TEACHER EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT:  
A CASE STUDY OF TWO PRIMARY SCHOOLS

by

MASIYE EPHRAIM MAKGOPA

submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION –WITH SPECIALISATION IN CURRICULUM STUDIES

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: DR M L MOKHELE

December 2012
DECLARATION

Student Number: 3519-101-5

I declare that TEACHER EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF TWO PRIMARY SCHOOLS is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

_________________________________________  _________________________
SIGNATURE                                                                 DATE

(Mr M E Makgopa)
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my dear parents,

the late Mr Motumpana William Makgopa
and
the late Mrs Mapitsi Christina Makgopa,

who so much wanted to see me an educated man, even though they never entered through the doors of a school as learners themselves.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge the valuable contribution that the following people made towards my study. They really made it possible for me to complete it:

- my supervisor, Dr ML. Mokhele, who guided me in my new adventure. She always gave me courage to soldier on, even when the chips were down. Her assistance has been instrumental throughout my studies.

- Prof LC. Jita, for introducing me to the field of research.

- my wife, Cynthia, for giving me courage and, more importantly, the chance to study.

- my children, Tselahale, Matome and Maphuti, for their patience, as sometimes I did not have time for them. They excitedly waited for me to finish.

- Mr MOH Mochaki, for encouraging me to enrol for my masters’ degree.

- the educators at the two primary schools where I collected the data.

and to

God Almighty, for giving me strength, health and insight.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 1:</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 2:</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 THE CONCEPT PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 TYPES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND CULTURE</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 3: 33

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 33

3.1 INTRODUCTION 33
3.2 THE RESEARCH APPROACH 33
3.3 THE RESEARCH DESIGN 34
3.4 SAMPLING 36
3.5 DATA COLLECTION 38
3.5.1 Interviews 38
3.5.2 Procedure 39
3.6 ANALYSIS OF THE DATA 40
3.6.1 Scanning and cleaning the data 41
3.6.2 Organising the data 41
3.7 THE VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE INSTRUMENTS 41
3.7.1 Member-checking 43
3.7.2 Prolonged stay at the site 43
3.8 ETHICAL ISSUES 43
3.8.1 Gaining entry into the field 43
3.8.2 Confidentiality and anonymity 44
3.8.3 Caring and fairness 44

CHAPTER 4: 45

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY 45

4.1. INTRODUCTION 45
4.2 CASE STUDIES: 45
4.2.1 Case study 1: Mr Ples 45
4.2.1.1 Background 45
4.2.1.2 Mr Ples’s perception of parental involvement 48
4.2.1.3 Expectations the teachers have of parental involvement 51
4.2.1.4 The teachers’ attitudes towards parental involvement 55
4.2.1.5 Methods of communicating with parents regarding the learners’ work 57
4.2.1.6 The commitment that the teachers show in respect of parental involvement 59
4.2.2 Case study 2: Mr Molefe 61
4.2.2.1 Background 61
4.2.2.2 Mr Molefe’s perception of parental involvement 63
4.2.2.3 Expectations the teachers have of parental involvement 66
4.2.2.4 The teachers’ attitude towards parental involvement 71
4.2.2.5 Methods of communication with parents regarding the learners’ work 75
4.2.2.6 The commitment that the teachers show in respect of parental involvement 76

CHAPTER 5:

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 80

5.1 INTRODUCTION 80
5.2 THE FINDINGS 81
5.2.1 The guidance that parents need to give their children 81
5.2.2 The encouragement of the learners by the parents 83
5.2.3 The creation of an environment that is conducive to learning 86
5.2.4 The essence of communication between parents and teachers 91
5.2.5 Every responsible adult can, as a parent, play a role in assisting the learners to do well at school 94

5.3 CONCLUSIONS 97
5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY 99
5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS 100

REFERENCES 102
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPENDICES</th>
<th>109</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1:</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter to the principal of the first school</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2:</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter to the principal of the second school</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3:</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter to the Senior District Manager</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 4:</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consent form</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 5:</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview protocol</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUMMARY

The importance of a collaborative engagement between parents and teachers in order to enhance learning in the classroom is so great that the two parties seem inseparable. In this study the teachers indicated that they need the assistance of the parents of the learners whom they teach for them to do well. On the other hand, the parents are also keen to lend a helping hand, since it is the future of their children which is at stake. The challenge that emerges from this situation is that, more often, there is a breakdown in communication. The teachers and parents blame each other, especially when the learners do not perform well at the end of a year. The teachers will say the parents did not do anything to help their children with their schoolwork, while the parents will insist that the teachers failed to do their work. It is of utmost importance to stop the blame-game, but rather to seek ways in which both groups can help the learners to do well in the classroom.

The teachers need to inform the parents how they (the teachers) expect them to play their part in helping their learners with their schoolwork. Informing parents about their roles and how they may play them is very important, because then the parents will be able to meet the teachers’ expectations, whereby teaching and learning will be facilitated. The ultimate beneficiaries will be the learners, because they will receive education which is well-coordinated by both the teachers and the parents. The collaboration between teachers and the parents will be guided because the kind of parental involvement will be an informed one. The engagement between teachers and parents will yield good results, because in the process they will help each other to find strategies that will assist the learners in the classroom.

This study intends to ascertain from the teachers how they expect the parents to help their children with their schoolwork. It seeks to establish what the teachers’ perceptions are regarding parental involvement, that is, what they think it is, and how they think it should be. Two teachers from two primary schools in the Mogalakwena District of Limpopo Province were used in order to collect the data. These teachers clearly indicated that, indeed, the parents can be of great help, because they can touch some aspects that the teachers cannot reach in the lives of the learners.
They, however, also suggested ways in which the parents are supposed to help their children with schoolwork. The study also explored ways how the roles that the parents must play are communicated to the parents. The researcher’s aim was to explore the teachers’ expectations of parental involvement, and also possible ways in which it can be communicated to the parents. Recommendations were made to the policymakers to refer to when they draw up policies for the governance of schools.

**Key terms**

Parental involvement; learner performance; perceptions; teacher expectations; stakeholders; achievement; primary school learners; schoolwork; homework; attitudes; facilitation of learning;.
CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

When learners do not perform well, it is not uncommon for many education stakeholders to lay the blame squarely on the shoulders of the teachers. Similarly, teachers often complain about the level of commitment from the learners, and the lack of support from both the Education Department and other structures of governance within the school system. While not as loud, another voice often blames the parents for not giving schools, teachers and learners the required support for success. The blame on parents often comes relatively loud from the former disadvantaged schools when compared to the formerly advantaged schools. In the latter schools, parents often express their support in the form of (additional) payments that they make to the school when required from them. Indeed, the support by relatively affluent parents is not any better qualitatively, although it is significant, financially. While the teachers blame the parents for not being involved in the education of their children, the parents, at the same time, blame the teachers for not doing their work properly. In short, every stakeholder finds somebody else to blame for this unfortunate state of affairs.

This research seeks to unpack this blame-game between parents and teachers, in particular. The researcher is interested in finding out what the teachers expect from the parents. While everyone talks about parental involvement, it is not clear that there is a common understanding about what this involvement of parents in their children’s education means. Parents usually do not know the role that they need to play in order to improve their children’s performance at school. In most cases, schools have changed a great deal since the days when the parents were learners themselves. For one, the curriculum changes have been very frequent and far-reaching. How are parents to understand their role within the new curriculum policy, for example? Should they even be involved in curriculum matters? Is their role only limited to making sure that their children are ready for school each day, with proper nutrition and homework issues taken care of?
Should they restrict their role only to extra-curricular activities? Or is school governance the only role for parents, as provided for in the South African Schools Act?

This research seeks to understand what parental involvement means, particularly from the perspective of the teachers within a school. It would also be interesting to ascertain whether such an understanding by the teachers is shared by all the other stakeholders involved in children’s education across South Africa.

Parental involvement is viewed by many researchers in ever so many different ways. Bokhorst-Heng (2008) argues that parental involvement comes in various forms and will differ as a child moves through primary and secondary school. She referred to Epstein’s (2002) classic six-type model that captures the potential scope of parental involvement as follows: (1) the basic obligations of parents as care-providers; (2) schools communicating with parents about school programmes; (3) parents volunteering at school; (4) parental involvement in home learning; (5) the parent as decision-maker; and (6) collaborating with the community. The author hinted that notably her model suggests a two-way partnership where schools support parents and parents support schools towards the common goal of improved student-learning. This article focused on school-home partnerships in Singapore. The focus was on the processes of school-home partnerships in one secondary school, housing 12 to 15 year-olds. This study was premised on Epstein’s fifth type of parental involvement in decision-making. The culmination was a joint parent-teacher workshop on enhancing adolescent literacy in the context of school-home partnerships. Eventually attention was given to the implications of this research for school-home relationships and adolescent literacy practices. Parental involvement to some ranges from the parents checking what their children did at school, to parents helping their children to do their homework and schoolwork. This proposed research seeks to explore the various conceptions on the issue of parental involvement.

