano* (refer to paragraph 3.3.2). The proponents of *Education for Popagano* had seemingly assumed a stance that indicated their full awareness of the necessity to involve parents in the education of learners. However, in practice, no attention was given to this important component of education. Thus, parent involvement in communities in Bophuthatswana was lacking. This was made clear by the following excerpts from speeches of different educators and academics who had unsuccessfully to put the phenomenon of parent involvement on the educational agenda:

(1)   The growth and development of education in our country is linked to the tremendous desire of parents to educate their offspring (Holele 1978:2).

(2)   Parent involvement and commitment in the education of children has not only become a current household phrase but shall remain the mission statement of all educational institutions throughout the globe (Nkone & Makete 1992:11).

(3)   Parents should take part in the formal education of their children, should help in
        projects and attend school functions (Monnakgotla 1992:14).

Since 1994 the situation has changed in schools in the former Bophuthatswana or the North
West Province in matters of parent representation, school management and school governance.
Parents are represented in the form of school governing bodies (SGB's) with full statutory
powers (D.E. 1995:54, RSA 1996:18-20). But due to the legacy of a lack of resources and
facilities, the lack of parent involvement in most rural and township schools in the past and the
general neglect of schools by the state, the need for training of members of governing bodies
is crucial (Vally 1998:11). The North West Province still lags behind other provinces such as
Gauteng in the actual training of governing bodies (Vally 1998:12).

3.6   SITUATIONAL ASPECTS CURRENTLY AFFECTING EDUCATION AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE NORTH WEST PROVINCE

Rural life is beset with certain experiential conditions such as lack of housing and housing
schemes, poverty, unreported crime and disintegrated family structures. The New Unity
Movement in its report of January 1991, identified these as problems that should be addressed
in the post-election era in South Africa, in order to achieve solutions to the education crisis in
the country. On the surface, problems that led to the imposition of additional constraints on
rural education especially among African rural families will be described.

3.6.1   The migratory labour system

Life in rural communities of the North West Province was affected by the migratory labour
system of the 1960's. Heads of families, usually husbands and young men were forced to seek
employment away from their home on a long-term contract basis. This resulted in the decline
of the family structure and the beginning of many other problems (Ndzimande 1996:52). The
employment of the individual worker gave him freedom and chances of survival away from
home while his family lacked the support both financially and otherwise to alleviate poverty and
other problems in the home. The migrant worker would send very little money from his

earnings back home and very often it was not enough to cater even for the education and basic needs of his family. Thus learners could not be sent to school. Often learners as young as fifteen would also migrate to look for work as the deprivation cycle continued (Nzimande 1996:53). The need and desire to maintain ties with the family structure and its objectives lessened.

3.6.2   The changing family structure

Black families once depended on the extended family structure of uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces and grandparents for survival. Relatives and families existed side by side, linking a wider circle of people who were related by blood or marriage in a network of relatives. People of the same kraal/clan normally identified and cared for one another, so much so that people would assist one another even on matters relating to the education of learners (Ndzimande 1996:45). But now the extended family structure has lost the cohesive force that was once essential for survival as a unit due to the changing conditions of life. Family units have grown smaller to that of a nuclear family such as found in Western cultures. People have to seek employment and earn a salary, usually enough to support one's nuclear family so that each family has to fend for survival separate from the extended family pattern. (Ndzimande 1996:47). Thus the changing family structure has affected life in general among black families especially among poor rural communities. Ndzimande (1996:51) contends that the migratory labour system and the disintegrated family structures negatively impact on the social system.

3.6.3   Implications of situational factors on education

Rural life is impoverished due to lack of cultural resources, the marginal economy and the low level of education of most residents (Broomhall & Johnson 1992:201; Braamlett 1993:19). The effect on education is generally negative. Education and educational needs of learners among rural communities are neglected as learners are left behind with their elderly relatives when parents go away to big cities to seek employment. Obviously problems arise as invitations to parent meetings are either ignored or child-minders lack transport and money to reach the school.

Rural communities in the North West Province are still struggling to establish their governance structures for schools. Would-be candidates are discouraged by situational factors that prevail among communities such as the lack of knowledge of what is expected, the absence of skill in performing their duties and the lack of training of members as many communities are employing such services for the first time (Vally 1998:11).

Poverty, race and cultural differences encountered in rural communities may set educators apart from parents and other community members (Howley & Howley 1995:30) thus leaving rural educators with the dual function of establishing governance structures on the one hand and dealing with the poverty in communities in which they work on the other, without making less of any of the two aims (Howley et al 1995:130). Rural life therefore marginalises and alienates communities (De Young & Lawrence 1995:105).

3.7   SUMMARY

A unitary system of education has been operative in South Africa since April 1994. Each of the nine provinces runs its own education department, headed by the MEC and head of departments for that province. Parent representation in schools is through governing bodies with legitimate powers of management and governance. However, limiting parent involvement to those serving on governing bodies will not achieve the benefits associated with a comprehensive parent involvement program. Problems that make education and parent involvement in rural communities with special emphasis to the North West Province difficult, have been described. Factors include the rural nature of communities, poverty and the high illiteracy rate of the communities. Many schools have been found to be lacking in the necessary facilities and resources to facilitate education. In the North West Province alone, a school survey has revealed that many schools lack laboratories, toilets, telephones, electricity and water facilities. The matric results are also poor. This is attributable to the fact that the province lacks the bare necessities to improve education of learners. Lack of parent involvement in schools also contributes to the high failure rate and poor administration in schools.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapters 1, 2 and 3 in this research form the theoretical basis of the investigation into barriers to parent involvement. Particular attention is given to rural communities of the North West Province as well as the context in which parent involvement can take place. Chapter 2 addresses issues relating to how different communities perceive the role of the parent and of the educator as co-partners in the education of learners and how school policies can help to encourage parent involvement in schools. Chapter 3 provides the historical context of the phenomenon of parent involvement in rural communities of the North West Province (former Bophuthatswana), the political complexities that affected the normal running of schools in certain communities and the lack of engagement of parents in the education of learners. Special reference in this chapter is made to a case in point between the Amendebele-A-Lebelo tribe of Majaneng in the North West Province (former Bophuthatswana) in the late 1970's. In this chapter a rationale for the choice of methodology and the methods of data gathering are provided. The main steps in the gathering of data for the current research, as well as the analysis thereof is described (cf. 4.5).

4.2 DEFINING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In accordance with Taylor & Bogdan (1984:5) the term qualitative methodology refers in the broadest sense to research that produces descriptive data, people's own written or spoken words and observable behaviour. This means that researchers who study people qualitatively get to know them personally and experience what these people feel in their daily struggles in society (Taylor & Bogdan 1984:5-6).

Strauss and Corbin (1990:17) describe qualitative research as any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of

quantification. Thus qualitative research can refer to research about person's life stories, behaviour, organisational functioning, social movements or interactional relationships. In this way qualitative research methods can play an important role in education by assisting us in raising new questions, by leading us to assumptions, by cultivating an appreciation for complexity and finally by expanding our frames of reference (Sherman & Webb 1988:45).

A qualitative research approach is therefore considered appropriate in this research. Mouton and Marais (1990:155-160) shed more light on the subject of qualitative research methodology in educational research. They describe qualitative approaches as those approaches in which the procedures are not strictly formalised.

Through qualitative approaches in social sciences, researchers are committed to understanding social phenomena from the actor's own perspective by examining how the world is experienced (Taylor & Bogdan 1984:2; Smith 1987:174). Understanding of social reality in research by phenomenologists is based on what Weber (1963:25) calls *verstehen*, the understanding on a personal level of the motives and beliefs behind people's actions. The concept *verstehen* is therefore a process of living through and recreating the experiences of others within oneself (Smith 1987:7). This means that the researcher attempts to gain entry into the conceptual world of subjects in order to understand how and what meaning they construct around events in their daily lives (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:31-32).

Qualitative methods of research seek understanding of social reality through strategies such as informant observation and interviews which yield descriptive data (Epstein 1988a:189; Patton 1990:10). It is clear that data collection obtains significance only when placed in a particular context or meaning system (Hughes 1976:4, Smith 1987:174). The qualitative research paradigm in its broadest sense refers to research that elicits informants' accounts of meaning, experience or perceptions, produces descriptive data in the informants' own written or spoken words, involves identifying the informants' beliefs and values that underlie the phenomena (De Vos 1998:243).

Different researchers have different perspectives on what qualitative research entails. De Vos (1998:240) has acknowledged that it is difficult to describe qualitative research in a way that will satisfy everybody. Thus some researchers have defined it as a multi-perspective approach (utilising different qualitative techniques and data collection methods) to social interaction aimed at describing, making sense of, interpreting or reconstructing this interaction in terms of the meanings that the subjects attach to it (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:2). Therefore the term qualitative research can mean different things to different people (Strauss & Corbin 1990:18).

Some researchers have labelled qualitative research as field research/field work, naturalism, ethnography, interpretive research and constructivistic research (De Vos 1998:240). Others such as Lofland & Lofland (1984:3) have elaborated on the term naturalism/naturalistic research. It implies the minimising of the presuppositions with which the researcher approaches the phenomenon under study as well as a close and searching description of the mundane details of everyday life. The term ethnography encompasses qualitative research of a predominantly descriptive nature (De Vos 1998:240). Its near relative term, *interpretative*, refers to the fact that the aim of qualitative research is not to explain human behaviour in terms of universally valid laws or generalisations, but rather to understand and interpret the meanings and intentions that underlie everyday human action (Mouton 1998:2). *Constructivism* is nearly the same in meaning to *interpretism*. It relates to the theory of meaning (hermeneutics) but does not believe that reality can be understood by interpreting the meanings that people in a specific setting attach to it (De Vos 1998:240). Clearly, from the above explanation there is not doubt that various terms apply to qualitative research. Burgess (1984:4) notes this distinction succinctly by saying:

> *The terminology that is therefore used to discuss our mode of research is very broad. Some of these terms have much in common and cover a broadly similar approach while others lead towards 'restrictive usage and a particular emphasis.*

Having considered the different terms that refer to qualitative research, it should now be clear that they entail one common aspect; namely the interpretation of construction of the lived experience of subjects (De Vos 1998:241).

4.3   THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

In qualitative research the researcher becomes a primary research 'instrument' (Firestone & Dawson 1988:209). Thus the researcher can utilise his/her subjective understanding of reality as a source of data, as a means to generate a new hypothesis and as a way to help the reader develop a fuller appreciation of the phenomenon of interest (Eisner 1979:11-19). In other words, qualitative research calls for disciplined enquiry that is not biassed, and that does not pay attention only to certain aspects of the setting under studies. Miles et al (1981:590) summarises the dilemma by asking, "How can we be sure that an early, undeniable, serendipitous finding is not, in fact, wrong?" In accordance with Firestone & Dawson (1988:210) disciplined enquiry is guided by the researcher's intuition, procedures and inter-subjectivity. The term *intuition* in some way relates to the familiarity of the researcher to the actual field setting, notes and memories of interviews and of observations. Such knowledge is compared to prior experiences, theories and formulations of problems and can affect or improve validity and credibility of data (Firestone & Dawson 1988:210). For this reason the researcher has to be fully exposed to the phenomenon under investigation, gain access to interactions with clients or among administrators and not only rely on second or third hand reports but direct observations (Lofland & Lofland 1984:16-17). Procedures are essentially rule-bound but vary in the extent to which they allow judgement to intervene as they are being carried out and exist to help disciplined qualitative enquiry. Among them are data displayed in the form of charts that show reactions and motivations of key actors or characteristics of a series of similar events in a chronological order and casual network (path analysis with boxes of events and not variables as in quantitative research (Firestone & Dawson 1988:212-213; Miles et al 1981:15). The two techniques, data display and causal networks are appropriate procedures for this research as the phenomenon under investigation is about the attitudes of people towards parent involvement in schools. An inter-subjective approach relating to the interaction of researchers, setting and informants, regarding the research findings can enhance understanding and validity of findings (Firestone & Dawson 1988:215).

In qualitative research the researcher does not attempt to appear as an invisible anonymous voice of authority, but as a real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests (Harding 1987:9). The researcher becomes 'immersed' in the phenomenon of interest and is not 'detached' as in quantitative research (Firestone 1987:17).

In contrast to quantitative researchers, qualitative researchers go to a particular setting under study because they are concerned with historical context. They want to observe and understand their informants and the phenomenon under study in the context of the history of the institutions of which they are a part (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:30).

The qualitative researcher empathises and identifies with the people being studied in order to understand how they see things (Taylor & Bogdan 1984:6). Blumer (1970:86) explains it this way:

> *To try to catch the interpretive process by remaining aloof as a so called*
> *objective observer and refusing to take the role of the acting unit is to risk the*
> *worst kind of subjectivism.*

The qualitative researcher develops a relationship with informants, through observation and participation in the investigation (Burgess 1984:81). The researcher builds what Measor (1985:57) calls a 'relationship of reciprocal trust and rapport'. Therefore the researcher has the advantage of gaining the freedom to go wherever the action is in the area of studies and even negotiate and renegotiate with different informants throughout a research project.

4.4   DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES IN THIS RESEARCH

In this research, qualitative methods such as informant observation, individual interviews, focus group interviews and document collection strategies were used for data collection to study parent involvement within the context of a black rural community in the North West Province.

Strauss and Corbin (1990:20) view qualitative research as basically comprising three major components; data which comes from various sources, analytic or interpretive procedures that

are used to arrive at findings, theories and written and verbal reports that may be presented in scientific journals or at conferences aimed at specific audiences and the theory being presented. In other words qualitative researchers may observe and interview their respondents in order to get the information they require about the phenomenon under study, they may compile notes and memos and may through discussion with their informants get an overview of the findings of the concept under study.

4.4.1 Observation

Observation in this research was used to study the principal, educators, selected members of the school governing body (SGB) and any parents present in different settings within the school. The objective was to investigate and clarify school context. Since this research was conducted in primary schools, no learners were involved considering their level of maturity and age in responding to interview questions. This was necessary since schools and school contexts are regarded as cultural sites in which the school as an organisation, its mores, rituals and practices are influenced by the beliefs and perceptions of those who belong to it (Van Wyk 1996:186).

In other words the beliefs and practices associated with parent involvement constructed by educators and parents are influenced by the beliefs and norms embodied in a school's culture (Van Wyk 1996:148).

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:103) list advantages such as the following, which make observation a suitable strategy for data collection in this research;

- Observation studies are superior to experiments and surveys when data are being collected on non-verbal behaviour.
- In the observation study, the investigator is able to discern ongoing behaviour as it occurs and is able to make appropriate notes about its salient features.
- Because observation studies take place over an extended period of time, the researcher can develop a more intimate and informal relationship with those he or she is observing,

generally in more natural environments than those in which experiments and surveys are conducted.

• Observation studies are less reactive than other types of data gathering methods.

4.4.2 The interview

Interview strategies such as in-depth interviews and focus-group interviews were used to collect data in this research. This is done due to the belief that through interviews the qualitative researcher is able to build relationships with those she is interviewing through critical awareness about the respondent's replies in the interview. Hence getting access to their life and view of world is necessary (Burgess 1985:57). Qualitative researchers can only be successful in getting through to their respondents if they have built enough trust with them through aspects such as rapport and appropriate appearance, particularly in the manner of dress when in the field. Looking sloppy, scruffy and messy may only demean their professional ethos (Burgess 1985:58). Central to the process of interview is the interviewer's ability to listen critically to what the interviewees say in order to make them comfortable.

4.4.2.1 Semi-structured in-depth interviews

In this research semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from principals of the participating schools. The data was accessed by means of the narration of the informants' feelings, ideals, beliefs, thoughts and actions (Van Wyk 1996:149). The objective of the qualitative researcher is to extend understanding and insights within the context of a particular situation (Fraenkel & Wallen 1990:379). Semi-structured interviews are preferable when the researcher is not sure which are the essential and appropriate questions to ask, but when he/she is prepared to depend on the capacity to recognise significant data on appearance (Van Wyk 1996:197).

The aim in this research is to elicit data on how communities in rural schools of the North West Province (NWP) relate to the phenomenon of parent involvement. Therefore principals are regarded as key informants, individuals with status, and possess special knowledge that they

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can share with the interviewer (LeCompte & Preissle 1993:166). This does not mean that other structures are of lesser importance but that principals have an important role to play in defining school policy on parent involvement (Van Wyk 1996:150). The other reason is that principals can create barriers even if educators wish to work with parents (Van Wyk 1996:150).

The semi-structured in-depth interview is rarely conducted in isolation as it is often part of a broader programme of research and draws on the knowledge that the researcher has of a social situation (Burgess 1984:106). In this enquiry, the researcher's knowledge of barriers to parenting in rural communities and rural life facilitated discussions with informants.

In this research, an interview guide was used (cf. Appendix V-VII). However, this guide was not seen as a structured schedule or protocol, but rather as a list of general areas to be covered during the interview.

4.4.2.2   Semi-structured focus group interviews

Semi-structured focus group interviews with selected educators and parents in the participating three primary schools in Majaneng, Bosplaas and Marokolong respectively, were the primary data gathering technique. All three areas belong to the Temba Metropolitan Council where the researcher is a resident. They have been identified for study in this research due to their rural nature as compared to other areas around the township. Much has been described about the Majaneng area in Chapter 3 (3.3.2).

Semi-structured focus group interviews are recognised as helpful in answering questions of how and in particular, why people behave as they do (Foch-Lyon & Trost 1981:92). Focus group interviews use group interaction explicitly as research data and in this manner differ from any other category of group interviews (Kritzinger 1986:103). The following points as listed by Cohen et al (1980:259) distinguish semi-structured focus-group interviews from any other category of group interviews;

(1) The persons interviewed are known to have been involved in a particular situation or have been informants in a social situation.

(2) Elements in the situation which the researcher deems significant have previously been analysed by him. He has thus arrived at a set of hypothesis relating to the meaning and effects of the specified elements.

(3) Using his analysis as a basis, the investigator constructs an interview guide to identify the major areas of inquiry which determine the relevant data to be obtained in the interview.

(4) The actual interview is focussed on the subjective experiences of the persons who have been exposed to the situation. Their responses enable the researcher to test validity of his research question and to ascertain unanticipated responses to the situation, thus giving rise to further research questions.

From this it can be seen that the distinctive feature of the semi-structured focus group interview is the prior analysis by the researcher of the situation in which subjects have been involved.

Semi-structured focus-group-interviews are especially useful when working with categories of people who have limited power and influence in life in general, when conducted in a non-threatening and lenient manner (Morgan & Krueger 1993:15). Thus semi-structured focus group interviews are particularly suitable for the description and understanding of rural life where protocol inhibits access to certain social settings, i.e. where schools can only be reached through the 'Kgotla'/royal kraal or through the landlord. This is the case also in this research. The possibility that parents and educators in a rural setting would feel intimidated when they have to talk about the 'interference' of their leaders in the affairs of school has placed the choice of semi-structured focus-group interviews before any other category of group interviews. Morgan and Spanish (1984:260) maintain that focus-group discussions offer informants the opportunity to influence the discussion arena as they can decide what information to present and what not to present.

In this research the semi-structured focus-group interviews were guided by means of interview guide which included topics or themes that the interview should cover in the discussion

(Burgess 1984:111). In other words the guide acted as an aid to ensure that similar topics were covered in all interviews. Groups used in this study were smaller than the norm sometimes laid down for dynamic interaction (Foch-Lyon & Trost 1981:94). However the groups fell within the size range suggested by Morgan and Spanish (1984:253). Active dialogue and conversations were maintained at all times. All interviews were audio-taped with the permission of the informants. Audio-taping ensures accuracy, avoids the problem of selective hearing and note taking during the interview, minimises distortion and allows the researcher to take down respondent's answers verbatim (Gochros 1988:296). Furthermore audio-taping allows the researcher to participate fully in the conversation and to pose particular questions on topics that have not been covered nor need developing (Burgess 1984:111).

4.5   RESEARCH DESIGN OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study is qualitative by nature. Data were mainly collected through observation and interviewing of subjects in their natural environment. Qualitative researchers study entities and seek to understand them in a particular context (Smith 1987:174). Qualitative research emanates from the ethnographic tradition of research with an interpretive approach to social phenomena (Smith 1987:176). This means that there are no possibilities of the generalisability of results to a wider population but with describing and attempting to explain phenomena of the educators and parents' construction of beliefs and practices related to parent involvement in their specific schools (Van Wyk 1996:152). Moreover, qualitative researchers need to have a plan to show how they will proceed when in and out of the setting under study. This is what researchers in general call the 'research design' (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:58). Certain aspects such as gaining access, selecting and locating informants, reliability and validity of data, the agenda and the interview guide, how data is transcribed and analysed and others may enhance or hinder the process of research (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:59).

4.5.1   Gaining access and orientation

One of the important tasks for the researcher is the selection of an educational setting and negotiation of access to the informants (Measor 1985:55). In this research, permission to enter

the schools was obtained from the local education district office, principals and SGB's of the participating schools for ethical reasons such as building a relationship of trust with those in authority so as to gain freedom of the setting under study (Smith 1983:8-9). Such authorities are known as gate-keepers and very often have an important say and influence in a variety of ways and their support carries weight (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:81; Lofland & Lofland 1984:25). Gate-keepers are those individuals in an organisation who have the power to grant or withhold access to people or situations for the purposes of research. Thus researchers need to negotiate terms with gate-keepers who can grant permission to study different facets of the organisation (Burgess 1984:48-49). Choosing schools did not pose problems as the researcher in this study is a resident of the major area, Temba, where the three districts identified for studies are located. Once access was gained the researcher visited all three schools to discuss the proposed study and to negotiate terms of orientation to the purpose of the study, requirements and time schedule involved.

- **Choice of school districts and schools**

Three primary schools were identified; one each in Majaneng, Bosplaas and Marokolong. No true names were used in order to avoid recognition by the reading public once data was published. Thus schools were named schools A, B and C.

- **The decision to do research in Majaneng, Marokolong and Bosplaas**

Marokolong and Majaneng are rural districts under Chief Kekana of the Amandebele-a-Lebelo tribe in the North West Province. The inhabitants of these two districts speak mainly Northern Sotho and Tsonga. Schools in these districts were built through the tribe's funds.

Bosplaas is a rural trust farm. The plot-owners live in suburbs and have left their farms to the care of tenants who plough the land during rainy seasons and then contact the plot-owners once reaping time has arrived. Most learners in this district are alleged to be helping their unemployed parents in farming even during school hours as farming is their only source of living.

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The decision to do research in these three areas was prompted by among others, the need to find out the extent of parent involvement in schools, what barriers prevent parent involvement and what schools are doing to encourage parent involvement within communities in their districts.

Particulars of the three schools selected for this research are provided in Table 4.1.

TABLE 4.1   Characteristics of schools

	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C
Medium of instruction	English and Setswana	English and Setswana	English and Setswana
Number of pupils	662	567	1001
Number of educators	20	21	30
Number of classrooms	14	18	20
Staffroom	None	None	None
Parents' room	None	None	None
Principals office	Yes	Yes	Yes
Administration staff	None	None	None
Telephone	Yes (1)	None	None
Photocopier	None	None	None
Computer(s)	None	None	None
Running water on site	None	None	None
Policy on parent involvement (written/unwritten/none)	None	None	None
Toilets	Pit toilets	Pit toilets	Pit toilets
Deputy Principal(s)	1	None	None
Security at school	Fenced	Fence (dilapidated)	No fence
Electricity	Yes	None	Yes
Language policy (Written/unwritten)	Unwritten	Unwritten	Unwritten
Admission policy (Written/unwritten)	Unwritten	Unwritten	Unwritten

4.5.2 Interview guide

During orientation of informants, the researcher described the purpose of the research, researcher value and role in this research and the final purpose of the data collected. Entry into the field was supported by the interview guide on how the interview was to be done. An interview guide is about what researchers would like to study, what they hope to accomplish and opportunities they need to carry out that work (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:59). The interview guide does not dictate but guides the interview. As all interviews were audio-taped, issues such as ownership and anonymity of data in terms of future publications were discussed with all informants as well as rules for preservation of confidentiality. Statements on the characteristics of each of the participating schools were taken from the informants. These were audio-taped and handwritten and were interpreted with data collected.

4.5.3 Selecting and locating informants

Principals and educators of the participating schools in this research were encouraged to suggest colleagues who might be approached to be part of the semi-structured focus-group interview. The purpose of the research as well as the use of the tape recorder will be discussed with them. Bogdan and Biklen (1982:100) warn of the 'touchiness' of the encounter when permission to audio-tape the discussions has to be asked. However, the researcher persisted to ask and never recorded without the informants' permission. The informants wanted the assurance that private information they shared would not be revealed to others at their expense (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:100). Informants were thoroughly informed beforehand about the potential impact of the investigation so that they could withdraw from the investigation if they so wished (De Vos 1998:25). In the event where suggested informants were unavailable, the researcher resorted to volunteering of informants. This agrees with De Vos' (1998:24) views that qualitative research design is flexible and unique and evolves throughout the research process, that there are no fixed steps that should be followed and cannot exactly replicate. Groups of educators and parents for each participating school were interviewed. Thus a total of nine interviews with educators, parents and principals were conducted, i.e. three principals, fifteen parents and twenty educators. All in all thirty-three informants were interviewed (cf. 5.2).

4.5.4   Statement of subjectivity

The qualitative researcher is immersed in the phenomenon of interest because he is more concerned with understanding of the social phenomenon from the actor's perspectives through participation in the life of those actors (Taylor & Bogdan 1984:2, Smith 1987:17). This means the qualitative researcher is concerned with the kinds of observation, measurement and prediction that are presumed to be unbiased and unaffected by the enquirer's vantage point or location in the world, thus influencing and determining the kind of data he or she receives (Patton 1990:14, Measor 1985:94). In this research certain factors from the researcher's background such as being a native speaker of the language of the informants and being a parent who was always involved in the former Parent Teacher Association (PTA's) in schools in the past helped to establish rapport and thus facilitated the research. Moreover, Lofland & Lofland (1984:16) warn that certain characteristics of the researcher's background could constitute important points of difference between the researcher and his informants, thus presenting a barrier to the acquiring of authentic data by influencing the kind and quality of data collected.

4.5.5   Transcribing data

All taped interviews were transcribed. Each tape was properly marked and put in a safe place so that in the event where meaning as in tone, volume, emotionality and so on were lost due to transcription, reference could always be made. A written diary was also kept to record many of these aspects during and immediately following the interviews (Van Wyk 1996:164). Recapturing and conveying those perceived meanings to outsiders are innate to the nature of qualitative research at the point of analysis and writing (Patton 1990:351-352).

4.5.6   Analysis of data

Data collection and analysis were done concurrently although more formal analysis was left until most of the data had been gathered (Bogdan & Biklen 1982:154). In other words qualitative researchers who decide to collect and analyse data simultaneously should be able to narrow the study to only that which is to be pursued and to be able to focus on the type of

study they want to accomplish, that is, observational studies and interviews in this enquiry (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:156).

The purpose of qualitative enquiry is to produce findings through data collection, analysis, interpretation and presentation of findings. These are culminating activities of qualitative inquiry (Patton 1990:371). Central to data analysis is that data has to be interpreted (LeCompte & Preissle 1993:267).

Data was interpreted both mechanically in which physical organising and subdividing of data into meaningful segments were done and interpretatively in which criteria for organising textual data into analytically useful divisions and subdivisions to draw substantive meaningful conclusions were considered (Knodel 1993:44-45). Qualitative data analysis is an inductive process of organising data into manageable categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among the categories (Schumacher & MacMillan 1993:479; (Bogdan & Biklen 1982:153). This is what Knodel (1993:44) calls 'coding of data.'

Data analysis is a dynamic process (Taylor & Bogdan 1984:130). It is a process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes and other materials that the researcher accumulates. This will enable the researcher to present what was discovered to the reader (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:153). Qualitative research methods usually generate voluminous data (Patton 1990:379). This includes data that needs to be selected, focussed, simplified, abstracted and transformed from raw data that appears in field notes to verified data that is ready for display. Miles & Huberman (in Fetterman 1988:229) refer to a process such as this as data reduction. Data reduction is synonymous with data coding in that data are broken down, conceptualised and put back together in new ways (Strauss & Corbin 1990:57).

4.5.7 Validity and reliability in qualitative research

Various factors may affect the authenticity/truthfulness of data collected and interpreted when studying particular phenomena regardless of the research discipline and methods employed.

Aspects such as validity and reliability of research results are crucial to all social science research (Shimahara 1988:86). In this research, verbatim accounts of conversations, transcripts and direct quotations are used (4.6.9.2). Mechanically recorded data through a tape recorder was used during in-depth interviews with principals and focus group interviews with educators and parents. Precise descriptions from field notes and interview elaborations were used, as well as negatively reported cases on discrepant data (4.6.9.2).

Measures to enhance reliability involve a complete description of the research process so that independent researchers may replicate the same procedures in compatible settings (Van Wyk 1996:140). This is possible through the researcher's ability to delineate the physical, cultural and social context of the study; a statement of the researcher's role in the research setting, an accurate description of the conceptual framework of research and a complete description of data collected and analysed (Shimahara 1988:87).

The concept validity addresses itself to the truth of an assertion that is made about something in the empirical world and reliability on the other hand, concentrates on the degree of consistency in the observations obtained from the devices researchers employ: interviewers, schedules, tests, documents, informants and others (Deutscher 1970:202). In other words, validity is concerned with the accuracy of scientific findings and reliability is concerned with the replicability of research findings (LeCompte & Goetz 1982:32). Data collection takes a lengthy period. This is to allow opportunities for continued data analysis, comparison and corroboration to refine ideas and to match between research based categories and informant realities. The present research was conducted over a period of eight weeks. Informants were free to use the language of their choice to tell stories in their own words.

The informant observation and in-depth interviews took place in 'natural settings', all taking place in participating schools. Some parents were, however, interviewed in their own homes.

Establishing validity requires determining the extent to which conclusions effectively represent empirical reality and whether constructs devised by researchers represent or measure the categories of experience that occur (LeCompte & Goetz 1982:32). Measor (1985:73) states

that validity can be increased by using multiple methods and data sources (triangulation). Hence a number of methods have been used to collect data in this research.

In accordance with Patton (1990:87) four basic types of triangulation are distinguishable in research. They are the following:

(1)   Data triangulation in which data are compared and contrasted again and again thus providing a check on validity (Hutchinson 1988:131).

(2)   Investigator triangulation in which different researchers or evaluators are used as a way to present researcher bias through accounts from different informers (Taylor & Bogdan 1984:68).

(3)   Theory triangulation in which perspectives to interpret a single set of data are used. The researcher can refer to the literature in appropriate places to validate the accuracy of one's findings (Strauss & Corbin 1990:52).

(4)   Methodological triangulation in which multiple methods are used to study a single problem or programme.

Van Wyk (1996:141), however, is of the opinion that not all types of triangulation need be done. A multiple of methods for data collection were used in this research study.

4.5.8   Problems encountered during data gathering

4.5.8.1   *Observation in schools*

Three weeks prior to the interviews, the researcher spent time as an observer in each of the participating three schools. That meant a period of one week at each school. In school A, the researcher observed a group of young boys, about five in number weeding one portion of the schoolyard as punishment for allegedly having been caught smoking dagga. The researcher observed the learners meeting for assembly and the singing of hymns. The researcher attended lessons which ran from 08:00 up to 09:30, giving way for music practices as the school had to represent the North West Province at the Music Eisteddfod in Durban from 13 to 15 July 2001.

Some educators were preparing and selling food on premises (fundraising for the trip) as others were collecting and recording money received from the previous weekend's fundraising concert. The researcher also had a chance of observing the principal in a meeting with parents of learners who were in the school choir. He encouraged them to help with donations in order to make the trip a success. The whole school was busy.

In school B, the researcher observed learners watering their school vegetable gardens and drawing water from a nearby community borehole with bottles and other plastic containers to their plots. Two male educators were on duty. One stood guard at the borehole and the other at the garden site making sure that all water went to the right places. One corner of the garden fence had holes which were not noticed until goats flocked in to feed on the plants.

Activists at school C were similar. The distance that the researcher had to travel on public transport was long. Arrival time was only at break on the first day. Learners in two different school uniforms were playing outside. Some were buying lunch from parents who were selling food on school premises (for own income). The researcher was then told that two different schools each with its own principal and staff were sharing classrooms in the same yard. The level of noise in the school yard and classrooms was high even during interviews as the other school (which was not identified for study) had to go for their physical training lessons. The interview recordings were also delayed due to lack of electricity current as the principal claimed to have bought a wrong coupon number for her school.

In all three schools the hospitality of the staff presented a problem. They felt that the researcher should be accompanied during observation at all times.

4.5.8.2 *In-depth interviews with principals*

In all three participating schools interviews with principals did not present any problems except for one principal who did not want to comment on the drug abuse problem among learners in his school and the punishment that was given to the boys in question for fear that the incident might cause him trouble with the authorities. This is how he put it:

I merely did it for their parents. Any authority might charge us with child labour.

4.5.8.3   *Focus group interviews with educators*

Focus group interviews with educators proceeded smoothly. The educators were able to speak English although with occasional lapses into their vernacular. The researcher did not have problems when this occurred as she could translate what they said (the researcher in this study speaks the same vernacular as the informants).