Hill and Tyson (2009) highlighted that, although there is a growing body of literature focusing on parental involvement in education during middle school, research has not been systematically done to determine which types of involvement have the strongest connection with achievement. The authors conducted a meta-analysis on the existing research on parental involvement in the
middle school to determine whether, and which types of parental involvement, are related to
achievement. Across 50 studies, parental involvement was positively associated with
achievement, with the exception of parents helping with homework. Involvement that reflected
academic socialization had the strongest positive association with achievement. Based on the
known characteristics of the developmental stage and tasks of adolescence, strategies reflecting
academic socialization are most consistent with the developmental stage of early adolescence.

Existing research shows that teachers want parents to be involved in their children’s education.
Conteh and Kawashima (2008) highlighted that government policy in England has for many
years encouraged parental involvement in children’s education. In response, most primary
schools have developed a range of strategies designed to assist parents in supporting their
children’s learning at home, particularly in learning to read. There seems to be a particular way,
though, in which teachers expect parents to get involved in their children’s education. Lareau
(2000), for instance, indicated in a research study that the teachers and principals did not ask the
parents to intervene in the manner that they expect parents to be involved, nor did they always
appreciate their actions. Nevertheless, they tolerated and sometimes encouraged parents’
terventions at school even when these deviated from school or district rules. The point made
by Lareau and other scholars is that the issue of parental involvement in schools comprises of a
hit-or-miss involvement, and all parties seem to tolerate a bit of clumsiness around it. The
teachers are not always happy when the parents become involved, especially as regards
curriculum matters, but they sometimes tolerate the involvement with some reluctance.

In most cases the parents try to carry out their responsibility of helping their children with their
schoolwork. Unfortunately, some parents are not able to offer assistance to their children because
of constraints, such as a limited ability to read and write. One important factor that comes to the
fore is of how teachers perceive parental involvement. From the literature it seems that teachers
expect the parents to be involved in their children’s education, but the confusion is brought about
by how parents should be involved, that is, what exactly is expected from the parents.

The tendency is for most schools to blame the child and the family for their weaknesses and
deficiencies. However, if the child succeeds, both the school and the parents tend to claim the
credit, and they sometimes even acknowledge each other’s contribution to the child’s success (Sithole 1993). For the relationship between parents and the school to be positive, the relationship should be reciprocal, in the sense that the school should either reserve or reconstruct the culture, and that the parents should be supportive of the school (Sithole 1993). Sithole further notes that it is mainly through this involvement or non-involvement that a parent will accept a curricular change, or not. A non-involved parent will often resist change however meaningful it may be, while an involved parent will readily accept it (Sithole 1993).

While teachers do need the parents to become involved in their children’s education, when the parents do get involved the teachers sometimes complain that the parents are taking up too much of their time. When the parents reduce the level of their involvement, the teachers again blame the parents for a lack of interest in their children’s education. Hegenbart (1980) argues that much of the educational literature today views parental involvement as a necessary component of successful educational programs. There is some evidence to show that if teachers’ expectations can be realised, it will be of great help because the two parties, teachers and parents, will then get to know each other and work towards attaining those expectations which will eventually improve the learners’ achievement. Zhao and Akiba (2009) argue that while schools play a major role in promoting parental involvement in many countries, few comparative studies examined the level of school expectations for parental involvement and its effect on student achievement. Their study found that the schools’ expectations of parental involvement were significantly associated with higher student achievement in mathematics in the United States of America.

The researcher is of the opinion that the findings will help the teachers and the parents from other schools and the Department of Education in the sense that those expectations can be communicated to the parent population at large in the form of policies which may be formulated by the Department.

Feiler, Andrews, Greenhough, Hughes, Johnson, Scanlan, & Yee (2008) argue that if children see that their parents are enthusiastic about their education, they are more likely to view their schooling in a positive light, and be more receptive to learning. Engaging and working with parents are some of the most vital aspects of providing children with an excellent education. This
statement, made by Feiler, *et al.* (2008) calls for an investigation into what the teachers understand in respect of parental involvement, and what the teachers expect the parents to do in the name of being involved in their children’s education.

### 1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Although the involvement of the parents in their children’s education is perceived by teachers as important, it is not clear what role the parents are expected to play in the schools. Chen, Kyle, & McIntyre (2008) argue that teachers are aware of the importance of parental involvement, but the focus is always on concerns about the learners. The abovementioned authors noted that not knowing how to involve parents or not having sufficient time are major constraints that the teachers identified in expanding or making changes in their parental involvement strategies. On a personal level, as a teacher the researcher has also observed that, while most parents are prepared to engage in their children’s education, they often do not know how they are actually supposed to be engaged. The teachers expect the parents to participate in a particular manner in order to enhance their children’s performance at school, but still fail to communicate clearly the manner in which parents are supposed to help their children. This lack of communication between teachers and parents sometimes results in problems between these two sets of stakeholders.

Many studies on parent involvement have focused on the roles of parents and teachers, their levels of involvement, the communication processes, effects on achievement, family influences, the rationale and social ramifications (Hegenbart 1980). Hegenbart further argues that comprehensive perceptions and feelings of those participating in parent involvement are essential to practices and programs that will be permanent rather than temporary.

This study is informed by this literature and my own personal observations. I am inspired to establish what the teachers’ expectations on parental involvement are. Parental involvement must be informed in order for it to be helpful to the educators. To address the broader research problem on the teachers’ expectations in respect of parental involvement, I sought answers to the following questions:
1. What are the teachers’ beliefs on the ideal type of parental involvement for better learner performance and improved facilitation of teaching in schools?
2. What do the teachers expect the parents to do in order to facilitate learning by their children?
3. How do teachers inform the parents about these expectations?
4. How can the teachers’ expectations of parental involvement be interpreted and understood?

1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary purpose of this study is to ascertain what the teachers expect from the parents in order to improve their children’s performance in the classroom. This study is aimed at making recommendations that will help to guide parental involvement in schools through informed research, and hence improve the performance of the learners in the classroom. In exploring the problem I had the following objectives, namely

- to find out what the teachers believe is the ideal kind of parent involvement that will lead to better learner performance, and the facilitation of teaching;
- to explore what teachers expect parents to do in order to facilitate their children’s learning;
- to establish how teachers inform parents about what they are expected to do in order to improve learner performance.
- to explore how teachers’ expectations of parental involvement can be interpreted and understood.

1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

I have been a teacher for many years, and have realised that teachers often attempt to involve the parents in the education of their children. This is done, sometimes, with the belief that parent involvement can uplift the performance of the learners in class. In many cases the teachers do not have the time to meet with the parents to clarify what type of involvement they expect to see from the parents. In instances where teachers make time to meet with parents and clarify the type of involvement they expect, the collaboration between the school and the home can work
wonders, for the benefit of the learners. In other instances, however, where conversations are limited or non-existent, parents may get involved in ways that teachers do not find suitable, resulting in confusion and mistrust. How can the communication in respect of the teachers’ expectations for parental involvement be managed and improved?

Many researchers argue that parental involvement enhances learner performance in class. Koutrouba, Antonopoulou, Tsitsas, & Zenakou (2009) argue that the parents’ involvement in their children’s education has been shown to have positive results in various aspects of child development, such as behaviour, social-emotional development and academic performance. Their article focuses on the teachers’ views of the major problems affecting home-school partnership, as well as possible solutions to the problem of communication between the school and the family. It examines the teachers’ accounts of the components of parental participation in the process of pupil-learning, and evaluates the teachers’ suggestions for improving teacher-parent collaboration in Greek schools. The results show that Greek secondary school teachers have a positive attitude towards parental involvement in schools, but find that, in fact, parental involvement in Greek schools is poor and infrequent. In general, the study showed that Greek teachers appear to be in favour of an active collaboration with parents which will benefit the schools, the families and the pupils.

Lareau (2000) noted that teachers often suggested to the children to take the book they had been reading home for the night, so as to read it to their parents. She further highlighted the fact that in some of her research schools, teachers went to the extent of introducing formal classroom and school programmes aimed at increased reading at home. The schools held conferences where teachers and parents interacted, with the aim of improving the children’s performance. The importance of the home environment and parental influence was also stressed by Saenz and Felix (2007), who argued that the availability of literacy material is important, because the number of storybooks in a home can predict the child’s level of vocabulary. A greater amount of printed material at home has also been associated with higher reading test scores. In contrast, children with fewer books at home are read to less frequently, and are more likely to have reading difficulties. If this is found to be what teachers believe in, and expect the parents to buy storybooks and read to their children more frequently, parents must take note of this. A reality
check needs to be done in order to establish how teachers want the parents to take part in their children’s education and how this is communicated to the parents.

This research is aimed at understanding these issues, within the context of two schools.

Auerbach (1989:168) argues that for most middle-class Anglo students, their home environment provides them with the kind of literacy skills and practices needed to do well at school. The fact that their parents’ use and transmit literacy in the specific ways that the schools expect, gives these children an advantage. Even with minimal communication between teachers and parents, therefore, it is not surprising to find middle-class Anglo parents being able to play a meaningful role in helping their children with schoolwork. For parents from non-middle class backgrounds, the situation may need to be more explicit and communication improved. It is important that the two parties get to know their roles and their expectations of each other. Hence, this research seeks to establish the kinds of expectations that teachers have with regard to parent involvement, and how these are communicated between the school and the home.

This research study is important because it has the potential to inform us about the teachers’ expectations of the parents in the schools, and also for the improvement of learning. If parents know what is expected of them, they will better be able to align their involvement accordingly, resulting in fulfilled expectations.

The findings from this research could be useful to -

- the teachers, in that they will be able to communicate with the learners’ parents so that they may know what is expected of them. Such communication could help to establish a healthy working relationship between the teachers and the parents.
- the parents, in that if there is clarity about what parents are expected to do, and these expectations are communicated properly, the parents might be able to align their involvement with the expectations. The parents will then understand the role that they are supposed to play in order to improve the performance of their children at school. There will be less confusion and mistrust between the stakeholders.
• national policymakers, as it will serve as a source of reference. National policymakers will be able to use the findings to draw up policies on how teachers can involve parents, and to communicate what is expected of them. This could clear the confusion that often arises between what parents do, on the one hand, and what the teachers expect of them, on the other hand.

• researchers in that this study seeks to address a gap in the existing research. We still know very little about the kinds of expectations that teachers have for parent-involvement. If this study is successful in establishing data on the kinds of expectations that teachers have with regard to parent involvement, it will contribute new insights into the existing body of knowledge to which other researchers can refer.

• the learners in the schools, as they will be receiving coordinated and mutually reinforcing kinds of assistance from both parents and teachers.

1.5 OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS

Chapter 1–Background to the study.
In this chapter I introduce the research problem, present the background, as well as the aims and objectives of the study. The rationale for the study is also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 2 –Literature review.
I introduce a discussion of the existing research on the teachers’ expectations of parental involvement. I expand on the theoretical perspective that underlies the study.

Chapter 3 –The research design and methodology.
The research approach and the research design that was used in the study are discussed. I also identify the data collection methods and explain in detail how the data collected from the participants was analysed.

Chapter 4 – Findings of the study.
In this chapter the findings of the study by means of two cases is discussed.
Chapter 5 – Discussion, conclusions and recommendations.

The above chapter discusses the conclusions, recommendations as well as the limitations of the study.

In the next chapter, chapter 2, literature about the topic that is researched is discussed. There is a thorough look into what other researchers had already established regarding the topic which is being studied. There is also a discussion on the theoretical background to the study.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Several aspects of parental involvement have already been discussed by different researchers. Each researcher will have his/her personal views based on facts, about parental involvement. It is important that the views of these different authors be explored. This will inject more insight into the discussions that will follow. This chapter will assist in not repeating what other researchers have already dealt with. A comparison of different viewpoints could also be given.

There appears to be a lack of communication between teachers and parents, which often leads to an undesired form of parental involvement. This problem needs to be solved, because it hinders the necessary involvement that could help learners to progress. Teachers need to take note of the importance of making parents aware of what is expected of them in order to help their children. If this problem is not addressed, the risk is that the distance that exists between teachers and parents will remain, and will continue to have a negative impact on the performance of the children. Parental involvement has increasingly gained support among theorists and policymakers across many countries as an effective way to improve the learners’ academic performance (Theodorou 2008)

2.2 THE CONCEPT PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Various researchers have defined the concept parental involvement from different perspectives. Lareau (2000) defines parent involvement as “…preparing children for school”. This includes such activities as, for example, teaching children the alphabet, talking and reading to children to promote language development, attending school events, for example, parent-teacher conferences, and fulfilling any requests teachers make of parents, for example, to play word-games with their children at home. She further notes that although parent involvement is positively linked to school success, many parents are not as involved in the schooling of their
children as the teachers would like. Many teachers work hard to increase parental involvement. Surveys indicated that most teachers desire parental involvement and request it, particularly in the early years of schooling. Lareau (2000) further notes that almost all the teachers in elementary schools encourage parental involvement and many are discouraged by what they call insufficient parent participation. It appears that there is a dire need for parents and teachers to work closely together for the learners to do well in the classroom.

Jeynes (2003) attempted to define parental involvement by saying that it consisted of four components, namely parental expectations, parental interest, parental involvement in school, and family community. The results of the study revealed that parental expectations were the most important aspect. He noted that increased parental involvement is the key to improving the academic achievement of children.

According to Audrey (2010), parental involvement in the United States of America is associated with the institution of compulsory public education and related federal legislation.

Definitions of parent involvement vary, and include a broad array of actions, such as monitoring learners’ work progress, volunteering at schools, and helping with homework, communicating with the school personnel, advocating for academic services, and making education-related decisions. Implicit in policy and legislation that mandate parent involvement is the belief that such involvement will positively affect students’ academic achievement, as well as their behaviour.

Bower and Griffin (2011) hinted that the traditional definition of parental involvement includes activities in the school and at home. It may take many forms, such as volunteering at the school, communicating with teachers, assisting with homework, and attending school events, such as performances or parent-teacher conferences. The above authors go on to define parental involvement as either supporting student academic achievement, or participating in school-initiated functions.
2.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

A number of researchers emphasise the importance of parental involvement in the early stages of learning. Senechal and LeFevre (2002), in their investigation of whether parental involvement relates to the development of early literacy-skills, found that parents’ report of teaching accounted for a significant amount of children’s early literacy skills. These authors further hinted that parent-involvement in the attaining of early literacy skills provide the basic groundwork for children’s acquisition of the mechanics of reading. They maintained that the notion that including parents in their children’s academic development can critically enhance their performance has been supported in a variety of research contexts. They further argued that the understanding of how different aspects of parental involvement might influence children’s acquisition of reading skills is of great importance. These authors indicated that teachers can recommend that parents read to their children before and after their children begin their decoding skills, because early progress in the development of receptive language is predictive for the acquisition of reading vocabulary and comprehension. They further highlighted that the relation between parents’ reports of teaching and children’s early literacy skills is consistent with a more general perspective that home experiences predict the acquisition of academic skills.

According to Rivera (2010), research indicated that children of parents who are involved in their child’s early schooling excel more than children whose parents do not participate. Parents who invest the time, effort and service in their children’s education convey a compelling message that education is important, and that the child’s efforts matter. Rivera indicated that for Latino parents with few or negative school experiences, the active participation as a parent may seem overwhelming, frightening or intimidating. The more there is parental interaction and involvement, the greater the child’s performance. Closing the achievement gap must start at home through the parents, starting with the birth of their child.

Parent involvement is a valuable component of any learner’s education. According to DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, &Duchane (2007), researchers have found that parent-child discussions about school help to improve academic achievement and to reduce problematic behaviour. This finding strongly suggests that parent involvement is a valuable component of any learner’s education.
DePlanty, et al. (2007) stated that parents are their children’s first and most important teachers, and for the learners to succeed in school, parents must participate actively in their children’s academic lives. Parents need to become involved early, and stay involved throughout their children’s school years. The results of their study suggest that teachers, parents and learners value the importance of parent involvement in education. Many similarities emerged regarding the behaviour that each group of participants perceived as being important.

DePlanty, et al. (2007) suggested that the aim of the school should be to persuade parents to participate in the activities of the school. The school can realise its goal by means of the following, namely (a) by organising workshops that focus on the benefits of parent involvement, and those parent behaviours that are most important, (b) by brochures or pamphlets sent home, informing parents about parental involvement, (c) by talks with parents about involvement during parent-teacher conferences.

Rivera (2008) stated that research shows that families have a powerful effect on children’s success in school. Parental involvement at home and in school is positively associated with children’s school readiness and significant school performance. Aikens and Barbarin (2008) used the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Cohort of 1998-1999, to examine the extent to which family, school, and neighbourhood factors account for the impact of socio-economic status on children’s early reading. Through the use of hierarchical linear modelling techniques, growth curve models were estimated to depict children’s reading trajectories from kindergarten to the third grade. Family characteristics made the largest contribution to the prediction of initial kindergarten reading disparities. This included the home literacy environment, parental involvement in school, and parental strain.