4.5.8.4   *Focus group interviews with parents*

The interviews with parents were done solely in vernacular, save for one parent in school A (a retired school principal) who agreed to do his in English. His interview took place at his home and it saved the researcher time needed for translation during data analysis. Otherwise the researcher had to translate all interviews of the parents and the endeavour was time consuming. The other problem was that the researcher had to 'explain' the questions to the interviewees in spite of having allowed the interviews to continue in the vernacular. In one school parents asked the researcher why their particular school had been singled out for research, implying that the researcher was in some way 'spying'. The researcher explained that it was due to the hospitality of their school that a decision to do research (in their school) had been taken after first meeting with the principal, staff and learners of the school. In all three schools interviews went smoothly.

4.5.8.5   *Presentation of data*

In presenting data, the key issue is the inclusion of numerous examples of raw data and original discourse (Van Wyk 1996:166). Description is the major purpose of a qualitative study (Patton 1990:374; Lincoln & Guba 1985:359). Data were organised into readable, narrative descriptions with major themes, categories and illustrative case examples extracted through content analysis (Van Wyk 1996:166).

Raw data provides the opportunity for the reader to gauge the level of validity of research data (Bogdan & Biklen 1982:179). Conclusions made from the collected data were supported by reference to one or more extracts from audiotaped discussions with informants in an attempt to provide balanced sections of discourse.

4.5.8.6 *Limitations of the present study*

Educational provision and thus parent involvement in rural communities are beset with varied problems from school to school and from community to community. The study cannot therefore, claim to have identified all issues associated with parent involvement in rural communities. The research was only aimed at gaining some understanding of the complexity of the problem and issues, and of the extent of parent involvement as seen through the eyes of the informants. In this way some of the gaps in the knowledge concerning parent involvement in rural communities can be tentatively filled.

4.6 SUMMARY

The main methodology of data collection in this research is qualitative research methodology. In qualitative approach the researcher uses observation and interviews as data collection strategies. Semi-structured in-depth interviews of individual principals and semi-structured focus-group interviews of educators and parents were conducted. Gaining access to settings is crucial to the study. Therefore permission to enter the setting must be obtained. Data collected through qualitative methods has to be interpreted so that its valid and reliable meaning about the setting and informants can be shared with the wider public. However, ethical considerations should be applied so that informants' views and experiences are not misrepresented, privacy is not violated, informants are not harmed and consent if given for their participation in the study.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

5.1   INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapters deal with parent involvement in rural schools in different countries of the world, including the theories and practices of parent involvement, as well as the benefits and expected results of different types of involvement (chapter 2). The educational provision for rural people especially in the North West Province before and after 1994 is discussed in chapter 3. In chapter 4 the research methodology, the rationale for the choice of a qualitative approach for this research and the research design are described.

This chapter presents and describes data generated during *semi-structured in-depth interviews* with three primary school principals and *semi-structured focus group interviews* with twenty educators in three focus groups and fifteen parents of the selected schools also conducted in three focus groups. One parent did not form part of the group but was interviewed at his home. He is a retired principal and could express himself in English.

In this chapter, the characteristics of informants are summarised in Tables 5.2-5.7. The ensuing sections (5.3 to 5.5) present significant themes which emerged from the interviews. As most interviews with parents were done in vernacular, care has been taken when translating not to lose meaning. However, here and there the researcher has had to add a word or phrase (between brackets) to prevent misunderstanding. Quotations are presented in indentations and comments in brackets. Data from field notes were integrated into the data from the transcribed interviews during data analysis. Notes and audiotapes are safely kept for later reference.

5.2   CHARACTERISTICS OF INFORMANTS

This section presents responses by informants which are related to personal characteristics. Attention is also given to possible effects of the age distribution of the informants. The

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particulars of the participating schools are summarised in Table 4.1 and should be read in conjunction with the ensuing sections.

The participants included parents, grandparents, educators and school principals. All are resident in the rural districts of Bosplaas, Marokolong and Majaneng (cf 4.5.1).

The interviews with parents took place at the schools their children attend and were mostly conducted in the local vernacular, the only exception being the interview with a caregiver from school A who was interviewed at home in English. All interviews with educators took place in English with occasional lapses into vernacular. This meant that the researcher had to translate sections of the interviews of educators as well as all interviews with parents. The translations were from Northern Sotho and Setswana to English. In general, the transcripts of all interviews were done in the language used by the participants and later transcribed. Although it is possible that a change in idiom may have taken place the researcher is satisfied that the translations are faithful to the course of the conversation

5.2.1 Parents

In section 1.7 parent is defined as including any person (both biological or non-biological) who is caring for a child or taking responsibility for that child. It is further stipulated that such a person may be male/female, married or single. This definition was adhered to in the choice of participants. Thus the profile of the parent participants includes an array of people typically found in rural areas to be caregivers of learners in primary schools. Relevant background information which is needed to understand the informants' responses to questions is included in Tables 5.1 through 5.3.

Table 5.1:   Parents at school A

PARENT	1A	2A	3A	4A	5A	6A
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male	Female
Age	22	30	49	35	70	62
Marital status	Single	Single	Married	Married	Married	Married
Children at school	1 niece 2 nephews	1 -	2 & 1 Nephew	2 -	6 Grandchildren	3 Grandchildren
Highest grade passed	Grade 12	Grade 12	Grade 8	Grade 10	SED	Grade 10
Presently employed	No	No	No	No	Pensioner	Pensioner

(Key: SED = Secondary Education Diploma).

Table 5.2:   Parents at school B

PARENT	1B	2B	3B	4B	5B
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male
Age	45	27	72	68	60
Marital status	Married	Single	Widowed	Married	Married
Children at school	4 & 1 niece	2	6 Grandchildren 1 Great grandchild	2 Grand-children	1 Grandchild
Highest grade passed	Tech. Educ.	Gr. 12	Never went to school	Grade 4	Grade 10
Presently employed	Dressmaker Self-employed	Unemployed	Never worked	Pensioner	Mechanic Self-employed

Table 5.3:   **Parents and SGB members at school C**

PARENT	1C	2C	3C	4C
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female
Age	25	61	50	43
Marital status	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Divorced
Children at school	3	3 Grandchildren	1 Grandchild	2 & 1 Grandchildren
Highest grade passed	Gr. 12	Grade 8	Grade 10	Grade 11
Presently employed	No	No	No	No

In school A all participants are females; in school C four of the participants are female, and one is male. In school B there are two females and three male participants. The fifteen caregivers included in this research clearly illustrate the problems encountered in rural areas of South Africa, where many children are not being cared for by their biological parents (cf 5.3.1). Eight participants are grandparents (one grandmother from school C has both her own children as well as a grandchild in primary school). Four of the participants are married while two are single mothers. The youngest caregiver interviewed is 22 years of age and cares for the children of family members. This caregiver, who is unemployed looks after her niece and nephews while their parents are absent from their home for long periods of time because of the long distances they need to travel to their place of employment.

The fact that more than half the participants are grandparents is consistent with the profile of caregivers in the area. The principal of school A estimates that only half the learners in his school live with their parents or a parent. Educators in school B say that in their school the percentage of children living with their parents is only slightly above fifty percent. In school C the educators and the principal agree that most learners live with members of the extended family as biological parents are either working in towns and cities in the vicinity or the parents are themselves still at school. Thus in all three schools most learners seem to be in the care of grandparents. However, no schools have any official data to substantiate these estimates The principal of school C explains the problem:

The rate of teenage pregnancy in this village is high. Learners leave school prematurely only to go back to school later leaving the child with grand-parents.

Parents/caregivers interviewed fall within the age group 22 to 72 years. The grandparents were all willing to be part of the interview, and took an active part in the discussions. However, all indicated that although they were compelled to look after their grandchildren, they found the task difficult and did not seem to have the level of energy required for the task.

5.2.2 School principals

The school principals of all three schools were interviewed. The biographical details are included in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4:   Principals

PRINCIPALS:

PRINCIPALS	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C
Gender	Male	Male	Female
Age	37	46	52
Teaching experience (years)	15	20	26
Years as principal	3	3 months	4
Marital status	Married	Married	Divorced
Children at this school	None	None	None
Schools attended by own children	Former Model C Schools	Township School	University/working
Professional qualifications	PTD.	BEd.	HED.
Academic qualification	BA.	Matric	Matric
Further field of study	None	None	BEd. (Incomplete)
Registration with SACE	Yes	Yes	Yes

Key: SACE =   South African Council of Educators
         PTD   =   Primary Teachers Diploma

BA   =   Bachelor of Arts
BEd   =   Bachelor of Education
HED   =   Higher Education Diploma

The principals of the participating schools fall within the age group 37 to 52 years and as such were already teaching before 1994 when the democratic government in South Africa was put in place. This means that they have both the experience of teaching under the previous racially divided education system, as well as under the new government (cf. 3.2; 3.3; 3.4). This places them in a good position to compare both systems. However, as most provincial education systems are still grappling with the inability to redress the imbalances of the past, the educators claim that not much has changed for educators teaching in rural schools..

5.2.3 Educators

In total twenty educators were interviewed. The biographical details of the teachers are included in Tables 5.5 to 5.7.

Table 5.5:   Educators at school A

EDUCATOR	1A	2A	3A	4A	5A	6A
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male
Age	51	49	42	36	36	46
Teaching experience (years)	26	24	18	15	20	20
Own children at this school	None	None	2	None	1	None
School attended by own children	Technikon	Township School	School A	University	School A	None
Professional qualification	SED	SPTD	PTC	PTC	UDE	PTC
Academic qualification	Matric	None	Matric	Matric	Matric	Matric
Further field of study	None	None	None	None	None	None
Registration with SACE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Standard taught	Grade 1	Grade 6 & 7	Grade 1	Grade 7	Grade 5	Grade 4

Key: SED   =   Secondary Education Diploma

       SPTD   =   Senior Primary Teachers Diploma

       PTC   =   Primary Teachers Certificate

       UDE   =   University Diploma in Education

Table 5.6:   **Educators at school B**

EDUCATOR	1B	2B	3B	4B	5B	6B
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Female	Female	Male
Age	39	42	32	36	47	48
Teaching experience (years)	12	19	12	13	18	22
Own children at this school	None	None	None	None	None	None
School attended by own children	Township school	Technikon	Township school	Township school	Township school	Township school
Professional qualification	HED	UDE	HED	JPTD	UDE	HED
Academic qualification	Matric	Matric	Matric	Matric	Matric	Matric
Further field of study	None	None	None	None	None	None
Registration with SACE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Standard taught	Grade 5	Grade 3	Grade 1	Grade 6	Grade 2	Grade 5

Key: HED   =   Higher Education Diploma

       UDE   =   University Diploma in Education

       JPTD   =   Junior Primary Teachers Diploma

Table 5.7: **Educators at school C**

EDUCATOR	1C	2C	3C	4C	5C	6C	7C	8C
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male	Female
Age	27	27	29	39	41	46	47	30
Teaching experience (years)	8	8	8	16	21	20	21	14
Own children at this school	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None
School attended by own children	Former Model C School	Former Model C School	Former Model C School	Town-ship School	Techni-cal	Univer-sity	None	None
Professional qualification	FDE	FDE	FDE	FDE	FDE	FDE	PTC	PTC
Academic qualification	Matric	Matric	Matric	Matric	BA	Matric	Matric	Matric
Further field of study	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None
Registration with SACE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Standard taught	Grade 6	Grade 2	Grade 7	Grade 1	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 4	Grade 3

Key: FDE = Further Diploma in Education

PTC = Primary Teachers Course

BA = Bachelor of Arts

As is the case with the school principals, the vast majority of teachers have experience of the education system prior to and following the 1994 elections. As such they are well positioned not only to compare the systems, but also to gauge the amount of parent involvement experienced under both systems.

5.3 LIFE IN A RURAL ENVIRONMENT

Schools do not function in isolation. They are one of the social structures found within communities and are therefore influenced by both the community and the context of their environment.

5.3.1 Rural homes and the lack of basic infra structure

Bosplaas, Marokolong and Majaneng are rural areas. Some residents live in small two roomed houses and others in squatter camps. A few people have beautiful homes and can afford to educate their children in schools in the suburbs of major cities in Gauteng. However, these are the exception and the majority of learners in these areas live in small homes without electricity, running water or sanitation. Most homes are overcrowded. Only two parents interviewed live in houses with inside plumbing and electricity. All other parents, grandparents and caregivers interviewed share a house/tin shack with other family members. Close to ten people commonly share a small house or tin shack. In such overcrowded conditions learners live and study under difficult circumstances. One educator of school B remarking on the inability of learners to do homework stated:

> *We give learners homework but it is never done. When you ask they (learners) will tell you that there was no paraffin (for the lamps) or there were no candles. Some will tell you that they slept early as they feared for their safety at home.*

The situation in squatter areas is much worse. Houses are built with mud bricks or any other available material. Most consist of one room which is divided by curtains. In most cases younger children share a sleeping area with their elderly caregivers so that these children are compelled to go to bed when their grandparents do so. Often the hastily constructed shacks built by parents are severely damaged by storms, or start falling down due to poor building skills or the materials used. Many of these structures are not repaired as the parents may have abandoned the children and may have set up house elsewhere (often because of entering new relationships). Thus the children and grandparents are left in shacks which are dangerous to live in.

The circumstances under which learners live are detrimental as many are exposed to situations which they cannot cope with at a very young age. In school C educators agree that the lack of space encourages children to play out in the street often neglecting their schoolwork. The streets are also muddy and gather water in rainy seasons and this causes diseases for children living in the area, often resulting in high levels of absenteeism in school.

The principal of school A is also concerned about learners in his school who arrive at school tired and hungry and are unable to concentrate on their school work. He blames this on the long distances that learners have to travel to school. There are no main roads leading to the schools, thus no public transport to ferry educators and learners to and from school. Many pedestrians, mainly learners, walk along the dusty and muddy roads in rainy weather.

Principals, parents and educators of the participating schools repeatedly mentioned their dissatisfaction with the lack of basic necessities in a rural setting. Among others they mentioned a lack of proper sanitation (all three schools use pit latrines). Moreover, school B has no electricity, while in school C only a few classrooms and the principal's office has electricity.

Educators and principals of the participating schools report that most learners still live in muddy houses and tin shacks, with virtually no study area to do homework. School B is situated in an area where most people are hiring small plots of land. Plot owners in this area have sublet their plots and now live in cities. Most tenants are poor and live in appalling conditions. There is no electricity either at school B or in the homes of the learners. The school draws water from a communal borehole some distance away (cf. 4.5.7.1). One parent from school B remarked thus,

> *Where is Eskom? He (referring to the electricity supply commission) must give us electricity. We cannot go on like this.*

This was said in the misplaced belief that the researcher might help to facilitate the community's application for electricity in the area. However, the researcher explained that the study was not about electricity but about parent involvement in their school.

DISCUSSION:

Rural life is beset with many problems. Among others, the lack of proper housing and infrastructure and the limited resources of rural communities results in most families living and raising their children in very poor circumstances.

People need space of their own, particularly young people. A house or other structure in which young people grow up is the most important space in their lives as it provides a living environment, sense of security and stability, a social cultural context, a place to study and privacy of one's own room, media such as television, books, newspapers, magazines and so forth (Van Wyk 1996:182). This is lacking in all the homes included in this research.

5.3.2 Rural families

Learners in the three participating primary schools in this research belong to a diversity of family types; the nuclear family, single-parent female or male households and others. Interviews with parents, educators and school principals seem to indicate that many children are born to teenage mothers who themselves have returned to school to complete their schooling. Many single parents interviewed relate the problems of raising children alone. One unmarried and unemployed caregiver says:

> *I am looking after my sister's children. She supports us if and when she has got the money. So we rely on the children's grandmother's pension.*

Many educators interviewed described young parents as poor role models. The principal of school A explains: "*Parents who are poor role models find it difficult to support the education of their children.*"

Educators in school C say when you invite a parent to come and see you about a problem, only the grandparent arrives, often explaining that the biological mother is still at school or is looking for work in the suburbs.

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5.3.2.1 *Parents*

Educators in all three participating schools have indicated that although many of the learners in their schools stay with their biological parent(s), they cannot dispute that grandparents play an important role as financial caregivers in most households. The underlying trend in all three participating schools, however, is that most biological parents are inclined to stay in the background while grandparents are left to attend school meeting and cope with problems involving the children in their care. Where children are said to be staying with their parents, this is usually a single parent in a female-headed household. Many mothers caring for children are still very young, particularly those living in squatter camps. Often the father is still at school or has left the area to seek work. Many of these fathers do not return to take up the responsibilities of the children they have fathered. One unmarried and unemployed mother says:

> *Myself, I haven't got a husband. My parents support me and my children. Both*
> *me and my children live on my parents' pension and my five children are*
> *growing.*

Many single parents interviewed (educators and parents) agree that raising children alone is problematic. However, a single female educator in school C acknowledges that although both parents are important in the life of a child, one parent may at times be preferable. She explains:

> *Life in a loveless marriage poses problems for the children as well. So I live*
> *a single life. Me and my children are happy. I am working and can support my*
> *children.*

Educators in all three participating schools described young parents as poor role models. The principal of school A explains that parents who send children to buy beer or cigarettes or who are always quarrelling will have a negative effect on the children and thus affect the children's progress at school. Another educator in school A adds that children who witness their parents drinking, will become drunkards themselves later in life.