Uludag (2008) argued that although parent-teacher interaction is a key factor in children’s education, little attention has been paid to this issue in teacher education programmes. Their study explored and examined the opinions of elementary pre-service teachers about parental involvement in elementary children’s education. While a total of 223 pre-service teachers from a large research university in the southeast of the United States of America participated in the quantitative part, twelve pre-service teachers within the sample who were at the end of their
student teaching participated in the qualitative part of the study. The study results suggested that teacher education programmes, where parental involvement instruction and activities are integrated into the courses, help pre-service teachers become better prepared and carry positive opinions toward parental involvement.

The importance of parental involvement in the children in their teenage years was also looked into by a variety of authors. Chen and Gregory (2009) investigated whether student-perceived parental involvement predicts improvement in academic, behavioural, and relational outcomes for low-achieving adolescents. With a sample of 59 racially diverse 9th grade students, the authors measured three dimensions of parental involvement, namely direct participation, academic encouragement, and expectation for grades and attainment. Analysis revealed associations between two types of parental involvement and outcomes which were held after considering student gender and race. Students whose parents had higher expectations about grades and attainment had higher grade point averages, and were rated as more academically engaged by their teachers. The results suggested that certain kinds of parental involvement may be more effective than others in supporting low-achieving adolescents’ school performance.

Dumont, Trautwein, Ludtke, Neumann, Niggli, & Schnyder (2012) examined whether parental homework-involvement mediates the relationship between family background and educational outcomes such as academic achievement and academic self-concept. Data from two studies in which grade 8 students described their parents’ involvement in the homework process were re-analysed via structural equation modelling. The perceived parental homework interference and perceived homework-related conflict were negatively related to the students’ academic development, whereas perceived parental support and perceived parental competence to help with homework were positively related to academic outcomes. Although there were small associations between some aspects of parental homework-involvement and family background variables, parental homework-involvement did not mediate the relationship between family background and educational outcomes. Findings highlighted the need for differentiated conceptualizations of parental homework-involvement as well as detailed analyses of the process underlying the association between family background and educational outcomes.
According to Rapp (2009), educational research suggests that parental involvement is beneficial for academic achievement, and studies have pointed to parents’ seminal role in the education of young children, as well as in the need for continued nurture. Researchers indicated that parental involvement, however, tends to diminish over time, and in many cases nearly disappears altogether during the middle-school years. This decline in parent-child connection occurs at a most inopportune time, in that the early teen years are crucial in making personal, relational, and educational decisions that have both immediate and lasting impact. Rapp warned that teens that disengage from their parents too early are more susceptible to negative peer pressure, and tend to underachieve, while the most successful children are able to forge interdependent relationships with their parents. He concludes that as long as parent-child interactions remain non-threatening, parental influence remains a crucial element in the child’s development.

Parental involvement again manifests itself in the way in which learners with disabilities interact with their learning activities. Research shows that families have a powerful effect on children’s success in school. Parental involvement at home and at school is positively associated with children’s school readiness and significant school performance (Rivera 2008). Al-Shamari and Yawkey (2008) investigated the degree to which parental involvement impacts on students’ levels in special education programmes in Kuwait. The study showed that parents of special-needs children can be involved in classroom activities and school functions in many different ways. The results indicated that more than 70% of the participants’ sample was engaged in some forms of involvement with their special-needs children. Through additional percentage, chi-square and factorial analysis additional results were indicated. Parental involvement in the special education programmes is critical for the continued development of children with special needs.

Bennet and Hay (2007) wanted to identify the family characteristics that promote the development of social skills in children with disabilities. Parents and teachers completed a range of questionnaires in an Australia-wide study of 212 parents of children with disabilities who attend mainstream schools. The results of the study showed the importance of family characteristics for the development of social skills in children with physical disabilities. A strong link was found between aspects of healthy family relationships, especially high levels of parental
involvement with highly cohesive, idealised, and democratic family styles strongly influencing children’s social skills by providing a safe and sound foundation for children to explore their social environment.

Ankeny, Wilkins and Spain (2009) argued that parental and family involvement in the transition of youth with disabilities from school to the adult world is vital. They highlighted that the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 emphasised the important role that families play in their children’s education, and the Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 mandated parental involvement in educational planning. Their research indicated that students and family participation remains one of the national challenges facing secondary education and transition services. To provide best-practice strategies for involving parents in the successful transition of youth from school to adulthood, this article reviews the transition literature, and then presents findings from interviews with four mothers of children with disabilities. It also provides a list of transition-related internet resources for youth, families, and professionals.

According to Crosnoe (2009), the theoretical and policy focus on parental involvement in education has evolved into a consideration of 2-way connections between families and schools. Working from a social capital perspective emphasizing the importance of information in periods and domains of uncertainty, the author tested a specific application of this reconceptualization in his study. Multilevel models of the National Education Longitudinal Study revealed that youths started high school in higher level math when parents, middle school personnel, and high school personnel were in contact with one another, and when middle school personnel bridged middle school and high school.

Ferrara and Ferrara (2005) argued that parent involvement promotes better student attendance, increased graduation rates and less grade retention, higher parent and student satisfaction with school, less discipline reports, and higher achievement scores in reading and math. On the other hand, Davenport and Bogdan (2005) highlighted the fact that parental involvement is an integral component in the educational environment. They argued that student achievement and parental satisfaction require an on-going well-planned series of activities involving parents in home and school administrators in the accomplishment of learning objectives and goals. They continue to say that parental involvement allowed both parents and teachers to be participants in creating
new academic standards, aligning curriculum and assessments with the new standards, creating environments supporting reform, holding their school accountable for results, transforming professional development, involving the parents and the community, and fostering incentives for inter-agency cooperation to fulfil the needs of all students in their care.

According to Crawford, Heaton, Heslop, & Kixmiller (2009), families’ involvement in their children’s science learning at home has numerous benefits, especially when they support the children’s self-initiated investigations. In a position statement on parental involvement in science education, the National Science Teachers’ Association stresses the role of parents in the daily reinforcement of children’s learning of science concepts and science process skills. They argue that it is important for families to realize that although young children may not or fully understand scientific phenomena, they can begin to develop the foundational science concepts, skills, and methods necessary for becoming scientifically literate and informed citizens.

Lundeen (2005) hinted that it is no secret that students whose families are involved in their children’s education significantly benefit in achievement, attitudes, and application. Academic and anecdotal research clearly indicates that parent involvement is a critical predictor of children’s school success. She asserts that the greatest barrier to parental involvement is the lack of knowledge of schools and families on how to effectively work and plan together.

Quilliams and Beran (2009) wanted to identify individual and family risk factors that may explain why some students are at risk of academic failure. In their study, students’ self-concept, academic motivation, and their parents’ involvement in education were reported by both students and teachers. They found indications that students with low parental involvement in their education exhibit a low sense of competence and motivation towards learning, and achieve minimal academic success.

The existing research according to Cooper and Maloof (1999) has been based on the importance of parent involvement in the improvement of learners’ performance in the classroom. Emphasis has been on how learners learn better when they learn with their parents. Cooper and Maloof (1999) argued that the use of international parents as teachers of the less-commonly-taught foreign languages offers many advantages in the classroom. These parents have a special
perspective on language teaching because they are native speakers and authentic representatives of their cultures. This statement serves to emphasise that children learn better when their parents are involved. Lawson (2003) states that when parents do not provide stable and nurturing home environments, students come to school ill-prepared, and the teachers’ jobs are made more difficult. Furthermore, without a stable home environment, children tend to require additional teacher attention, and behavioural and disciplinary problems arise. The findings from the studies of these two researchers confirm the fact that parent involvement is found to be necessary for learners to do well in class. The existing research indicated that parent involvement enhances the performance of learners in class. Ortega and Ramirez (2002) argued that parent involvement is an important predictor of academic success. It is important in the improvement of learners’ performance, and it is the wish of most educators that parents could get involved.

2.4 TYPES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Lawson (2003) differentiates between two types of parental involvement, namely school-based parent involvement and home-based parent involvement.

- **School-based** parent involvement implies volunteering to participate at the school itself. Some of the teachers that he interviewed responded by saying that parental involvement could be practised in the library, on the playground, in the cafeteria, and while monitoring the halls or the restrooms. Some teachers indicated that they believed that school-based parent involvement can be channelled to create powerful and effective classroom aides and allies. According to Lawson, teachers argue that school-based parent involvement should facilitate and enhance students’ learning experiences. It should also help students to succeed by adhering to the needs of the school and its teachers.

- **Home-based** parental involvement revolves around home-based activities that help reinforce the school’s mission and teachers’ work practices through positive parental social modelling. Teachers, in this case, are reported to be viewing parental involvement as a means of facilitating their ability to teach. They view home-based parent involvement and subsequent positive social modelling as an important vehicle to make
teachers’ jobs easier. The teachers regard parents as the first-time teachers. The teachers just pick up the ball later after the first five years or so of the children’s lives.

Lawson (2003) states that teachers believe that children’s valuation of education is directly linked to the expectations and values of their parents; home-based parental involvement is perceived as the primary means of stressing the importance of education. The teachers view parent involvement as very important, because it is from parents where the children get most of their values and belief systems. If the parents believe that school is important, then the child believes that school is important. This helps create a positive attitude toward the school’s activities among children, and it will eventually lead to improved learner performance.

During interviews in this study, the teachers’ responses clearly indicated that they believe that parents and families should serve the schools’ needs in helping children achieve academically, but the teachers believed that the parents are at the moment neglecting such responsibilities. Furthermore, the teachers’ perceptions of such neglect contributed to labelling and stigmatising the practices of parents, which in turn alienated the parents from the school. Although the parents want to facilitate the teachers’ abilities to educate their children, the teachers’ non-responsiveness to parental concerns often leaves the parents with little recourse but to confront the teachers, or stay uninvolved in the school.

2.5 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND CULTURE

The specific culture has an impact on the manner and extent to which parents become involved in their children’s education. Lawson (2003) highlighted the fact that if teachers and parents can truly reach a level of mutual understanding and acknowledge their different worldviews, epistemologies, and cultural frames of reference without pathology, it is believed that their common grounds and interests will become more readily apparent. And if they can reach that next step, their caring and commitment to children promise better outcomes for all. This, in a way, stresses the point that teachers need to communicate their expectations of parental involvement to the parents. Parents emphasised the teaching of respect for all members of the family, and obedience, before their children entered school. These two values; respect and obedience, are of primary importance in levelling the field for the children to study under normal
circumstances. This one form of parental involvement where parents teach children respect and obedience will prepare the child mentally before he enters the school.

Auerbach (1989) hinted that while positive home factors were sufficient to carry a child in the lower grades, both positive home and school factors were necessary for literacy development in the upper grades. She further indicated that when the researchers investigated the validity of the commonly held view that parents’ hopes for their children affect their children’s success at school, they found that although these aspirations *per se* did not influence achievement, parental willingness to advocate for their children did. She hinted that the researchers link this finding to the teachers’ expectations, namely that parental involvement in an advocacy role is important because it shapes the teachers’ perceptions, which in turn influences student achievement.

Auerbach (1989) further argued that although being expected to conform to culturally unfamiliar school expectations and practices may intimidate parents and drive them away, being encouraged to explore their own concerns and to advocate for their own expectations may free parents to become more involved with their own and their children’s literacy development. The goal is to increase the social significance of literacy in family life by incorporating community cultural forms and social issues into the content of literacy activities.

Lareau (2000) noted that in championing the virtues of parent involvement in schooling, and in promoting techniques for increasing it, researchers have neglected the more basic question of why social class so affects parental involvement. Hegenbart (1980) argues that of all the studies conducted on parent involvement none directly asked parents and teachers if they wanted to be involved, and if so, at what levels. No study asked teachers and parents about reasons for and potential problems with parental involvement. According to Lareau (2000), the concept of cultural capital has the potential to show how social class differences in family life can help or hinder individuals in their efforts to meet the standards of school, and go on to gain acceptance in college; empirical research has not demonstrated this potential.

In the study of parent involvement with their third-grade children, where interviews and classroom observation were used, Lareau and Horvat (1999) found that teachers indicated that they enthusiastically welcomed parent involvement, and believed that their requests for parental
involvement were neutral, technically efficient, and designed to promote higher levels of achievement. The researchers argued that teachers often stressed the importance of parents understanding their children’s educational situations, by which they meant that parents should accept the teachers’ definition of their children’s educational and social performance.

Jeynes (2003) argued that teachers are among the first to recognise and appreciate parental involvement. He found that the attitude that teachers have towards parent involvement was positive. This was evident in the article where Lareau & Horvat (1999) indicated that teachers liked parents who were deferential, who expressed empathy with the difficulty of teachers’ work, and had detailed information about their children’s school experience.

These findings will inform this research, in that they confirm that teachers have a certain expectation from the parents regarding the improvement of the performance of a learner. This research will seek to establish what those expectations are.

Furthermore, Lynch, Anderson, Anderson, & Shapiro (2006) maintain that the more teachers know about parents’ beliefs and the activities in which they engage with their children at home, the more they can help to build a bridge between home and school literacy. They further argue that previous research had shown that congruency between home and school literacy relates to children’s school success. These articles call for studies to be conducted to test whether it is a fact that if a parent is not involved, then the child will suffer in respect of his/her scholastic achievement.

Hannon (2000), in his search for the relationship between the parents’ literacy level and the child’s level of achievement, found objective evidence of the link between parents’ competence in basic skills and the competence of their children, and that it indicated a very strong correlation between the low basic skills of the parents and the low attainment of children. He further indicated that there was a clear association between the children’s reading test scores and the parents’ reported reading competency. Marsh and Thompson (2001) highlighted the fact that the importance of involving the home in order to promote children’s learning has been a well-established principle in the United Kingdom. The authors indicated that in the workshops that
were conducted for bringing home literacy practices into the nursery, fifteen parents and carers who attended became extremely engaged in the activity, and it appeared to provide them with opportunities to share their cultural capital. The parents even started to discuss which toys and artefacts are suitable for their children at the nursery. This indicates that parents may be interested; it is just that they need to be informed what kind of involvement is expected of them. The project fed the nursery staff with valuable information about the children they were dealing with, as it is easier to teach a child whose background is known.

Bojuwoye (2009) argued that education is the business of both the schools and the homes. A school’s success is more assured with joint efforts of teachers, pupils, parents and the local communities. However, translating home-school partnership into a positive impact is dependent on how partnership is conceived, since this is what determines the approaches to and the forms or practices characteristic of the partnership. Thus, to understand how homes and schools interact together to positively influence the school or the educational process, the conceptualisation of home-school partnership, including in terms of attitude to it, the benefits expected to be derived from it, and its characteristic practices, need to be examined.

This researcher aimed at investigating the nature of home-school partnership, or how homes and schools in Kwazulu-Natal interact to influence learning and the development of children. The results revealed that the participants were unaware of many partnerships presented to them in the questionnaire. A major implication of the results is the need for teacher-education programmes to feature the training of teachers in strategies for encouraging parental involvement in children’s education through the design, initiation, and implementation of effective programmes that foster home-school partnerships.

Howard and Reynolds (2008) examined the school experiences of middle-class African American parents and students, because they are largely overlooked in the professional literature when it comes to under-achievement and parent involvement. The researchers used the Critical Race Theory as a conceptual framework to examine parent involvement as it pertains to African Americans in middle-class schools. The researchers attempted to account for an explicit intersection of race and class to be used in their analysis. Their aim was to analyse the role of
parental involvement in the education of middle-class African American students. They examined the research literature on parental involvement, and specifically on African American parent involvement. They also shared their findings which examined critical questions around parent involvement. Finally, building from the findings from the data, the researchers offered considerations for what they term “models of engagement” for African American parents; a set of recommendations and guiding principles that may provide greater clarity regarding the manner in which parent involvement can be demonstrated in an attempt to improve school performance for African American students in middle-class schools.

Another emphasis on parent involvement was done by St Pierre, Ricciuty, &Rimdzius (2005) in their study which aimed at experimenting to test the effectiveness of Even Start, a federally supported family literacy programme that provides early childhood education, adult education, parent education and joint parent-child literacy activities to children and parents from low-literate families. In their research they found that after participating in Even Start, parents reported that their children were significantly more likely to know the alphabet, to count up to 100, and to know several colours. The parents reported that the children read more, engaged in age-appropriate writing, and had an improved understanding of printing concepts.