Most parents interviewed, indicated their intentions to leave for bigger cities should job opportunities arise. The grandparents mostly argued that they had nowhere else to go, or were content with rural life and have no desire to leave the area

5.3.2.2   *Grandparents*

Educators in all three participating schools estimate that the greater percentage of children in their schools are cared for by grandparents. Many reasons are given, such as mothers who are themselves still in their teenage years or parents working away from home thus leaving their children with grandparents. Sometimes even parents who are employed still remain in the home of the grandparents, often sharing this home with other relatives. In a situation such as this, the elderly grandparents who own the house dictate the conduct of all living under their roof. Such grandparents may prove to be difficult to deal with when issues involving their grandchildren need to be addressed at school. One grandfather interviewed shared the view on the importance of being breadwinner in his own household.

> *I pay for these kids with my own pension. I buy them uniforms. I buy a bag of mealie-meal. You know, their parents aren't working and I support them. But I want my grandchildren to get educated.*

One grandmother agrees that "one cannot abandon one's grandchildren. One must keep them in one's care." In most instances the biological parents do not contribute financially.

The principal of school B added that most biological parents and relatives come home when they know that pensions are being paid out and then demand money from their elderly parents. Many grandparents allegedly comply, for fear of being attacked.

One grandparent interviewed informed this researcher that:

> *...older grandchildren steal our money if we don't offer it willingly. But it is better if other relatives are around. Then I can share it among them all. Then there is no fight.*

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Women who marry more than once also leave children from their previous relationship with their parents at home. This is done for fear that once other children are born of the new relationship, the children from previous relationships will be thrown out. Financial support for such children is often minimal thus burdening grandparents. This is particularly problematic if the mother is not working. Often when the biological parent comes to visit after a long period of absence, she brings nothing and may not even have money for her return trip to her new home. The grandparents then have the choice of paying for her return trip or undertaking to support her in their home. Either way, another financial burden has been added to the grandparent's list of financial obligations.

In most cases where children stay with their grandparents, they know who their biological parents are. However, in some cases children do not know the identity of their father, and in extreme cases, that of their mother.

DISCUSSION:

The problem of children being cared for by their grandparents is increasing since young people continue to have babies without being able to care for them. Grandparents continue to become foster parents of their grandchildren. For these reasons, education authorities have begun to recognise their role in the education and general upbringing of their grandchildren as "caregivers" together with other relatives in the education of learners (Reglin 1993:3). Although there are no statistics to substantiate that many children live with their grandparents as suggested by this study, the findings are supported by a study conducted in Soweto. The study revealed that a significant number of learners does not live with their parents but rather with their grandparents (Chisholm & Vally 1996:37).

5.3.3 Lack of employment opportunities

There are few employment opportunities for people living in rural areas. This prevents parents from meeting their financial obligations at school. However, it also prevents them from contributing to the general care of their children. A grandparent, who still has to care for his grandchildren, discusses how difficult it is to provide for the family on his pension:

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I get R540 per month. With this money I must feed and clothe them. I must
provide money for transport for those who go into cities every day to look for
work. None of them gets jobs. The money we earn is too little!

Another parent in a self-employed dressmaking business tells of how business has slowed down since many workers in her area were retrenched. She says:

Most of my clients come from the neighbouring factories in Babelegi. But with
so many firms closing, people do not come to me any more. Now I cannot
provide for my family's needs.

The lack of employment also affects people who have completed their schooling. A parent from school A who obtained her senior certificate responds:

I finished school in 1994. Till today I am still unemployed. We hope they (the
government) will provide us with jobs!

One parent in school C explains that doing odd jobs helps her buy a bag of mealie-meal after a fortnight's wages. This is hardly enough to provide for her family's needs.

Educators in school B, where most learners come from households whose occupants are mainly tenants, say they have started an informal "soup kitchen" for some learners in grade 1. The ingredients are paid for by the educators. As one educator explained: *It is only to see them through the chilly winter season. They (learners) come to school hungry.*

Another educator agrees with her, adding: *Furthermore, how will they listen when what they hear are hunger pangs and spells of cold?* In this way educators agree that they tend to concentrate on providing for the basic needs of learners and do not have the energy or time to improve home/school links and collaborate for the benefit of the child.

DISCUSSION:

Lack of employment has slowed down the economic growth rate in South Africa and thus has increased the inability of the formal sector economy to provide school leavers with employment (Van Zyl Slabbert, Malan, Marais, Olivier & Riordan 1994:120). Moreover, various estimates of household income suggest that millions of South Africans are living below the poverty line (Van Zyl Slabbert et al 1994:131). A situation such as this has a bearing on this research since economic conditions are of crucial importance to any substantial improvement in young people's quality of life and education.

5.3.4   Family poverty impacts on children

In communities that are poor and unemployment high, children as young as ten years old are sometimes compelled to fend for themselves. Often this means leaving school to work, regardless of the fact that they will be paid virtually nothing.

Educators in school C informed this researcher that learners in their school, particularly boys leave school to go and wash taxis and cars at a nearby taxi rank near the Hammanskraal station. They do not care whether lessons continue in their absence as long as they can earn enough pocket money. Generally these children use this money to buy personal items which their parents are not able to provide them with. The principal of school C explains that if these children should return to school after a long absence they are so "lost" that many once more drop out of school, only resuming their studies the following year.

The situation is, however, different for school A and B as they are situated far away from the Hammanskraal station and opportunities for children to earn money in this fashion is not possible.

DISCUSSION:

Child labour in South Africa as in other countries of the world ruins the chances of a basic education for many young children. In spite of this young children are attracted by the chance

of earning money and contributing to the household, or using it to buy things for themselves which their parents cannot afford. The danger is that such children eventually drop out of school and thus add to the illiteracy level of the country which at present stands at an estimated 37 percent of the population (Shindle & Bot 1999:8). This also affects the relationship between the school, educators, principals, parents and the community as all parties tend to blame the other for not taking better care of children and thus contributing to this problem.

5.3.5   Health issues in rural areas

Rural communities have to cope with many health issues such as tuberculosis, cholera, malnutrition, et cetera. All these are, however, exacerbated by the rapid rise in HIV/AIDS among the population in South Africa.. Thus educators cannot afford to ignore the fact that some of the learners in their schools are victims of HIV/AIDS, live with a parent/caregiver who is HIV positive, or is terminally ill. This makes it necessary for both educators and parents to work together in order to help fight the disease in the community and among learners. This is important as explained by a parent with children in school C:

> *You see children of today are not like those of the past. They grow up and mature quickly with the time. So much that primary school children are already engaged in sexual activities.*

Statistics have shown that South Africa has the fastest growing HIV/AIDS infection in the world (Tutorial Letter 104/2000:18). The report further states that:

- by June 2000, 20 percent of the population was infected
- by 2002 more than six million South Africans will be affected
- by 2010 the life expectancy will have dropped from 68 years to 48 years
- productivity in all sectors will decline due to illness at work, absenteeism due to personal or family illness and funeral attendance.

The results are alarming and clearly show that this is a health issue which will need to be addressed by all role players in the community. However, one parent explains that this is a problem:

Parents in this village are afraid to talk about sexual matters to their children. This becomes a problem even for the learners when they go to school. They go to school with wondering minds, with unanswered questions and with no one to turn to...

For this reason parents in school C agree that both the school and the home need to make a concerted effort to educate learners and deal with those who are sick and dying in their community. This is, however, difficult to achieve as schools are also perplexed as to how to deal with the problem. An educator at school C explains:

Most learners live with a member of the family with HIV/AIDS and related diseases. They are often traumatised dur to deaths relating to these diseases. Schools cannot give counselling as we are not trained to deal with cases of this nature.

DISCUSSION:

HIV/AIDS and related diseases affect the lives of people in different ways. Some may be personally infected, while others may need to support and care for family and friends who are dying. Moreover, children increasingly have to deal with the deaths of parents and other relatives. Although there are no available statistics on the incidence of HIV/AIDS in the schools or communities in this research, it can be assumed that they do not differ markedly from that of the country as a whole, and that steps therefore need to be taken by schools and parents to deal with the issue. This includes increasing people's awareness of the causes of HIV/AIDS and developing an HIV/AIDS education and training policy in order to change attitudes and behaviour towards sexuality and the status of girls and women in the community. The other aim should be the inclusion of HIV/AIDS programmes within the curriculum through all grades, planning strategies for responding to the impact of HIV/AIDS on the sustainability

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of the education system and the care and support systems for learners and educators affected by the impact of HIV/AIDS (Tutorial Letter 104/2000:3).

IN CONCLUSION

Schools do not functions in a vacuum (Epstein 1987:130). Thus, socialisation processes play a major role in school achievement (Jantjies 1995:289). This means that processes that should bring together the cooperation between parents and educators should be reviewed and analysed in order to align the school with the home domain. This is particularly true in a rural environment where a multitude of problems, most of which are related to poverty, need to be addressed. This also impacts on the amount of time and energy parents and other caregivers have to spend on supporting the education of children in their care, or the schools they attend. This is dealt with in more detail in 5.5.

5.4   RURAL SCHOOLS

Although all schools share common characteristics, rural schools are often beset by problems unique to their environment and the communities they serve.

5.4.1   Lack of facilities and infrastructure

Rural communities are poor and so are their schools. In South Africa, in particular, rural schools were administered by the former self-governing states whose education systems were characterised by lack of provision of resources to schools. At the beginning of a new millennium the new education system is still battling with the inability to redress the imbalances of the past. Thus most rural schools cannot provide adequate education for their learners.

Educators interviewed in this study have cited the lack of facilities and resources as a problem that affects the provision of effective schooling. These are the remarks of one science educator from school B:

Experiments are impossible to conduct. No electricity, no laboratory. What can we do? Learners have to study experiments from their books off by heart.

A remark such as this makes one aware that educators are trained to teach in well resourced urban or suburban environments but are often unable to apply those skills in the rural environments within which they teach. These and other problems deny the rural learner comparable opportunities of learning which his/her counterpart in many urban communities enjoys.

Some of the educators interviewed in this study have indicated that their own children are attending school in the former Model C schools because *"those have the necessary resources and facilities to assist the efforts of educators".*

This finding is supported by evidence from a needs survey of all schools in South Africa to determine the level of support that each school requires in terms of provision of resources (cf. 3.4.2). The survey has revealed that the majority of schools in rural areas still lack the bare necessities for adequate provision of education (HSRC 1997/March).

The principal of school A is adamant that the lack of facilities and resources such as laboratories and laboratory materials, libraries and biology rooms denies learners and educators the experience of learning in a proper environment. He pointed at a trophy and a few medals hanging behind the door of his office and said:

Look what the school has won in a recent science fair. But there are no materials to continue. There's no money.

However, he applauded his educators for the "wonderful work" in spite of all the limitations.

Educators in schools B and C agree that the lack of facilities makes it difficult for them to perform their duties. These are the remarks of one educator from school B:

You know one takes the whole year (meaning a long time) to reach the toilets
[they are pit toilets and normally they are placed a distance away from the
classes to avoid the stench]. Even then one still needs an escort, in case there
are snakes and lizards. They are scary.

This school also has no washbasins where educators and learners can wash their hands after using the toilet. This is unhygienic and constitutes a health hazard.

Parents in school C informed this research that their school shares classrooms with another school and that they were worried that due to overcrowding their children may not be learning properly.

Environments conducive to learning include clean, and attractive school grounds. However, in all three schools participating in this research, the school grounds are bare, with no lawns, or trees. Learners walk around the dusty school yards. Only school A has a small and neat flower garden in front of the classes. When asked why this is so, an educator from school B was quick to defend their school:

There is no water in the school yard. So we are unable to plant trees and
decorate our school yards. We struggle to get the little to drink.

Of the three participating schools, only one school has a telephone, none has a staffroom, a photocopier, computer or any other aids to facilitate teaching (cf. 4.1). Thus educators still use chalk and writing boards even for tests and examinations. None of these schools have hired administration staff as funds are lacking. School governing bodies (SGBs) which consist mainly of grandparents who are themselves pensioners are unable to organise funds for their schools. The only funds the schools receive are the school fees which parents have to pay. But in a community that is poor and where unemployment is high, parents claim that they do not have money to pay school fees. In school B the principal informed this researcher that about sixty to sixty five percent of learners (in his school) has still not paid school fees. He continued to saying that some learners still owed school fees from the previous year (2000).

DISCUSSION:

The lack of resources and facilities in rural schools is cause for concern for both the communities and authorities alike. The situation is so bad that in some provinces schools built by government as well as those built by the community are no longer fit to be used as classrooms. Some buildings are nearing collapse while in others schooling has to stop in bad weather. The effect of this on home-school relations is great and is discussed in more detail in 5.5.1.

5.4.2 The problem of absenteeism

The principal of school C informed this research that some learners in her school are absent from school in order to look after young children at home. This is particularly noticeable when grandparents have to go to government centres to receive their pension payout. An educator from school C explains

> *Learners leave school to go and look after their sisters' children. When asked*
> *why, the learners will tell you that they had to look after other children at*
> *home, as their grandparents had gone to receive their monthly pension.*

Educators in school C agree that the level of absenteeism among learners in their school is high and that caregivers never bother to inform the class teachers that children are not going to be able to attend school. Educators in this school think that parents "do not care" and that they (parents) are "shifting their responsibility to the educators".

Responding to the allegation of absenteeism among learners in school C another educator emphasised the importance of proper attendance in this way;

> *Learners should come to school daily so that their progress is not interrupted.*
> *There should be continuity in their work so that even you, the educator, are*
> *able to measure your own strengths with that of the learner.*

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When asked what they thought could be the solution, educators were quick to respond thus:

> *Parents should be invited quite frequently to school at least twice a quarter to come and sit with their children in class, help them do school work in class and at home and in that way they will be able to know the amount of work that every child is expected to do each time they are in class.*

Another educator from school C was quick to say: *Yes, let the parents come. But we do not know if they will not get bored. But I think that this will help them to understand how school works.*

In school B where most learners come from tenant families, educators informed this researcher that the level of absenteeism among learners in their school is high during certain seasons of the year particularly in winter when it is cold. Learners in this school live with unemployed parents/caregivers as in other schools but the level of poverty is immense. Most learners come to school barefoot and with no jerseys to keep themselves warm. When asked what educators in this school do to encourage continuous attendance, this is what they said:

> *We tell them (the learners) to come to school every day. But they still absent themselves. When we invite their parents, they too do not come. So we are losing hope. But as summer approaches (for this interview was done in mid winter) there's going to be an improvement.*

The situation in school A with regards to the level of absenteeism among learners is the same as in the other two participating schools. In this school, educators informed this researcher that absenteeism of learners is, among others, caused by measures that are in place to stop late coming of learners such as locking the gates at certain times of the day. Once learners realise that they are locked outside, most of them go back home with the intention of being early the next morning. However, this is cause for concern among educators and at the time of this interview they were beginning to review their disciplinary measures regarding late coming.

However, they still felt that parents/caregivers "were not doing enough to encourage schooling", as one educator remarked:

Parents are happy when children come home early. They give them odd jobs like fetching water, washing the dishes and they are not worried about their children losing out in school work. They (parents) just sit with them (learners) at home.

Thus, although absenteeism is a universal phenomenon, the problem in rural areas is often unique. Here children are often kept at home to look after younger siblings, escape the cold, and assist with chores inside and outside the home. This does not further the relationship between the home and the school and negatively impacts on children's learning.

IN CONCLUSION

It is clear that rural schools have problems which may be seen as unique to their environment. Moreover, they share the problems that all schools situated in poor communities have. However, it is equally clear that these schools are in desperate need of the benefit associated with effective parent involvement in schools. It is also apparent that great effort and careful planning will be necessary to establish parent involvement in these schools. It is therefore of importance to determine the barriers to parent involvement so that these may be addressed prior to establishing the type of parent involvement in the schools which will lead to significant improvement.

5.5   BARRIERS TO PARENT INVOLVEMENT

A barrier can be regarded as an obstacle/problem that prevents the development of an effective relationship developing between parents and schools. The barriers that prevent this partnership from developing deprive all, particularly the learners, of the benefits associated with effective parent involvement.