The existing research encourages prospective researchers to continue investigating several aspects of parental involvement. After conducting a longitudinal study of the influence of parent involvement on scholastic achievement by the learners where the teachers’ concern about parent involvement was noticed, Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, &Fendrich (1999) noted that most teachers reported having had numerous contacts with parents. It was notable that teachers reported being unaware of parental practices at home in the case of about one third of the parents. This highlights the need for further research, exploring both parent and teacher perspectives on what constitutes appropriate parent-teacher collaboration, and which role each should play in the process. Izzo et al. (1999) further argued that future research should continue to explore other diverse aspects of home-school collaboration that may impact on children’s academic and social functioning. Variables such as the amount of time spent helping with schoolwork, monitoring study time, and discussing academic or interpersonal issues at school might add valuable insight. The limitation in the existing research is that much emphasis is put on the teachers’ reports. The
findings were mostly dependent on how teachers perceived parent involvement. Izzo, et al. (1999) argued that their information on parent involvement was based solely on the teachers’ reports, thus they were essentially assessing the relationships between the teachers’ perceptions of parent involvement and school performance. One could argue that teachers who knew little about a parent might have, based on the child’s school performance, estimated what the parents’ home involvement was likely to be, thus compromising the validity of the assessments.

The above would help me to guard against such flaws when I conduct my research. I learnt that when I do my investigation, the reports should be from both the teachers and the parents.

Izzo, et al. (1999) maintained that when parents communicate constructively with teachers and participate in school activities, they gain a clearer understanding of what is expected of their children at school, and they may learn from the teachers how to work at home to enhance their children’s education. The above researchers argued that other researchers emphasised the importance of the actions of the parents that the children experience directly, such as efforts to facilitate their children’s academic or social development at home. Izzo et al. (1999) further indicated that such activities not only signal to children the value of education, but provide them with additional support and create continuity between their two primary spheres of influence, namely the home and the school. The above authors expect the teachers’ perceptions of the following aspects of the parents-school relationship to relate positively to children’s school performance, namely (a) the frequency of parent-teacher contact, (b) the quality of the parent-teacher interactions, (c) participants in educational activities at home, (d) participation in activities at school.

2.6 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

In their study of the relationships among school-performance and parent-involvement variables, Izzo et al. (1999) ascertained that most parent involvement variables correlated positively with school performance. In particular, the teachers’ perceptions of good relationships with parents and greater participation in home and school activities all were associated with better scores on all school performance indices they used. Overall, an important finding was that participation in
educational activities at home significantly predicted the widest range of performance variables, and predicted academic achievement significantly more strongly than any other parent-involvement variable.

There seem to be some gaps in the studies on parental involvement in the improvement of the learners’ performance in the classroom. Huang and Mason (2008) argued that research supports the view that the parents’ attitudes, behaviours, and activities related to their children’s education influence their learning and educational success. They further highlighted the fact that at that stage research studying parental involvement in their children’s schooling included elementary through middle school-aged populations. They argued that there has been a number of studies that explored parental involvement with preschoolers, but relatively few studies have investigated the African American parents’ motivation for involvement in their young children’s education. Their study wanted to fill this gap.

This study seeks to fill the gap where the teachers wished that the parents became involved in their children’s education in a particular manner, and that parents were not in the know of how they are expected to be involved.

Parental involvement can be looked at from a number of angles. Ortiz (2001) argued that research on parent involvement tends to focus on mother-child interaction. This means that the existing research overlooked the importance of the role that can be played by the fathers. He hinted that data collected in a recent study by the National Centre for Education Statistics (United States Department of Education, 1997) suggested that children do better at school when their fathers are involved, regardless of whether their fathers lived with them or not. This fact would help me to be inclusive in my search for information regarding the issue of parental involvement. Ortiz (2001) continued to state that the importance of parent involvement in their children’s educational achievement is well-documented in the literature.

McNeal (2012) noted that there are many conflicting findings regarding the relationship between parental involvement and student performance. Some findings support a positive relationship between involvement and achievement, whereas others support a negative relationship. The most
common explanation for the negative findings, in which parent involvement is associated with lower levels of academic achievement, has been termed the *reactive hypothesis*. The reactive hypothesis claims that any negative correlation or relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement stems from a reactive parental involvement strategy, whereby a student, having academic or behavioural difficulties at school, leads to greater levels of parental involvement. By means of the National Longitudinal Education Study, the researcher used a 3-panel, cross-lagged regression model to empirically investigate this claim. The analysis revealed little to no empirical support for the reactive hypothesis. In fact, reduced achievement and increased truancy are not met with greater levels of parental involvement, but rather with reduced levels of parental involvement.

Feiler, *et al.* (2008) maintained that parenting has a strong impact on a child’s educational development, behaviour and mental health. It is likely that children’s motivation will increase when parents are involved in their education. These researchers further indicated that before the research project started the teachers were already developing exciting links between the children’s out-of-school lives and their in-school learning. This meant that teachers had already perceived parental involvement in a positive way. This showed that the researchers held this idea that teachers and parents need to work together for the sake of the achievement of the learners.

Galindo and Sheldon (2012) stated that the children’s homes and schools were the most influential contexts in which learning and development occurs, especially during early childhood. Their study built on Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory and Epstein’s theory of overlapping spheres of influence to examine school and family connections and their relationships to family involvement and students’ achievement gains. The above authors used a nationally representative sample of kindergartens and found that the schools’ efforts to communicate with and engage families predicted greater family involvement in school and higher levels of student achievement in reading and math at the end of kindergarten. They also found that, on average, family involvement at school and the parents’ educational expectations were associated with gains in reading and math achievement in kindergarten.

Savacool (2011) argued that research has shown that parental involvement affects children’s achievement more than school procedures, especially in the primary school years. Researchers
have also indicated positive effects on children, families, and school when schools and parents continuously support and encourage a child’s learning and development. However, little research has been done to help teachers better understand why some parents choose not to be involved in their child’s education.

Using qualitative interviews, this research investigated the barriers and struggles parents face, as well as the difficulties teachers have with parents who are not involved in their child’s education.

Researchers do not consider any replacement for parental involvement. Rivera (2010) maintains that mandated programmes, while well-intentioned, do not make up for the role that parents must play in preparing their children for success. He hinted that closing the gap cannot merely be about teachers working harder; it is also about parents taking time with their children from an early age to have interactive, meaningful conversations with them. It is about making the home a stimulating place with books and other study material, and reinforcing learning with a daily routine that promotes personal interaction and creativity. It is about parents who do not delegate their responsibilities to teachers, coaches or the government, but instead realize that their job is never done. It is about parents focusing on their children, and not on themselves.

Bower and Griffin (2011) argued that parental involvement is seen as an effective strategy to ensure student success, as evidenced by several correlational studies, with the overarching benefit of parental involvement being increased academic performance. They continue to highlight that increased parental involvement leads to early social competence, which ultimately leads to academic success.

Weinberger (1996) maintained that until the 1980s many teachers felt that parents should be dissuaded from teaching their children reading, because it was believed that it could hinder the child’s progress. She further indicated this view has changed, and that schools have increasingly acknowledged that parents can contribute to their children’s reading development. This clearly shows that teachers started to realise that parents are supposed to be involved in their learners’ school activities. She highlighted that teacher encouragement of parental involvement contributed indirectly to the increase in the children’s reading scores. Their children’s literacy development could be helped if the teachers talked more with the parents about literacy.
2.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Neuman (2000) defines *theory* as a system of interconnected abstractions or ideas that condenses and organises knowledge about the social world. He further states that theories normally consist of the following parts, namely concepts, assumptions, concept clusters, and classification (Neuman 2000). He argues that theoretical frameworks are orientations or sweeping ways of looking at the social world. They provide collections of assumptions, concepts, and forms of explanations (Neuman 2000).

The key theoretical perspective underpinning this research is the notion that both parents and teachers have knowledge that is relevant to enhancing the children’s learning, but this knowledge tends not to be successfully communicated and is often underutilised. The overall aim of this study will be to develop, understand and evaluate ways in which the learners’ learning could be enhanced by means of a process of exchanging knowledge between parents and teachers. It means that parents and teachers have to come together and share their knowledge about the learner, since they know learners from different worlds. Parents know children from the out-of-school world, while teachers know the learners from the formal schooling point of view.

I adopted this theoretical approach from the Home School Knowledge Exchange Project that was undertaken in Britain.

Feiler, *et al.* (2008) in their discussion of the project, stated that a key principle underpinning the Home School Knowledge Exchange Project is that although parents and teachers know much about different aspects of children’s learning, this tends not to be very well-shared and built upon. Parents have a deep and intimate knowledge about their children, how they approach learning, what motivates them, and what their children know and want to find about. Similarly, teachers have a wealth of knowledge about children’s learning at school, and how to teach the range of subjects that comprises today’s curriculum. The firm conviction that mothers had the ability to educate came from as far back as with Pestalozzi, who stated, “The mother is qualified, and qualified by her Creator, Himself, to become the principal agent in the development of her child. What power can be more influential, more stimulating than maternal
love?” (Hegenbart 1980). This statement emphasises the fact that parents have a role to play in the upbringing of their children.