In South Africa in the past, parent involvement differed according to racial groups and was better established in schools serving white communities. In black communities, particularly in rural areas, parent involvement has been minimal. However, the present education system encourages collaboration between the home and the school and emphasises the importance of both educators and parents in the education of learners. In other words, barriers which prevented parents from taking their place as partners in education in the past should be reviewed so that parents can begin to have a say in matters of education such as in decision making and governance structures in schools. On the other hand, educators too should begin to acknowledge that parents are important "natural teachers" of their children and that they should have a choice in how they want their children to be taught. Thus both educators and parents need to become aware of the potential of parental support and involvement in learners' education achievement (Jantjies 1995:290).

Home-school-community involvement can be defined in different ways. Among others, Epstein (1995:701-704) mentions assisting parents in their parenting tasks, establishing effective two-way communication, using parents as volunteers, teaching parents how to support learning at home, including parents in decision making, and collaborating with the community (cf. 2.3). Moreover, the phenomenon of parent involvement is seen as referring to more than just the biological parents. Thus, grandparents and other relatives with interest in the general upbringing of learners should be allowed to have a say in the education of learners as they have become important caregivers in the absence of biological parents (Reglin 1993:3). Also included are the communities in which learners live.

A cursory review of most schools shows that the type of comprehensive parent involvement referred to above does not take place, particularly within rural communities. This research was undertaken to determine exactly which factors act as barriers to parent involvement, so that these may be addressed. A discussion of rural communities as well as rural schools (cf 5.3 & 5.4) show that many factors negatively impact on the establishment of a working relationship between schools, parents and communities. The following section will add to this list. In chapter 6 a number of ways of overcoming the barriers to parent involvement is offered.

5.5.1 The powerful effect of poor school facilities and lack of support

When the physical conditions of schools are poor, parents and educators tend to concentrate on this to the exclusion of all other issues relating to education. The situation in these schools is no exception. When interviewing parents, educators and school principals all resorted to a discussion of the conditions under which children have to learn and seemed unable to focus on broader issues such as the lack of parent involvement in their schools. In this way the poor school facilities coupled with the lack of administrative help overshadows all else and acts as a barrier to the establishment of effective parent involvement.

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that all participating schools in this research are poorly resourced. School B does not have any electrical lighting while School C has electricity in a few classrooms and in the principal's office.

The toilet facilities in all schools are inadequate and all three schools use pit-latrines.. Facilities for learners to wash hands are lacking. Only school C has basins with water in front of the classrooms for learners to wash hands before and after their lunch break. None of the schools included in the research has a staffroom.

Of the three participating schools in this study, only one has a neat flower garden in the space adjoining the classes (school A) with footpaths of cement to be used by learners.. In schools B and C learners walk along muddy paths in rainy weather, treading this mud into classrooms. Both educators and parents in these schools agree that the lack of running water is the major reason for the poor condition of the school grounds.

All schools are overcrowded and the classrooms in need of repair. School C shares the school buildings with another school (which was not included in this research). It is obvious that the physical conditions of schools have a negative impact on the morale and confidence of users in the school. This often overshadows any initiatives aimed at improving the partnership between the school and the community. As one parent of school C explains:

We are not happy about this situation. We are not sure if our children receive the proper education due to overcrowding. Educators also complain about this kind of situation. They say that learners are packed up to the doors and there is virtually no space to move around the classroom.

This, both educators and parents feel is unfair as they built the school themselves and therefore consider it wrong that their children are now compelled to share these facilities with another school. As one parent explained:

We have built the school with our own hands. We helped carry sand in containers on our heads for plastering. When we finished the school inspectors came to divide our classrooms. They gave some classes to another school. We don't know where it (referring to the other school) came from. Now our children are crammed in a few classrooms.

Another parent was quick to say:

And we don't think that our children are learning properly under these conditions. When we tell the authorities that the school must go, they (authorities) ask us where must the school go? We don't want this school no more in our classrooms. They must go.

These words give some indication of the anger and frustration that may be caused by lack of facilities in an environment where communities have become helpless because they do not have anywhere else to go for help. It also aptly illustrates why parents and educators speak of little else when asked to discuss education in their communities.

Because of the lack of a staffroom in all three schools, there is little interaction between staff members during the school day. As one educator remarked:

Sometimes we do not even know whether other educators in another group are sick or need help. We sit here in our group. We know only us!

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Parents interviewed in this research all agree that the lack of facilities hinders the learning process in their schools. As for parents who have to visit the school during school hours, they find the lack of privacy inhibits meaningful discussion of problems. A parent in school A remarked:

You come to school to talk to educators about the progress of your child, you stand outside on the stoep. There is no place. The principal's office is full. Other people are listening!

None of the three participating schools have any administrative staff thus compelling educators to do the administration of the school in addition to their daily classroom teaching. Parents interviewed find this unacceptable and are concerned that this has a negative impact on the time educators have to spend with learners. In spite of this no parents, even those with senior certificates, are asked to help, or ever offer their assistance.

None of the schools has the type of technical support many well resourced schools in urban areas take for granted. For example, only school A has a telephone, none have computers, photocopiers or other technological aids to assist staff. As one educator explained:

We spend the whole time writing on the chalkboard. If we had computers and photocopiers, our work would be easier.

A parent in school C was also concerned about learners and educators in his school being computer illiterate. He said: *If in our school we can have computers then educators and learners can become computer literate.*

The same parent also came up with a plan of how the school can acquire computers. He remarked that:

If big companies and business can be approached to donate computers in our school, our children can learn how to operate them.

He also informed this research of the high fees that are charged at Computer Colleges (± R3000-00 for a six months course) and how learners in his school would benefit if their school was well resourced. Children could then become computer literate at no extra cost. However, the issue is not how schools can get computers but rather the adequate provision of facilities and resources to support the efforts of educators and the impact that the lack of resources has on the quality of education for learners.

DISCUSSION:

The majority of learners in South Africa still continue to be educated in conditions of extreme neglect and poverty due to the inequality of provision from the past, while privileged and reasonably well resourced schools also exist in the education system (Shindler & Bot 1999:6). In a survey conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in 1997, a school needs survey revealed that most township, rural and farm schools were still lacking in the provision of adequate resources and facilities when compared to those which catered for whites, Indians and coloureds (Bot 1996:13). This is one of the problematic areas that the South African education system is trying to address so that there can be adequate teaching and learning in all schools.

Lack of facilities and resources in schools in disadvantaged communities hampers proper teaching and learning especially in a country where educators are trained in urban environments. Educators are unable to apply the skills that they have acquired and thus the education of learners suffers. However, of equal importance is the fact that educators and parents are so overwhelmed by the lack of the facilties at their schools, that they seem not to have the energy or knowledge to address this problem. Both seem to look to the government to address the issue. Given the level of poverty in the area and the general lack of expertise available in the community, this is perhaps understandable.

5.5.2   Parent involvement is equated with financial support to schools

Except for the financial support of government to schools, school fees are the main source of funding for schools. This means if learners owe fees the budget of that school will always be

in deficit, as part of this money is used to buy extras for the school, such as teaching aids, uniforms for different sporting events and for members of the school choir. Although much has been said about well qualified educators who should be able to teach under all circumstances, educators in rural schools generally complain about the lack of resources.

The principal of school B explained the reason for the poor payment of school fees.

> *When you ask the child about who's paying fees, the learner is quick to say "granny". When the granny comes, she wants you to understand that the mother of the child is unemployed or still at school. So there is no money!*

All parents who participated in this research admit that their schools will not improve the quality of education if there are no funds to support the efforts of educators. However, many feel the responsibility lies with the government. As one parent explained: *We are not working. The government knows it. Let them support us.*

South Africa's legacy of apartheid continues to be felt and the country continues to have one of the highest income inequalities in the world. A large number of people still live below the poverty line. The South African education system operates in a society in which 18 million people (about 45,7% of the total population) live in poverty (Hartshorne 1999:106). Moreover, unemployment in the country continues to stand at a high of 33 percent (Motala & Mungadi 1999:3). Parent involvement in such communities is often difficult as many parents and caregivers are struggling to survive and have little or no energy left for social obligations. All three principals interviewed in this research agree that many learners in their schools still owe money, many not even having paid the previous year's school fees. This they interpret as a lack of parent involvement in schools. It is also seen as a problem which prevents parents who still owe school fees from attending parents' meetings. One parent explains:

> *Well, the other problem is when parents are unable to pay school fees and buy books for their children. Each time there's a meeting, we think of the money we owe and that we are going to be reminded of that. So we decide not to attend.*

This is a problem as most parents are unemployed and therefore not able to rectify the situation. As one parent remarked: *"The situation is so much out of control that we are afraid even to talk about it."*

DISCUSSION:

Schools need funds if they are to function well. The government is unable to provide in all the needs of schools. It is thus left to the parent communities to provide in the needs of the schools. When they do not do so it is interpreted as a lack of support or a lack of involvement of parents in the education of their children. Likewise, the embarrassment of not being able to meet their financial obligations at the school often prevents parents from becoming involved in other aspects of the school. Children may also be negatively affected by their parents' inability to pay school fees and provide in their other needs. Thus, children whose families cannot pay school fees, books and supplies, transportation and uniforms may drop out of school because of the embarrassment. Their poverty is reflected in their clothes or lack of school lunch (Van Wyk 2000:86).

5.5.3   No clear policies on parent involvement

Parent involvement in a school should be determined by either a written/verbal policy which explains how and in which activities of the school parents can be involved. This policy directs the type and extent of parent involvement as well as the pace of implementation of the policy. However, none of the three participating schools has policies on parent involvement. When asked whether the school had a policy on parent involvement an educator in school B answered "Yes", but when asked to explain its contents, it was discovered that she mistook a school policy for a policy on parent involvement. Likewise, the principals and educators of the three schools participating in this research agreed that they have never drafted such a policy and that the issue of parent involvement in wide range of activities had never been discussed.

Because of lack of parent involvement policies in the three participating schools, both parents and educators lack understanding of parent involvement in general and thus cannot implement appropriate parent involvement strategies. The principal of school B acknowledges the

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importance of parents' involvement on learner achievement but did not have a school policy to support this and was not even certain whether such a policy could be developed and whether one had to get permission from the district office before doing so.

Most parents in the three participating schools were not sure in which way they could help in the schools. This contributes to the general lack of understanding on what constitutes parent involvement. Thus some parents said they are involved in the school because they attend meetings/pay fees/help cook while others did not know what constitutes parent involvement. This limited understanding of parent involvement forms a barrier to parent involvement in communities that practise little or no parent involvement. In addition, educators and principals interviewed informed this researcher that their schools did not have a written or verbal policy on a school-family-community partnership. Parents interviewed also indicated that their schools have never discussed family and community involvement as a way of improving schools. Generally educators interviewed mentioned using the more conventional ways of involving parents such as open-house days, fundraising activities, parent-teacher conferences and others. Although parents appreciate being involved in these ways many parents, especially single and dual income parents, are not able to participate in such activities, yet they want to help their children succeed in school. However, because of the lack of a school policy on parent involvement and the lack of thought on the topic few educators are making any arrangements to accommodate different types of families and caregivers in a variety of activities related to children's schooling. As Chrispeels (1991:371) notes: Most efforts have been directed at "fixing" parents rather than at altering school structures and practices.

DISCUSSION:

The absence of a school policy on parent involvement and the lack of understanding of ways in which families may be involved is unfortunate as research shows that school programmes and educator practices are the strongest and most consistent predictors of partnerships between the school and the family (Dauber & Epstein 1993:61; Wannat 1994:644). In this study a policy on parent involvement would not only give direction to home-school relationships, but would compel all role players to reflect on what they define as parent involvement and which strategies would be appropriate in their particular schools and communities.

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5.5.4 Changing family structure

As discussed under 5.3.3 learners in the area come from a variety of family structures. This inevitably affects the type and extent of parent involvement. Thus, for example, young school-going mothers seldom attend meetings, leaving this task to the grandparents. Educators interviewed describe these young parents as poor role models. In such families, grandparents assist in caring for children even in matters relating to education. Thus, an educator from school C says: *The biological parents lack commitment and thus leave everything to grandparents.* Another educator agrees with her, adding: *...and it is difficult to work with grandparents as they are illiterate most of them.* The principal at school B elaborate:

> *Grandparents are too old and tired to attend to the education of children. Biological parents are away in big cities, working, but their children's education suffers due to lack of parental support.*

Information collected from parents interviewed in this research shows that many children in the three participating schools come from a variety of family types such as single parent families, nuclear families, female headed families and multi-generational families (cf. 3.6.2). Most women interviewed were abandoned by their children's father or were widowed. All single parents interviewed agreed that there are many problems in raising children alone especially if it is known that the father is alive but "does not care". A grandmother who cares for children of her own daughter is not happy about young boys "*giving our daughters children and continuing with school while our daughters remain mothers at home*".

The principal of school B says parents need more education on parenting skills, which will draw their attention to assisting in learner education rather than leaving everything in the hands of educators. Although he himself has never attended a workshop on parent involvement, he views parent involvement in education as encouraging the positive behaviour of the learner in school. In spite of this, schools do not seem to be making plans to accommodate varying family structures.

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DISCUSSION:

The family is a major socialising agent in society, assisting individuals as they move from childhood into adolescence and eventually adulthood (Van Wyk 1996:191). But due to factors such as teenage pregnancy which has resulted in children being born to young mothers who are not physically and mentally ready to raise children, more and more grandmothers assist in caring for their grandchildren. Many families are headed by females who have to give both the financial and emotional support children need. Working single parents find it difficult to attend to their children's educational needs such as attending parents meetings and serving on governance structures of their children's schools due to lack of time. On the other hand, educators need to formulate policies which stipulate how parents (from all walks of life) can be involved in education for the benefit of learner achievement.

5.5.5 High level of illiteracy of the community

As discussed under 5.3.1 school children are being cared for by teenage mothers, their biological parents, grandparents and other relatives. In accordance with many other rural areas in South Africa, many of these caregivers are illiterate. This obviously impacts on the role parents are able to play in the education of their children and any calculated decisions which need to be taken at school.

It also affects the relationship between the school and its educators and the community. In most interviews with educators of the participating schools, many expressed the view that illiterate parents and grandparents, with little or no experience of schooling have little to contribute to school governance and the education of their children. Similarly parents or caregivers who are illiterate feel that they have little to contribute to the schooling of their children and that they enjoy little status within schools. This is often resented and one grandparent in school C was quick to point out his own worth in spite of a lack of education:

> *I cannot read and write, but I can help to guard the gates of the school when registration of new learners starts in order to stop would be thieves from stealing our school's money.*

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However, this is in contrast to the situation regarding other grandparents. When asked whether they would help their grandchildren with homework, one grandfather said:

I cannot read and write. And these children spend time kneeling over their books at home. Sometimes there is no money to buy candles. So we sleep early.

DISCUSSION:

In South Africa it is estimated that 37 percent of the population is unable to read and write (Shindler & Bot 1999:10). This, according to educators, seriously affects parents and caregiver's involvement in school activities. However, should a school have a greater variety of activities in which parents and caregivers could become involved, there will be more opportunities for all to play a meaningful role in the education of the youth, in spite of their own lack of schooling.

5.5.6   Lack of training of School Governing Bodies (SGBs)

Extensive education changes have been proposed since 1994 amid difficulties in providing sufficient government finance to implement the policies. One such change is the establishment of SGBs in all public schools according to the South African Schools Act (RSA 1996a). This is appreciated by the participants. As one parent explained: *"At least we are happy because we chose these people into office."* However, to be effective, people serving on such structures need to be trained. Most governing body members interviewed in this study made it clear that they have never been trained/workshopped in preparation for their duties in governance structures in schools.

Two members of the school governing body in this research were found to have been co-opted as the elected parent members lacked interest in or commitment to the tasks they were expected to fulfil. These two members (from school A) although willing, were also ill prepared for their tasks. All principals interviewed in this study agreed that their SGBs needed training

and that they would also personally welcome training as they were also struggling to fulfil their roles on the SGBs.

Of importance to this study is that the SGB is also tasked with improving parent involvement in their respective schools. This could be achieved by, among others, fulfilling some of the tasks set in the South African Schools Act (RSA 1996a:14):

- develop the mission statement of the school;
- adopt a code of conduct for learners of the school after consultation with the learners, parents and educators of the school;
- determine the admission policy and language policy of the school,
- after a fair hearing, suspend learners from attending the school as a correctional measure for a period not exceeding one week;
- supplement the resources supplied by the state in order to improve the quality of education provided to all learners of the school. In this regard parents may be asked to pay school fees. The amount must be agreed upon by the majority of parents and such funds must be administered by the governing body.

In other words, should the SGB fulfil their tasks as set, they will need to work with and consult parents on a wide variety of issues. However, most complain that they have not been trained to do so and are unsure which procedures to follow.

A principal interviewed said that although the SGB did take decisions, they were not trained to do so and that this diminished the role they should be playing. Likewise, educators interviewed said that SGB members were unsure of their tasks and seldom took initiatives, rather relying on instructions from the principal.

DISCUSSION:

In July 1999 the Minister of Education announced a national mobilisation plan for education and training in South Africa under the slogan "Tirisano", that is, working together (Department of Education (DE) 1999:6). Priority three of the nine-point programme is entitled: *Schools*

must become centres of community life. Under this heading various aspects are discussed, including the role of school governing bodies. The minister acknowledges that this is a new concept for most communities in this country, thus warning that we must, ... "put great effort into ensuring that governing bodies, especially in poor communities, are given the support they need to become strong and viable" (DE 1999:9).

5.5.7 Principals and educators are not trained to implement parent involvement

Leadership plays a pivotal role in nurturing any kind of change. The principal as the key leader in a school should be able to plan, organise, motivate and direct people towards achieving genuine transformation and school improvement. However, to do so, the principal needs a clear understanding of the issue at hand. When the issue is parent involvement, most principals admit that they do not have a clear understanding of the concept and have never been trained to improve home-school relations and are not competent to advise their staff on the issue.

Educators interviewed agreed that they also were not trained in parent involvement but would like to be workshopped on how to work with parents in a collaborative home-school relationship. Educators in school C informed this research that the only person who talks to parents is the principal. They added that "when the parent leaves you, the educator is left with a problem learner in class."

Educators in all three participating schools were also concerned about their limited ability to work with parents as partners in the education of learners. As one educator remarked:

> *We are not sure which programmes they can be involved in. But with training*
> *we can reach some common ground.*

All educators interviewed indicated that they would be happy if they can be given the opportunity to involve parents of learners in their register class. An educator in school A stated:

> *I would want to see parents sitting with their children in my class so that they*
> *can experience what learners are going through in the classroom.*

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Different educators interviewed suggest different ways in which they would like to engage parents in the education of learners. However, it is only through training and strong leadership that they could have common goals and strategies to involve parents and caregivers for the benefit of the learners.

DISCUSSION:

Principals need to be able to fulfil their tasks. This often entails receiving appropriate training. One of the tasks of the principal is to improve collaboration with parents and the community. This involves careful planning and the ability to inspire both parents and educators. The principals in this research have not received such training. Moreover, educators are not taught how to involve parents in the education of their children. This lack of training of both principals and educators acts as a barrier to parent involvement and prevents the utilisation of an important resource for the school.

5.5.8 Lack of time for effective school-family-community partnerships

In communities where a parent(s) works far away from home, particularly in the case of single working mothers, there is little time left for parent involvement in schools. They are unable to attend meetings during weekdays as they leave work late and arrive home even later. Many more have to work during weekends as well. Educators interviewed in this research said:

> *Parents are not involved because of lack of time and a feeling that they have enough on their hands anyway.*

Moreover, meetings held during the weekends are also not well attended as parents have other social activities such as wedding, funerals and parties to attend.

Educators also pointed out that they too did not have enough time for parent involvement. An educator from school B confesses that:

As educators, we cannot isolate ourselves from the activities in our communities. So we attend, thereby shelving parent involvement in school for some other time.

Parents also appreciate the little time they get with educators in their schools. One parent applauded that by saying:

...educators in this school are approachable. They always listen to our problems and are ready to help. But sometimes as parents we feel that we are overloading them with our problems. This is why we choose to be quiet and leave them alone.

Principals like educators in all three participating schools agree that the many social functions in which their communities and school staff have to participate add to the difficulty of finding suitable time to discuss school problems.

DISCUSSION:

Lack of time is often blamed for the lack of effective home-school relations. However, the benefits (cf. 2.9) are so numerous that they should outweigh any obstacles to the implementation thereof. The realities are, however, that many people have to work to support their families which leaves educators with the task of fulfilling many roles which are the responsibility of parents. A solution is to have a variety of options for involvement for parents so that even those who are seldom at home, may have the opportunity of becoming involved in their children's schooling. Moreover, educators should be trained to involve a variety of caregivers, and not just wait for parents to arrive.

5.5.9 Grandparents as caregivers

Both educators and principals of the three participating schools informed this researcher that when meetings are called, mainly grandparents attend. When asked if schools cannot work with grandparents instead of parents, the principal of school C says:

Yes, we are working with them but they (the grandparents) just tell you that the people who should be doing this and that are not there so it is impossible to do what the school wants them to do for learners.

Educators in school B also mention that "*most of the grandparents 'sit back' and cannot give the support required by our school*".

Educators in school A also mention the presence of grandparents at meetings. They are even more outspoken in their opinion that this is of no help. One educator remarks:

I don't know what is wrong. Most of the attendance at meetings are of grandparents. And most of them cannot read and write. So what support do you get from them?

Similar situations were found in school B. One grandfather interviewed confessed of being "tired" just having to walk to school for this interview.

DISCUSSION:

Although statistics do not indicate how many children are living in the care of grandparents, as suggested by this study, the findings are supported by a study undertaken in Soweto. In that study it was found that a significant number of learners do not stay with their parents but rather with their grandparents (Chisholm & Vally 1996:37).

Education systems today encourage schools to recognise grandparents as important caregivers and the role that they play in supporting the emotional needs of the child. Therefore educators should begin to acknowledge the changing roles of families and family members and begin to work with grandparents in the education of the learners.

5.5.10 Lack of support for parenting task of parents/caregivers

Parents need to fulfil their role in the home as well as in their children's schools. To do so they need help. The school is well positioned to provide this assistance, but in may cases schools are not doing so.

Many families living in rural South African communities experience stress which affects the way they relate to their children and the school due to the problematic life situations: children becoming mothers in their teenage years, children contracting HIV/AIDS, children becoming sexually active too early in life and having to care for grandchildren whose mothers have left to stay with their boyfriends in squatter camps. An educator in school A stressed these problems: *Many parents are in extremely traumatic life situations and are struggling to survive.*

A situation such as this often leads to parents' avoiding the school for fear of being forced to accept more responsibilities. In addition, many parents are unemployed and are grappling with urgent problems of survival, leaving very little time and energy for parent involvement.

Educators in rural communities can assist by teaching parenting skills to parents and caregivers. This they can do by utilising the services of the school counsellor or inviting experts from different fields to come and give a talk to parents and learners on a particular topic. However, due to lack of facilities and resources in rural schools, programmes and extracurricular activities offered are unfortunately limited. Moreover, many educators interviewed agree that the general apathy of parents to education makes it difficult for educators to help them.

One educator in school C stated that parents just "dump the children at school" and then expect the "job to be done". Principals of the three schools also agree that "parents don't care" and that "they have left everything at school to the educator's responsibility." On the other hand, a parent at school A expressed willingness to receive help:

> *The school should invite and train us on better ways of helping our children*
> *to do better educationally. They must not leave it until the child fails.*

DISCUSSION:

Good parenting skills not only benefit learners and schools but parents also gain in a number of ways. Epstein (1997:10) lists the following:

- parent develop an understanding of and confidence about parenting, child and adolescent development and changes in home conditions for learning as children proceed through school.
- parents develop an awareness of own and others' challenges in parenting.
- parents develop a feeling of support from school and other parents.

Most parents interviewed in this research indicated that their children are "troublesome" and that they expect educators to help. In school C a parent informed this research that her child "bunks school" and this makes her "afraid of coming to educators to seek help."

Schools can support families by providing opportunities to strengthen parenting skills, enhance parent networks and minimise the stresses of parenting. Increasingly, educators deal with learners and families challenged by the absence of a parent(s) in the home. Such stressful circumstances can inhibit effective parenting practices and as a result, have negative effects on children's development and school achievement. Although educators should not be held responsible for meeting the needs of such families directly, they can learn to understand the connections between family functioning and child rearing. They can also learn to support families through parent education programmes, parent centres and referrals to other community or social services. In short, educators can be trained to work in "full-service schools" that provide families additional support services such as health and mental care, adult education and social services (Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider & Lopez 1997:40).

5.5.11 Limited use and understanding of parent volunteers

Classroom activities are an important facet in learner education but educators seem unwilling to include parents in such activities. Educators interviewed confessed to using parents as volunteers only in fundraising activities or to accompany learners on trips away from school,

while most seem unwilling to use volunteers to support learning in the classroom. Of the educators interviewed in this research, only one educator agreed to having parents sit with learners in class "to experience the feeling what learners go through during lessons." However, no educator interviewed has ever invited parents into their classrooms. One grandparent from school B remarked that he did not want to work within a class: *I cannot read and write. What shall I do in class?* Neither he nor the educator considered using him in other capacities such as telling children stories, or relating tales of his youth, or going out and collecting apparatus, et cetera.

In contrast, a parent in school C, suggested specific ways in which parent volunteers could be used such as contributing to the AIDS awareness campaign.

> *If the school can invite members of the community like us to come and educate learners about HIV/AIDS or they can get experts from elsewhere to come and teach learners about HIV/AIDS. That is what I would like to see happening in this school.*

DISCUSSION:

In the light of the high learner-educator ration in most South African schools, particularly in rural communities, the use of parents as volunteers in classroom activities is a viable option. However, educators need to be made aware of the ways in which volunteers can be used, recruited and trained (cf. 2.9).

5.5.12 Limited two-way communication

Communication is important in any relationship. Effective home-school relationship is no exception. Educators and principals interviewed in this research indicated that they communicate with parents at school meetings, parent conferences and by messages passed on through learners. At times notes are sent to parents. However, limited opportunities seem to exist for parents to communicate on their own initiative. Although educators maintain that parents are free to contact the school if they have a problem, they do not seem willing to meet parents at a time which is convenient for both parents and educators.

Most parents admitted that they were mostly contacted about negative issues, which does not promote a good relationship between the school and the home. One educator interviewed felt that schools often viewed parents as "difficult" and that this negatively affects their interpersonal relationship and good communication. However, most educators, parents and principals interviewed indicated that they needed training in conducting parent-educator conferences.

DISCUSSION:

The improvement of two-way communication between the home and school is necessary as effective communication can strengthen family involvement in a child's education. Through open and honest communication, parents and educators can begin to understand one another's ideas about learning, discipline and other topics. Such communication helps parents and educators to work together to improve an individual child's performance and to contribute to school's policies which may benefit all learners in school. Educator preparation can equip all educators with the skills to improve two-way communication between home and school, especially when difficult and sensitive issues have to be discussed (Shartrand et al 1997:30).

5.5.13 Little use made of the expertise in the community

Educators are ill prepared to work with parents and community members. This is partly due to lack of knowledge of how to get parents and the community involved in the education of learners. In all three participating schools, educators seemed unsure of how and when to involve members of the community to address either learners or parents. For example the school can invite traffic inspectors to speak on road safety, nurses on health issues and the police on crime and crime prevention. Likewise, various agencies can inform parents on HIV/AIDS, drugs and other related issues. However, in the schools included in the research this is seldom done.

On the other hand a parent in school C expressed concern about the lack of computers and computer lessons for both learners and educators in their school. He felt that the community should be approached for assistance:

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If parents can be used to get sponsorship to buy computers for learners at school ... and if big companies and institutions can be approached for sponsorship we can have learners starting computer literacy at school.

DISCUSSION:

In rural areas, the people living in the community are generally poor. Moreover, there are few industries in the area to approach for assistance. However, schools should realise that the word *community* must be defined to include all groups affected by the quality of education, not just people living near the school (Epstein 1995:702). More attention should be paid to preparing educators to work with the community or to link community resources to the goals of learners, families and schools. Likewise, parents living in deprived communities should be made aware of community resources which are available to them and their children and which can be used to improve their quality of life. Making use of community resources and expertise is important for all educators, particularly those who teach in economically disadvantaged communities.

This is supported by the Minister of Education (Department of Education (DE) 1999:6) who also includes the community in the government's plans for the future of education in the country.

There is a role in community schools for religious bodies, businesses, cultural groups, sports clubs and civic associations, both to serve their own requirements and to contribute to the school's learning programme both in and out of school hours.

5.6   SUMMARY

This chapter presents characteristics of individual informants and the findings derived from an analysis of the data collected during in-depth interviews and focus group interviews with informants from the three participating schools.

Parent involvement efforts are most successful when educators and schools assume that all parents want what is best for their children and can make important contributions to their

children's education. Thus, educators need to understand the benefits and barriers to family involvement in the education of learners. Therefore, educator preparation should include knowledge of skills in and positive attitudes towards involving parents (Shartrand et al 1997:23).

Chapter six will conclude with the implications for parent involvement and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVING PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

6.1   INTRODUCTION

In order to show that the aims of the research originally expressed in 1.4 have been achieved, a general overview of the investigation is provided in this chapter. A historical overview of educational provision for black people in South Africa prior and after 1994 is given as well as the theories underlying parent involvement. This is integrated with the key themes that emerged from the qualitative research. Furthermore a synthesis of the main findings are also provided in this chapter. Finally, recommendations for improving parent involvement derived from the research are briefly given.

6.2   OVERVIEW OF THE INVESTIGATION

Exactly what constitutes parent involvement is hard to determine as the term is used to describe a broad array of activities involving the school and home. But central to the success of parent involvement programmes in a school is that both educators and parents should take their place and become partners in the education of the learner (1.1.1).

6.2.1   The theoretical basis of parent involvement

In order to determine the role and place of parents in education, a literature study of different theories on parent involvement was undertaken. The emphasis was placed on disadvantaged and rural communities in South Africa and elsewhere in the world. Of particular importance were Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence (cf. 2.2), Swap's school-to-home transmission model (cf. 2.4) and Comer's staff and management team model (cf. 2.5).

All three theories emphasise that the learner should be placed central in a programme and that the ultimate goal should be to improve learner achievement and success. In line with changing family structures throughout the world, the emphasis of programmes are to accept any adult person, such as grandparents, as caregiver and include such persons in parent involvement activities.

Barriers to parent involvement are discussed in section 2.7. Findings emphasise that the main barrier is lack of school policy and practice of parent involvement (5.4.3). This justifies findings from the literature (chapter 2) which emphasise that school practices, not just family characteristics make a difference in determining whether parents become involved in and are informed about their children's education.

Benefits of parent involvement for learners (cf. 2.8.1), parents and the community (cf. 2.8.2) and for educators and the school (cf. 2.8.3) are well documented in the literature and the claims that parent involvement improves learner achievement, leads to decreased dropout rate, decreased behavioural problems and increased parent self-esteem are now beyond dispute.

6.2.2   Educational provision in the North West Province (former Bophuthatswana)

Educational provision in the North West Province was examined by means of a literature study. Due to its rurality, the lives of people of the North West Province were affected by aspects such as the migratory labour system (cf. 3.6.1) which separated many black families for long periods of time. Labourers lived under very poor conditions while families left behind lacked the bare necessities for survival. Many learners were forced to remain in rural areas while their fathers and/or mothers went to the cities to seek work. These children were usually left in the care of grandparents, who are themselves poor, illiterate and old and need assistance in providing for the educational needs of their grandchildren (cf. 5.4.10). The absence of biological parents resulted in the whole family structure, including the provision of education, changing (cf. 3.6.2).

Rural and disadvantaged communities are characterised by poverty, as are their schools. In the School Register of Needs Survey of 1997 (cf. 5.3.4) it was revealed that schools in the North West Province lack the necessary facilities and resources for effective education in the province. This was reaffirmed in this research. During interviews educators and parents described schools which have pit-latrines, no running water, no telephones (with the exception of one school), no staffroom, photocopier, or computers (cf. 3.4.2). These are found to be some of the backlog inherited from the past apartheid system which divided the country into Bantustans (cf. 3.5.1).

Now new education laws and policies are addressing the imbalances of the past regarding school governance, financing pupil enrolment and attempting to provide adequate resources for all learners. This is in line with the requirements of the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996, a document that governs the running of schools at national level (cf. 3.5.2).

6.2.3   Parent involvement in the North West Province (former Bophuthatswana)

Since 1994 parents in schools in the North West Province are represented in schools by virtue of SGBs which have full statutory powers (cf. 3.5.3). However, there is lack of training of SGBs in the province (cf. 5.4.6) and most SGBs are unable to fulfil their roles in schools. Some SGB members have lost interest and many schools are compelled to co-opt interested parent members into the governance structures of the school. Although this is in line with the prescription by government (DE 1999:6), these co-opted members also feel the need to be trained in matters such as handling the finances of the schools, developing a code of conduct and improving parent and community involvement at their schools.