Lawson (2003) indicated that teachers held social reproduction theories in which certain causal chains of events lead to predetermined outcomes. Teachers believe that familial inter-generational patterns of low educational attainment, unemployment and negative social modelling structure an environment of hardship and failure that is reproductive and inescapable for many students. Teachers believe that healthy parents and families are a prerequisite for improved learner welfare. They tend to believe that parents need to be trained to maximise the learning capacities of their children.

In this study the parents’ theories, developed from their world-views, will be explored and compared with those of their teachers.

Johansson (2009) focused on parental involvement in Sami schools when developing a culturally sensitive school curriculum. The research recognizes a number of competing and complementary interests that play a role when constructing structures and policies in curriculum development. The results indicated that parents and teachers expressed an interest in developing a culture-based local curriculum through a process of reflecting on and creating an education, incorporating the past, the present and the future. The study pointed to a desire for cooperation between home and school in the development of a culture-based school curriculum and a school practice supported by a culturally-responsible teacher.

Parental involvement strategies should consider race and ethnicity, because research has indicated differences in parental involvement among African American, Latino and White families. African American families tend to spend more time in home-based activities with their children than their White counterparts. However, home-based involvement is difficult for schools to measure and is often overlooked, and families are not recognised for their efforts. Parent-groups is a strategy that has proven particularly successful with African American families, allowing parents to obtain information about the school, to advocate for the children as a collective group, and to form support networks with other families.
Teachers may need to explore parental involvement in conjunction with the families to discover their needs, and what works for them. Parental involvement is not an easy practice; it takes time and a lot of investment on behalf of the schools and the school staff in order to build effective, collaborative relationships with the families. Although African American, Latino and parents in poverty may be more difficult for schools to engage in traditional methods of parental involvement, the evidence, both in the literature and in the study that these authors were pursuing, suggested that these parents are involved in their children’s education and shows that teachers are trying to engage parents.

Participants in the Sheltered Instruction and Family Involvement (SIFI) project participated in many professional development experiences. They learned about research demonstrating the positive effects of family involvement on students’ academic achievement, and read sources that described practical strategies to implement. In addition, they described their intended goals for increasing family involvement in action plans. Follow-up discussions at the project meetings included time to discuss their findings and get feedback from other participants. These explicit activities of the project appear to have helped several of the teachers to change some of their views about family involvement and related practices. Several teachers in both cohorts increased their efforts to contact, involve, and learn from the students’ families, and they made modifications in their teaching to connect and build from students’ background knowledge. This clearly shows that even when some teachers start by looking down on the value of parental involvement, they change their attitudes as they become engaged in debates regarding the issue of parental involvement. They ultimately realise they need to build on what the parents have already done; in as far as the imparting of knowledge and skills to the children is concerned.

Using the concepts developed in this framework, this study will examine the teachers’ and parents’ ideas on parental involvement in a local context. I will use the tools, concepts and findings from these previous studies to understand the role and influence of parental involvement on learning at Schools X and Y, all from the perspective of the teachers involved.
In the next chapter, I outline research methodology. There is a discussion of aspects such as research approach, research design, sampling technique, and data collection methods and data analysis.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to explore the expectations and perceptions that teachers have in respect of parental involvement. It seems obvious that teachers and parents can complement each other in an attempt to prepare the learners to become future responsible citizens. This study aims to establish the manner in which these two parties, parents and teachers, are supposed to engage each other in order to enhance learner performance. Data were collected to establish what the teachers’ expectations are regarding parental involvement.

3.2 THE RESEARCH APPROACH

A qualitative research method was used in this study. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) define qualitative research as “…an inquiry in which researchers collect data in face-to-face situations by interacting with selected persons in their settings”. They further state that qualitative research describes and analyses people’s individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions. I found the qualitative approach relevant to this study because the research investigated the perceptions and expectations that teachers have on parental involvement. I wanted to study perceptions and expectations, which cannot be quantified, and therefore the qualitative research approach was relevant here. Qualitative research methods, unlike quantitative research methods which use numeric data to answer questions, make use of words to answer questions.

Qualitative research seeks to understand human and social behaviour from the insider’s perspective, that is, as it is lived by participants in a particular social setting, for example, a culture, school, community, group, or institution (Ary, Jacobs, &Razavieh 2002). From the qualitative approach’s point of view, research is always value-bound, and it can never be value-free. Qualitative inquirers believe that it is impossible to develop a meaningful understanding of human experience without taking into account the interplay of both the inquirers’ and the
participants’ values and beliefs. This research approach was useful in this study because it sought to explore the social behaviour of the participants, for example, how parents become involved in their children’s education, and what teachers expect parental involvement to be.

3.3 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006) research design describes how the study will be conducted. It summarises the procedures for conducting the study including when, from whom, and under what conditions the data will be obtained. This research design indicated the general plan, that is, how the research was set up, what happened to the subjects and what methods of data collection were used. A research design determines how the data will be analysed. Qualitative research designs emphasise gathering data on naturally occurring phenomena, and can be classified as interactive or non-interactive. This research falls in the category of qualitative designs that are classified as interactive. Mouton (2003) indicates that a research design addresses the key question namely, what type of study will be undertaken in order to provide acceptable answers to the research problem or questions. I wanted my research to focus on lived experience and on society and culture.

For the purpose of this study I used a case study design. Kumar (2005) defines a case study as “…an approach to studying a social phenomenon through a thorough analysis of an individual case”. The case may be a person, a group, an episode, a process, a community, a society, or any other unit of a social group. All the data relevant to this case were gathered and organised in terms of the case. It created an opportunity for the intensive analysis of many specific details often overlooked by other methods. The impression was that the case being studied is typical of cases of a certain type, so that through intensive analysis, generalisations could be made that will be applicable to other cases of the same kind.

Leedy and Ormrod (2010) noted that in a case, which they say is sometimes called an idiographic research project, a particular individual, program, or event is studied in depth for a defined period of time. They proceeded to say that sometimes researchers focus on a single case, perhaps because its unique or exceptional qualities can promote understanding or inform practice
in similar situations. They said that at other times researchers study two or more cases, often cases that are similar or different in certain key ways, to make comparisons, build theory, or to propose generalizations, and such an approach is called a *multiple* or *collective* case study. A case study may be especially suitable for learning more about a little-known or poorly-understood situation. It can also be appropriate for investigating how an individual or program changes over time, perhaps as the result of certain conditions or interventions.

The data collection methods that can be used in a case study, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), include observations, interviews, documents, past records and audio-visual materials, such as photographs, video-tapes and audio-tapes. They say that data analysis in a case study typically involves the following steps, namely

- the organisation of details about the case - the specific facts about the case are arranged in logical order;
- the categorization of data - data are clustered into meaningful groups;
- the interpretation of single instances - specific documents, occurrences, and other bits of data are examined for the specific meanings that they might have in relation to the case;
- the identification of patterns - the data are scrutinized for underlying themes; and
- syntheses and generalizations - an overall picture is constructed, and conclusions are made.

In this study the emphasis was on the element of typicality, rather than uniqueness. In other words, when the selection of the subjects for the case study was done, I was very careful to ensure that the teachers I interviewed are typical of those according to whom generalisations could be made.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), a *case study* is “…an in-depth analysis of a single entity”. They classify case studies into the following types, namely intrinsic case studies, instrumental case studies, and collective case studies. In an *intrinsic* case study, the focus is on the case itself. This is where unusual or unique individuals, groups, or events are studied. An *instrumental* case study provides insight into a specific theme or issue, and the focus is on an in-
depth understanding of the entity, issue or theme. In a collective case study two or more cases are studied, for example, one can study a particular issue in five schools and each school will be considered a case. The abovementioned researchers maintain that data collection in a case study has to be extensive and varied. They say that, essentially, the researcher needs to gather whatever information is required to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon which is being studied.

According to Creswell, Eberson, Eloff, Ferreira, Ivankova, Jansen, Nieuwenhuis, Pietersen, Plano Clark, & Van der Westhuizen, (2010), the term case study can be used to describe a unit of analysis, such as a case study of a particular organisation, or to describe a research method.

3.4 SAMPLING

In this study the purposeful sampling technique was used because I needed only participants that could be useful to the study. The participants who were to be selected to form the sample, were supposed to be the ones who were likely to be information-rich in respect of the purpose of the study. The accessible population were teachers who teach at the selected primary schools. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) argue that purposeful sampling denotes selecting information-rich cases for a study when one wants to understand something about those cases without needing to generalise the information to all such cases. The researcher searches for information-rich key informants, groups, places or events to study. In other words, these samples are chosen because they are likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomena the researcher is investigating.