6.2.4   The research design

The necessary background to parent involvement models and theories was explored in chapters two and three of this research study. They provided a detailed account of parent involvement in rural communities of the North West Province (cf. 3.5.3) and of factors affecting involvement of parents in such communities and schools (cf. 3.6). A qualitative approach (4.5)

was considered appropriate for an exploratory study of barriers to parent involvement in education in rural communities in the North West Province. Three primary schools in the rural areas of Majaneng, Bosplaas and Marokolong near Temba were identified. Access to these schools was granted by the local district education office (cf. 4.5.1) and a period was spent as participant observer in each of the schools (4.4.1). Semi-structured in-depth individual interviews with principals of the three schools (cf. 4.4.2.1) as well as focus group interviews with three groups of parents and three groups of educators were conducted. Data thus obtained were analysed according to procedures typical of qualitative research which included organising the data according to emerging key themes (4.5.7). The themes relate to the context in which life is experienced in a rural environments (5.3) and within rural schools (5.4). The barriers to parent involvement as experienced by both educators and parents were identified (5.5).

6.3   SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section of the research study integrates prior research and theory reviewed in chapters two and three with significant themes uncovered in the qualitative investigation. The findings relate to the barriers to parent involvement in rural areas of North West Province.

6.3.1   The changing family structure

The migratory labour system (3.6.1) of the apartheid era affected the black family structure and contributed to the disintegration of this social structure. Many children were either left alone or in the care of grandparents when biological parents went to seek employment in cities and towns. This resulted in a number of children having to leave school to seek employment themselves as the money parents sent back home was insufficient to take care of the family's needs. Although the migrant labour system is decreasing many adults still leave their families in rural areas to seek employment elsewhere. According to the participants in this research most are still not able to provide in the financial needs of their families and most children and relatives remaining in rural areas live in poverty.

The migratory labour system brought about a loss of the cohesive force of the extended family structure of uncles and aunts which once linked a wider circle of people who were related by blood or marriage. This network of relatives is decreasing and family units are growing smaller. This has impacted negatively on the family and its social system (Ndzimande 1996:51). It has also negatively impacted on the amount and type of care school-going children are getting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The rural black family structure needs the support of people at all levels of society such as the school, the church, big business, non-governmental organisation (NGOs), community leaders and others to work together in supporting the family and its values. Both educators and parents should work together in order to restore the bond that existed in black families in the past. Educators should begin to include parents in governance structures and to guide them in better ways of rearing children. This suggests a positive starting point for parent involvement programmes in school. In addition, the schools should include classes for caregivers who are taught basis parenting skills. This is in line with Epstein's typology (2.3).

6.3.2   Lack of resources and facilities in rural schools

Most rural schools are housed in old buildings with no proper playgrounds, no teaching aids and no administrative help (cf. 5.4.1). Some schools even share their school buildings with other schools. Moreover, there are no training facilities to develop skills for both educators and parents (5.4.6). These were reported by informants in the three selected schools as well as through the participant observation carried out in this investigation. Most informants agreed that their communities are poor and unemployed and thus are unable to support their schools financially.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The physical environment of schools influences the way of life and morale of both educators and parents. Therefore, SGBs in different schools should be encouraged to seek ways of

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collecting money to improve the physical environment of their schools. Likewise business should invest in the future of this country by supporting the structures which are to educate the youth. In addition, parents and educators should make more use of the expertise of the parent body by making use of parents for maintenance of buildings, protection of school property and administrative duties at schools.

6.3.3 Poverty impinges on education and parent involvement

Parents and caregivers in rural areas are unable to fulfil their financial obligations to schools. Many schools are also insensitive to their plight and use all meetings with parents to discuss this issue. Often this serves to alienate the parents further. In addition, some learners leave school before completing their studies to seek employment, thus increasing the dropout rate and illiteracy that is already high among learners in rural schools.

RECOMMENDATION

Parent involvement can help to encourage the positive behaviour of learners at school (2.8.1). Learners who always see and feel their parents' presence at school tend to develop positive ways of thinking, thereby taking their school work seriously. In addition the school should aim at encouraging a culture of learning among learners and to improve communication with parents. Schools could also use community resources such as social workers to help learners needing specialised help. Both parents and educators need assistance in dealing with deviant behaviour, and this should be provided. A system should be sought whereby parents and caregivers who are unable to meet their financial obligations are able to render some service to the school in lieu of payment.

6.3.4 Grandparents as caregivers of young children

Many children in rural areas are left in the care of grandparents. Thus people, even in their seventies, are taking care of children who are still in primary school (5.2). This could lead to a number of problems. Grandparents usually belong to a low socio-economic strata, are

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illiterate and are often not inclined to become involved in the school activities of their grandchildren. Educators also mention the problem of children being absent on days that grandparents have to receive their old-age pensions, as these children have to look after the younger children at home.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The problem of grandparents not taking full responsibility of learners and children left in their care (5.4.12) can only be solved if biological parents begin to reclaim their place in the family. However, this is not always possible as parents have to work far from their homes. The realities are therefore that parents have to leave young children in the care of grandparents, particularly when they are unable to afford pre-schools for these children. Community leaders could avail their services such as child-minding at the pension payout points for those children who cannot be left alone at home, so that learners are not forced to absent themselves from school for reasons such as these.

6.3.5   Lack of school policy on parent involvement

None of the three schools identified for study in this research has developed a written policy on parent involvement (5.4.3). Moreover, the schools do not even have a verbal agreed-upon policy for the role they wish parents to play in the school and the steps they are planning to accomplish this.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Lack of clear school policy is a major barrier to parent involvement. It is therefore recommended that schools particularly those in previously disadvantaged and rural communities should formulate written policies which will address aspects of parent involvement. Epstein's typology of home-school relations (cf. 2.3), Swap's partnership model (cf. 2.4) or Comer's school development programme (cf. 2.5) can be used to guide policy making for parent involvement. However, in all cases the programmes chosen need to be

relevant to the community they serve. Thus Solomon (1991:360) warns: Parent involvement that boosts student learning doesn't just happen. Schools should, therefore, plan and introduce programmes that correspond to the specific problems and dynamic of each community.

6.3.6   Limited use of parent volunteers

Parent volunteers are seldom used in schools in rural communities (5.4.12). Where volunteers are used, their help is usually unrelated to learner education. Informants in this research reported that often parents are given tasks such as serving food, accompanying children on school trips et cetera, and are never engaged in the classroom as aides. Educators themselves feel threatened by the presence of parents in the classroom.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Parents need to feel that their efforts are being appreciated. Thus limiting their involvement to serving food and attending sports days at schools does not indicate a willingness on the part of teachers to accept parents as equal partners in the education of the learner. Educators need to be taught the value of class volunteers, as they can be valuable in many other ways. The presence of class aides can substitute educators who are ill, those attending in-service training courses and so forth. Educators need also to be taught ways of preparing parents for work in classrooms. Swap's curriculum enrichment model (cf. 2.4.3) addresses the issue of school volunteers.

Parent volunteers as aides in the classroom can be used to address the problem of reading and story telling particularly in classrooms where learners with different IQ's are put together. While the educator concentrates on one group, the class aides is busy with the other, so that no learners are left unattended at any other time.

6.3.7   Limited opportunity for two-way communication

Research has shown that parent involvement is an unfamiliar concept in schools in rural communities. This could be the result of the alienation between schools and their communities

originating in the apartheid period before 1994 (cf. 3.2.2). In rural communities parent involvement is mostly understood to mean parents' financial support (paying school fees) by the community. Otherwise parent involvement may also be equated with attending parents meetings. Schools seldom communicate the projects aimed at uplifting the community in which they are situated. Parents also are never given the opportunity to initiate programmes for the school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Parent/community involvement means that schools should identify resources and services in the community that aim to strengthen home-school-community relationships in which school programmes, family practices and learner development are integrated (Epstein 1995:704). This means that schools should be able to reach out to communities by way of talking to parents so that together they can help to solve societal problems that can impact on the education of learners.

6.3.8   Lack of training of school governing bodies

Although extensive education changes have been proposed since 1994, there have been difficulties in providing sufficient government finance to implement the policies. At this time the economy and tax base of the country are not strong enough to fund the many proposed changes set out in the various policy documents (Hartshorne 1999:106). What makes the situation even more problematic is that broad policy is determined by the national Department of Education, while the provincial departments are responsible for the implementation of policies (Vally & Spleen 1998:3). One structure that could facilitate parent involvement is the SGB. One of the tasks of the SGB is to facilitate parent involvement. However since few of these bodies have been trained, this task is seldom fulfilled.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The training of school government bodies can only be successful if the government can set aside funds for this purpose. However, if this aspect of parent involvement is going to be

neglected, schools will operate with governance structures that will lack skills in performing their duties. Thus the government's proposed *capacity building programmes* for school governors should be implemented.

6.3.9 Principals and educators lack skills on how to involve parents

The nature of decision making and political structure of schools have changed since the democratically elected governing bodies were established (Squelch 2000:142). However, principals are often reluctant to share power and authority and therefore often do not encourage parents to become involved in educational matters. Moreover, most educators are not skilled in involving parents and therefore support the notion that education should be "left to the professionals".

RECOMMENDATIONS

Principals should be encouraged to change from the old system of management such as authoritarian, hierarchical and top-down approaches to new approaches of human resource management, school planning and administration which are more in line with democratic principles of management. This includes the notion of encouraging parents and care givers to become equal partners in the education of their children. In addition, educators should be encouraged to welcome parents and caregivers and work in collaboration with the home to the benefit of all children.

6.3.10 Lack of time for effective home-school partnership

In most rural communities, parents work far from home and are unable to get involved in the education of learners (5.4.9). Those who are unemployed just do not make time to become involved leaving the education in the hands of schools and elderly grandparents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Parents need to get involved in the education of learners. Therefore, schools need to find a suitable time for meetings with parents. Likewise, a variety of parent involvement options should be available so that all parents can be accommodated. Thus, schools may also develop programmes where parents working away from home can attend during certain days and times while those who are unemployed may attend in the afternoons. The aim is to get all parents involved in the education of their children.

Finally, many barriers to parent involvement are general and include aspects such as a lack of a policy on parent involvement, or ineffective communication between the school and the home and the home and school. However, some barriers such as poverty or having grandparents as caregivers are specific to the community the school serves. Thus every school needs to know the children, their families and the community they serve.

6.4   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings of this study on barriers to parent involvement in education in rural communities support the use of a qualitative methodology as participants are given the opportunity to discuss issues which they consider to be important from their own frame of reference. This also assists the researcher who is trying to understand the particular context in which entities are defined (Smith 1987:174).

Because of lack of knowledge and understanding of how to overcome barriers to parent involvement on the part of both educators and parents, programmes that coordinate and integrate parent involvement into school and classroom should be put in place so that both parties should know where to start in building home-school partnerships.

Because little has been done to research parent involvement in black communities, particularly within rural areas, many aspects still requires more detailed research, such as:

- Strategies to include illiterate caregivers in learner education.

- The role of parents in maintaining a culture of learning in rural schools.

- Training of school governing body structures to perform their task efficiently.

- Training of educators and principals to work with parents in schools.

- Strategies to improve communication between the home and the school.

- Research on the use of community leaders to improve home-school-community involvement.

6.5 LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

The primary goal of this research is to understand barriers that prevent effective parent involvement in rural schools from the perspective of the role players.

The small size of the sample, typical of qualitative research is the obvious limitation of the study and cannot support a general theory of barriers to parent involvement. However, this was never the intention and the rich descriptions typical of qualitative research allow for a better understanding of the phenomenon of parent involvement in a rural area. This was the primary goal of the research and therefore no attempt is made to generalise or quantify the findings.

This research was purposefully limited to primary schools in rural communities. The participants and schools were chosen on the basis of their willingness to take part in the research which implies that different results may be obtained under different situations.

Existing literature overview (chapters 2 & 3) provides valuable background to the interviews thus suggesting that semi-structured in-depth interviews with principals (4.5.7.2) and semi-structured focus group interviews with educators and parents of the three participating schools (4.5.7.3) were suitable data collection strategies in this study. Following data analysis, findings were presented according to themes that emerged from the informants' accounts. Data were presented in descriptive form only and there are no attempts to generalise or quantify the findings.

Information gathered from this research study has yielded key areas (5.2, 5.3, 5.4) which have contributed to a better understanding of barriers to parent involvement in education. These key areas have indicated aspects in which investigations for further research can be done (6.4).

6.6   SUMMARY

Parents are currently represented by governors serving on the school governing bodies. However, it is clear that this is not sufficient to address all the barriers found to inhibit parent involvement in schools. Moreover, many of the parents serving on these bodies are ill prepared for their tasks. These structures, therefore do very little to encourage a broader interpretation of parent involvement. In addition, the fact that no schools have policies on involving parents results in parent involvement not being co-ordinated or organised and not being broadly defined. The implication is that the benefits of parent involvement as discussed in section 2.8 will not be achieved. This is unfortunate, as schools in rural areas are disadvantaged and could greatly benefit by comprehensive parent involvement programmes being instituted in their schools. However, the success of any parent involvement strategy depends on how well it matches up with a parent's needs. Thus the key is to know whom a child's parent or caregiver is, to understand the circumstances under which they live, and to have in a school's repertoire as many strategies for involvement as possible. Nowhere is this more true than in a rural area in North West Province.

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STATEMENT OF CONSENT

As a registered student for the degree MEd (University of South Africa) I am conducting a limited research project on barriers to parent involvement in education in rural communities of the North West Province.

In this research project, I would like to conduct semi-structural individual interviews with principals and semi-structured focus group interviews with parents and educators of the three selected schools. All interviews will be audio-taped and field notes will be made of comments recorded during the discussion. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of participants as well as that of the selected schools.

The analysis of data will be included in the dissertation and may be used in future in articles published in professional and scientific journals.

Any person(s) willing to participate in such an interview within the specified confines and safeguard may sign below to indicate consent.

School: ....

Interviewee: ....

Date: ....

GENERAL INFORMATION: PRINCIPALS

PERSONAL INFORMATION:

Full names: ....

Age: ....

Home language: ....

Marital status: ....

Gender: ....

PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION:

Highest qualification: ....

Number of years in the teaching profession: ....

Number of years as principal: ....

Registration with the South African Council of Educators (SACE): ....

INFORMATION ON SCHOOL:

Name of school: ....

Number of learners in school: ....

Number of educators in school: ....

Number of classrooms: ....

Platoon school Y/N: ....

FACILITIES AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF:

Does the school have a staffroom?: ....

Does the school have an office for the principal?: ....

Does the school have administrative staff?: ....

Is there a telephone at school? ....

Does the school have the following?:

        −   computer(s):   **Y/N**   ....

        −   a photocopier: **Y/N**   ....

        −   a fax machine: **Y/N**   ....

Does the school have electricity?:   **Y/N**   ....

Is there running water in the school?: **Y/N**   ....

Does the school have toilets?:   **Y/N**   ....

IN-SERVICE TRAINING FOR PRINCIPAL AND STAFF

Has anyone in the school attended a course on parent involvement?:**Y/N**   ....

How often are you able to attend courses/workshops to improve your skills?: ....

....

How often are staff able to attend courses/workshops to improve their skills?:...........................

....

....

GENERAL INFORMATION: EDUCATORS

PERSONAL INFORMATION:

Full names: ....

Age: ....

Home language: ....

Marital status: ....

Gender: ....

Number of own children attending this school: ....

If none, state type of school/tertiary institution attended by own children: ....

....

....

Do you live in the same village?: ....

PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION:

Highest qualification: ....

Years of teaching experience: ....

Standard/grade presently taught: ....

Registration with the South African Council of Educators (SACE): **Y/N** ....

IN-SERVICE TRAINING FOR STAFF:

Have you ever attended a course on parent involvement?: **Y/N** ....

How often are you able to attend courses/workshops to improve your skills?: ....

....

....

GENERAL INFORMATION: PARENTS

PERSONAL INFORMATION:

Full names: ....

Age: ....

Marital status: ....

Number of own children/grandchildren attending this school: ....

Do you have any foster children living with you?: ....

ACCOMMODATION:

Do you own the house you are living in?: **Y/N** ....

How many people live in that house?: ....

How long have you been living in this village?: ....

Do you have running water in the house/on the stand?..

Does the house have electricity?: ....

Number of bedrooms in the house?: ....

Is there a study area for learners in this house?: ....

OCCUPATIONS OF FAMILY MEMBERS:

Level of education of wife: ....

Type of employment of wife: ....

If not employed, when last did you work full time?: ....

....

Level of education of husband: ....

Type of employment of husband: ....

If not employed, when last did you work full time?: ....

....

If grandfather/grandmother in the family, are you on state pension?: **Y/N** ....

Does anyone else in the house contribute to family income? If so, who? ....

....

TRAINING OR WORKSHOPS FOR SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES (SGB's)

Have you ever attended workshops on parent involvement? **Y/N** ....

Has any of the other parents attended a course on parent involvement?: **Y/N**...........................

INTERVIEW GUIDE: PRINCIPALS

This guide was used only to ensure that important issues were included in the discussion. At no time was the interview guide used to dictate the course of the conversation and all participants were allowed to raise issues which were of concern to them.