I first decided what in the situation was essential to the study of the problem. Since this is a case study of two schools, the sample consisted of two teachers from the two selected primary schools, that is, one teacher from each school. The sample size was relatively small, since it entailed purposeful sampling for a case study. I chose those persons who would be suitable for providing the necessary information. The target population was teachers at the two selected primary school in the Mogalakwena District. Defining the population refers to establishing the conditions that specify who should be included or excluded from the population. When I chose
this sample I was guided by the following guidelines, as outlined by McMillan and Schumacher (2006), namely the purpose of the study, the focus of the study, the availability of the informants, the redundancy of the data, and the possibility of submitting the obtained sample size to peer review.

According to Ary, et al. (2002), qualitative researchers select purposeful samples believed to be sufficient to provide maximum insight and understanding of what they are studying. They further indicated that it is not possible for qualitative researchers to observe everything about the group or site that may be relevant to the research problem, but they try to obtain a sample of observations believed to be representative of everything they could observe.

This study involved teachers who teach at the selected primary schools, all Black Africans. The parents of the children who attend the school at these two institutions are also Black Africans. Children start their schooling in grade R, which is a reception class, at the age of four and a half years, turning five on or before 30 June of the same year. The medium of instruction at these schools is mother tongue, which is Sepedi, from grade R to grade 3, and English from grade 4 to grade 7. All the learners are also Black Africans. Data were collected from two teachers who teach at the two selected primary schools in the Mogalakwena District, in Limpopo. The focus was on what the teachers expect from the parents regarding the education of their children. Research was done on how teachers communicate their expectations to the parents so that the parents may know what is expected of them.

The teachers were asked questions that led them to give responses on how they perceive parental involvement. They were also asked how they expected parents to help the learners to do well at school. As the questions were asked their responses were captured on audiotapes, while I also took down notes. The instrument that was used during the collection of the data is called the interview protocol.


3.5 DATA COLLECTION

This research is a case study of the expectations which teachers have on parental involvement. It sought to establish whether the teachers have expectations of the parents whose children they teach and if, indeed, there are expectations, what they are? In this study the researcher made use of interviews as data collection technique.

3.5.1 Interviews

Creswell, et al. (2010) define an interview as “…a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participant questions to collect data and to learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours of the participants”. They further indicated that the aim with qualitative interviews is to see the world through the eyes of the participants. They also mentioned the key factors that make interviews successful are namely, (1) finding suitable person(s) in terms of the research questions, (2) clarifying the person being interviewed about the aim of the interview, (3) questioning strategy, (4) the types of questions asked, and (5) the interviewer assuming the role of a listener and not dominating the interview.

According to Ary, et al. (2002), interviews are used to gather data on the subjects’ opinions, beliefs, and feelings about a situation, in their own words. They also note that interviews provide information that cannot be obtained through observation, or that can be used to verify the observation. The advantage of interviewing is that as an interviewer, one can explain more explicitly the purpose of the investigation, and just what information the researcher wants. If the subject misinterprets the question, the interviewer may follow it up with a clarifying question.

I made use of interviews as I found them user-friendly, because people are usually more willing to talk than to write. If the interviewer establishes a friendly and secure relationship with the subject, certain types of confidential information may be obtained that an individual might be reluctant to put in writing.
A number of advantages of interviews which made me consider using them as a data collecting technique include:

1. interviews are flexible: researchers can probe for more specific answers, and can repeat a question when the response indicates that the respondent misunderstood;
2. the respondents give their original responses, which is not obtained through cheating by receiving answers from others;
3. the possibility of all the questions being answered is high, because the interviewer can ensure that;
4. the interviewer can record the exact time, date and place of the event that has occurred; and
5. the interviewer can standardise the interview environment by ensuring that the interview is conducted in privacy, that there is no noise, and that all the research ethics are taken into consideration.

I made use of semi-structured interviews. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delport (2002) maintains that with semi-structured interviews the researcher has a set of predetermined questions on an interview schedule, but the interview is guided by the schedule, rather than dictated by it. That is helpful, namely that every respondent was asked the same questions. That allowed for comparison of the answers from all the respondents. I conducted interviews with two teachers from the two selected primary schools

### 3.5.2 Procedure

In this case study I collected the data during a visit to the site. I developed a visitation schedule which included all the people I wanted to see and the amount of time I wanted to spend with each. I made sure that I make arrangements so as to avoid embarrassment where I might find that the people whom I wanted to see had already left. In this case I made appointments with the teachers of the primary schools in question.

I devised a means of recording responses in the interview so that note-taking may not be too time consuming. I first sought the permission from the interviewees before I recorded their responses
on the audiotapes. Over and above tape-recording the responses of the interviewees, I made use of a notebook where I took down field-notes. In this notebook I had prepared a page for each session’s field-notes by listing the date, the time, the teachers’ names and other more specific entries.

3.6 ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among the categories (McMillan & Schumacher 2010). I needed to familiarise myself with the data that I collected. This I did by reading and memorising the data repeatedly so that I could get a sense of what my data entailed. I began with the search for recurring themes or common threads of information. This process was followed by classifying the pieces of data and marking them with codes and grouping them into themes. These themes originated from the ideas that emerged from the review of the literature and the data collection.

According to Gay, Mills, & Airasian (2006), *data analysis* is “…an attempt by the researcher to summarise collected data in a dependable and accurate manner”. They mentioned that it is the representation of the findings of the study in a manner that has an air of un-deniability. The analysis of the data was generated from the transcripts of the audiotapes, the recorded field-notes and the responses from the transcripts. I listened to the audio-tapes several times, and thereafter transcribed the data. The research questions served as the guidelines for the analysis of the data.

There are three steps in preparing data for analysis, as outlined by Vithal and Jansen (2008), namely the scanning and cleaning of the data, organising the data, and representing the data. I considered the first two steps, which are the scanning and cleaning the data, and organising the data, as I thought that they were the ones which are relevant to his research design.
3.6.1 Scanning and cleaning the data

In scanning and cleaning the data, I prepared the new data for analysis by reading it, and checking for incomplete, inaccurate, inconsistent or irrelevant data. I did that without adding new ideas or reducing the ideas that were provided by the interviewees. I managed to do that with ease as I listened to the audio-tape.

3.6.2 Organising the data

To organise the data, I needed to code, compare and categorise the information. In so doing, I looked for pieces of information that are related, and coded them. Thereafter I categorised them into themes which helped me to analyse the data.

3.7 THE VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE INSTRUMENTS

McMillan and Schumacher (2006) describe validity as “…the degree of congruence between the explanations of the phenomenon and the realities of the world”. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) indicated that “…the validity of a measurement is the extent to which the instrument measures what it is intended to measure”. They noted that the validity of an instrument is specific to the situation.

Creswell, et al. (2010) also defines the validity of an instrument as the extent to which the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure.

They further mentioned the types of validity as –

- face validity - the extent to which an instrument looks valid;
- content validity - the extent to which the instrument covers the complete content of the particular construct that it is set out to measure;
- construct validity - has to do with how well the construct covered by the instrument is measured by different groups of related items
- criterion validity - whether an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), reliability is the consistency with which a measuring instrument yields a certain, consistent result when the entity being measured has not changed. Creswell, et al (2010) defines reliability as “...the extent to which a measuring instrument is repeatable and consistent”. Johnson and Christensen (2004) define reliability as the consistency or stability of the test scores, and validity as the accuracy of the inferences or interpretations you make from the test scores.

According to Gay, et al. (2006); validity is the degree to which the qualitative data we collect accurately gauge what we are trying to measure. They maintain that two common terms used to describe validity in qualitative research are trustworthiness and understanding. They further noted that qualitative researchers can establish the trustworthiness of their research by addressing the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of their studies and findings. They note that researchers can contribute to the trustworthiness of their research and to the understanding of it, by addressing descriptive validity, interpretive validity, theoretical validity, and evaluative validity.

Gay, et al. (2006) also highlighted the fact that when conducting qualitative research, one can facilitate the trustworthiness and understanding of one’s research findings by using a number of strategies. Amongst the strategies that can be used, are such as prolonged stay at the study site, persistent observation, peer debriefing, member checks, and triangulation. The above authors define reliability as “...the degree to which our study data consistently measure whatever they measure”. In qualitative research, researchers consider the reliability of the techniques they are using to gather data.

Creswell, et al. (2010) noted that by the reliability of an instrument they mean that if the same instrument is used at different times or administered to different subjects from the same population, the findings should be the same. I used member-checking and prolonged stay in the field in order to ensure validity and reliability.
3.7.