1.   INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

How would you define parent involvement?

Why do you think parents are important in the education of learners?

2.   SCHOOL POLICY ON PARENT INVOLVEMENT

What is the policy of this school on parent involvement?

Is it a written policy/unwritten policy?

3.   SCHOOL GOVERNING STRUCTURES

Is there a governing structure in place in this school?

What are the tasks of the school governing body?

In what way has the school governing body been trained to fulfil its tasks?

In what way does the SGB assist in getting parents involved in this school?

4.   COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND FAMILIES

In what way do you communicate with parents/caregivers?

Are there any opportunities for parents/caregivers to come to school and talk to educators?

How often are such opportunities created?

5.   PARENTS AS VOLUNTEERS

In what ways do parents assist the school?

Who shows them or informs them what to do if they are asked to help?

6.   PARENTS AND HOMEWORK

What is the policy of the school on the inclusion of parents in academic matters?

To what extent are parents involved in their children's homework?

In what way are parents taught to support learning at home?

7.   PARENTING

To what extent does the school assist parents in their parenting tasks?

In what way has this been linked to the issue of HIV/AIDS?

Do you think parents in this community are rearing their children in the correct manner?

8.   COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

In what way are businesses and churches involved in the school in this community?

9.   EXTERNAL FACTORS

In what way do societal problems such as poverty and changing family structure impinge on the school?

How do these factors influence parent involvement at the school?

How do you see the future of rural schools and parent involvement in the coming years?

10.   BARRIERS TO PARENT INVOLVEMENT

What barriers prevent proper parent involvement in schools?

What should schools do to encourage parent involvement?

INTERVIEW GUIDE: EDUCATORS

This guide was used only to ensure that important issues were included in the discussion. At no time was the interview guide used to dictate the course of the conversation and all participants were allowed to raise issues which were of concern to them.

1. INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

Explain what you understand by the term parent involvement.

Why would you think parents are important in the education of their children?

Describe an incident in which parents have helped you with regard to a particular problem child in your class.

2. PARENTING

How would you describe the relationship between parents and their children in this community?

How would you describe a good parent?

To what extend are parents involved in the lives of their children in this community?

How does HIV/AIDS affect the lives of parents and their children in this community?

3. FAMILY STRUCTURE AND HOUSING

What family types are prevalent in this community?

What is family life like in this community?

How are learners in this community affected by the structure of their family and circumstances under which they live?

What is the status of the learner in the home?

Who generally looks after learners after school hours?

4. GENERAL UPBRINGING AND CHILD EDUCATION

What is the role of the school in the upbringing and education of the learners?

What role do guardians, particularly grandparents play in the education of learners?

How does the absence of biological parents affect the upbringing of learners in this community?

5. COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

How often do you contact parents?

How do you contact them?

Are parents able to speak to you about their children?

Are opportunities created for you to meet with parents/caregivers?

6. PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

What is your experience of parent involvement?

What do you do as an educator to support parent involvement activities in this school?

In what ways are parents involved in your class?

Do you think parents are important in the education of their children?

7. BARRIERS TO PARENT INVOLVEMENT

What problems/barriers prevent proper parent involvement in this community?

What should schools do to encourage parent involvement?

8. TEACHER TRAINING AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Did you have formal training equip you to work with parents?

What has experience taught you regarding parent involvement?

9. THE SCHOOL AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT

In what ways can parent involvement be improved?

What role does the principal play in home-school relations?

Who should initiate parent involvement - the school or the community?

10. CONCLUDING REMARKS

What is your attitude towards parent involvement?

What future is there for schools which support parent involvement?

INTERVIEW GUIDE: PARENTS

This guide was used only to ensure that important issues were included in the discussion. At no time was the interview guide used to dictate the course of the conversation and all participants were allowed to raise issues which were of concern to them.

1. INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

Does being a parent place you in any better position to help your child with school work?

Does helping your child with homework help you to understand what your child is being taught at school?

How do you think you can assist your child to succeed at school?

2. RAISING CHILDREN

What is your opinion of today's child?

Do you ever talk to your children about their future?

Do you advise your children on issues which affect the community such as HIV/AIDS?

3. EDUCATION, HOMEWORK AND PARENTS

How is the homework of your child controlled?

How often does the school issue progress reports of learners in your school?

Are you happy with your child's grades?

In what aspect of life do you think your child needs to improve?

Have you talked to your child's educators about this?

In what ways do you think parents should be involved in the education of their children?

4.   COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE HOME AND THE SCHOOL

How do you find out what your child is doing at school?

Do you feel accepted at your child's school?

Have you attended a class register meeting at your child's school?

How often do you attend parents' meetings?

Are educators at your child's school friendly?

What is the general atmosphere of your child's school?

5.   SCHOOL SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

What social functions does your child's school engage you in?

Do parents play a role at social functions at the school?

Do you attend these social functions?

6.   PARENTS AS VOLUNTEERS

Are parents asked to help at school (such as with accompanying learners on trips, preparing food and catering at school and so forth)?

Do parents help in the classroom?

Are there opportunities for parents to become involved in the education of their children?

What can the school do to promote parent involvement?

7.   CONCLUDING REMARKS

How do you compare a child whose parents are involved with the one whose parents are not?

How do you see the future of those schools whose parents are involved?

INTERVIEW BETWEEN THE RESEARCHER,
MARGARET MAPHUTI KGAFFE (MMK),
AND PARENTS OF SCHOOL C

INTRODUCTION

The following is a transcript of the interview with parents of school C. the interview, as in all interviews with parents of the other two part6icipating schools was done in Northern Sotho but was translated into English. During translation, care was taken not to lose meaning. The tapes and field notes are safely stored for future reference. Pseudonyms were used in order to prevent recognition.

MMK: What is the medium of instruction in your school?

Anna: Setswana and English.

MMK: As parents, are you satisfied with Setswana as medium of instruction or would you rather have only English as medium of instruction?

Lefoka: No. You see, in the past the school used Northern Sotho. But later Setswana was introduced. Now the constitution says other black languages can be introduced. But we are still using Setswana and English. We would be happier if other vernacular languages can be introduced.

MMK: .   As parents, do you feel accepted in your children's school?

Monare: Yes, we are. Like when we want to view our children's books, (because some are kept at school) we are allowed to check our children's books for progress or can sometimes request to take them out for the weekend. That is also allowed. One can still agree with the educators on the number of days one wishes to keep the books for proper checking. This is the kind of relationship we want with educators of our children.

MMK: How often to you attend parent meetings?

Martha: I do not know how many times but meetings are called quite often. Sometimes if the school has something to discuss with us like when learners go for music competitions, they call us.

MMK: Are you happy with the attendance in your parents meetings?

Lefoka: Many parents don't attend. Sometimes the attendance is less than half the parents of learners in this school. It is important that parents should attend so that they are able to learn from other parents with similar problems on how best they can look after their own children. Our children are our own responsibility as parents.r

MMK: How does the absence of parents in meetings affect the progress at school and of learners?

Jan: If as parents we do not attend the school is unable to communicate its dealing with learners to parents. It is unable to reach and ask parents for help because there's no one to listen. In this way the progress of the school is impaired. Thus parents should attend as their contributions are needed by the school.

MMK: What barriers/problems prevent you from coming in and taking your place as parents in this school?

Lefoka: You see children of today are not like those of the past. They grow up and mature quickly with the time. So much that primary school children are already engaged in sexual activities. For parents who are afraid or cannot talk to their children, this becomes a problem that may stop parents from talking to their children's educators. Parents in this village are afraid to talk about sexual matters to their children. This becomes a problem even for the learners when they go back to school. They go to school with wondering minds, with unanswered questions and with no one to turn to thus they create a big 'bridge' between their parents and the school. Now educational problems begin for them and the parents can't handle that. Sometimes teenage children carry dangerous weapons to school. If as parents we are unable to talk to our children, then educators will not know about these weapons. But parents who are afraid of their own children, deny educators the opportunity to know and understand the behaviour of certain learners.

MMK: What other problems can prevent you as parents from associating freely with the school?

Anna: Well, the other problem is when parents are unable to pay school fees and buy books for their children. Each time there's a meeting, we think of the money we ow and that we are going to be reminded of that. So we decide not to attend. We do not have money and we are unemployed. The situation is so much out of control that we are afraid even to talk about it. We just feel that we want to be quiet about it.

MMK: Are the educators of your children friendly?

Mmalehu: You know what, people have different personalities but the educators in this school are approachable. They always listen to our problems and are ready to help but sometimes as parents we feel that we are overloading them with our own problems. This is why we choose to be quiet and leave them alone.

MMK: Do you feel accepted only when the principal is in or even when she is not in?

Mmalehu: Whether the principal is in or not, we feel at home. The educators in this school are friendly. But if your child bunks school, you never know what to say to the teachers. And that is why as parents we prefer to leave the problem to the educators. They are good to us.

Lefoka: (interrupting). But as for children who bunk school, I don't believe that this can make parents to be afraid of meeting with their children's educators because educators are there to help. Every learner in our school should be in the school yard by eight o'clock. If and when a child is seen roaming around the streets any time after eight o'clock, parents should want to know why. And the best thing is to talk to the educators about this. the only children who should be out of the school yard after eight o'clock are those of the other school we share buildings with because they have another group of learners who start at eleven o'clock. Again payment of fees should not be a problem. As parents we should learn to help our children with homework. In this way we will be able to see whether our children attend school regularly.

MMK: How do you think non payment of fees can be solved?

Lefoka: We are poor. But sometimes after doing odd jobs we are able to earn a little money. Saving R10,00 every week can help one to build up an amount of R40,00 in four months. With this money we can pay school fees for our children. Many

MMK: parents lack a way of saving money. But if they can follow my example (Mr Lefoka's) our schools can begin to see many children paying fees by the end of the year.

MMK: Does your school have drug problems among learners?

Martha: Not to my knowledge. Maybe it is because learners in this school are still to young to deal in drugs. An again, educators would have long notified us about it. I don't think there is any.

MMK: How was the SGB elected in your school?

Martha: We voted and wrote the selected names down. Later the names with more votes were put aside from those with lesser votes. The one with more votes became the chairperson. The others with lesser votes became the secretary, treasurer and additional members as well. At least we are happy because we chose these people into office.

MMK: Who does admissions at school?

Jan: Educators and the principal admit new learners every October of the year preceding the new one.

MMK: If as parents you were invited to come and assist in admissions, would you agree to do it? How would you feel about it Jan?

Jan: I would agree even if I cannot read and write. I would guard against thieves because educators collect money on registration. I would invite other parents like me particularly fathers and grandfathers of learners in our school to come and help to stop thieves from stealing in our school.

MMK: Who draws the budget for your school?

Anna: The SGB and the principal draw the budget. They use the money to buy what ever the school needs and then they come back to report to us (parents) what exactly was bought.

Puleng: (interrupting). To add to that, I am a member of the SGB. We are not totally conversant with drawing the budget. The principal helps a lot. If they could train us on what to do for the school as SGB members, that could help.

MMK: Puleng you are the SGB member. Have you ever been trained to accept your role as the SGB member? I mean were you ever workshopped on the whole concept of rendering service to the school as an SGB member?

Puleng: No. only the chairperson and the principal attend.

MMK: Why is this so, Puleng?

Puleng: I think it is because they always hire a small car to take only a few people to the workshop. It will be the driver of the car, the principal and one member and usually the chairpe4rson of the SGB. But they give us feedback so that we are able to report back to the other parents what was said at the workshop with education officials. These are only one day workshops.

MMMK: How often are workshops for SGB's held in your district?

Puleng: Since last year (2000) when new SGB's were elected, there has been only one workshop. That was sometimes in April this year (2001). You see they are not enough. We want to learn more but they don't teach us.

MMK: As parents, what would you like to see happening in your school, that which would make you happy about the education of your children?

Lefoka: If we could get sponsorship to buy computers for the learners and the school as well as to conduct science fairs for learners. Learners would develop computer skills early in life so that when they leave school they are already computer literate. Educators too would be able to learn computer skills as well. In this way they would be able to teach such skills, so that we can eventually have a computer literate community in our school. Education today requires that every learner should be computer literate. Big companies and institutions can be approached for sponsorship. That is if learners, parents and educators can work together in order to win the confidence of sponsors. Computer literacy can help learners when they leave school to find jobs. Computer education in colleges is expensive - up to R3000 per year. But if learners can start it at school even those parents who cannot pay for college education, their children are safe because of computer literacy education from their schools.

MMK: As parents what advice would you give educators regarding the way your children should be taught?

Puleng: There is one problem that I see with learners who repeat their grades every year and educators are inclined to 'push' such learners to the next class after some time. This is not right. Educators should identify learners with learning problems early in life, so that they can recommend a suitable school for such a learner. You see it is pointless to take a learner to the next class if that learner has not learned anything from the previous years. When such a learner realises that he/she cannot cope they become demoralised. They ultimately leave school with nowhere to go. Such learners can be taken to the relevant school where their potential can be developed properly.

MMK: Jan, what other advice is there for educators regarding the education of your children?

Lefoka: Well, I can say educators should start talking to learners about sexuality matters, particularly about HIV/AIDS diseases. Aids is a disease that kills young people and therefore learners should be taught in school on ways of staying clean of the disease. The more quiet, the worse the attack. Learners should be taught at an earlier age on safer ways of evading HIV/AIDS such as abstinence or using condoms. Learners should know the facts of life. They should know that today older people burry young ones due to the disease HIV/AIDS, when it expected that the young people should be the ones to burry their older relatives. So HIV/AIDS education should be started from school. Again if teachers are unable to teach learners about HIV/AIDS, they should invite people like us (Lefoka and others) to educate these learners or they can get experts from elsewhere to come and teach learners about HIV/AIDS. That is what I would like to see happening in this school.

MMK: What dissatisfactions do you have with your school?

Mmalehu: As parents of learners in this school, we are unhappy about the situation here. We are two schools sharing the same buildings and these belong to our school. Our classes are overcrowded due to lack of space because some of our classrooms are used by the other school. We are not happy about the situation.

M MK: And how do you know which leaner belongs to which school?

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Puleng: The schools use different school uniforms and each school has its own principal and staff and they hold different assent. The other school has even opted for platooning due to shortage of classes.

MMK: Don't learners get lost particularly early in the year when the schools are so close by each other?

Anna: No, because they can follow those of the same uniforms. But we are not just happy about this situation. We are not sure if our children receive the proper education due to overcrowding. Educators also complain about this kind of situation. They say learners are packed up to the doors and that there is virtually no space to move around the classroom. Educators also say that they do not even know all the learners in their classes because they (the learners) can hide behind others if they don't want to be noticed. We are really unhappy about this kind of situation.

MMK: Thank you very much.

AMANDEBELE-A-MOLETLANE TRIBAL AUTHORITY
PO MAJANENG
HAMMANSKRAAL
0400

29 September 1976

At a meeting of the Amandebele-A-Moletlane Tribal Authority held on Thursday the 23 September 1976, it was resolved:

(a)   That a meeting of the Amandebele Tribal Authority and the Amandebele Tribe, Moretele District under Chieftainess F.H. Kekane, hereby withdraw from membership of the Moretele Regional Authority, the Bophuthatswana Legislative Assembly and Government with effect from the 1 October 1976, in order to join hands with the other Amandebele Tribes elsewhere.

(b)   The Amandebele Tribe together with other tribes voluntarily formed what was then known as the Kgatla - Ndebele Regional Authority, now known as the Moretele Regional Authority, which in turn affiliated to the then Tswana Territorial Authority, presently known as the Bophuthatswana Government.

(c)   By then it was hoped that our traditions, language and culture would not be interfered with by this move; however, as time moved on, this assumption was proved to be wrong. Just as water and oil cannot go together, so has been our life as Ndebeles with the Tswana people.

(d)   On the surface, there appeared to be peace, but deep in the heart of the life of the Tribe, erosion was busy eating up the traditions of the Tribe, its Language and Culture; hence after lengthy and most careful discussions and consultations with the people and the Tribal Council, it became clear that the Amandebele Tribe cannot

afford to forsake their traditions, Language and Culture, hence the final decision as above stated.

(e)   The Amandebele Tribe wishes to thank the Bophuthatswana Government for the years we have been together, but that it is clear that just as they (Tswanas) would like to preserve their language, culture and customs, so do the Amandebele Tribe.

SIGNED ON THIS 29$^{\text{TH}}$ DAY OF SEPTEMBER 1976 AT KEKANASTAD ON BEHALF OF THE TRIBAL COUNCIL AND THE TRIBE.

1.   CHIEFTAINNESS: E.H. KEKANA
2.   COUNCILLORS:
2.1   CHAIRMAN: Joseph Kekana:
2.2   Alpheus Monoyane:
2.3   Moses Kekana:
2.4   Phillip Madisha:
2.5   E.J. Motau: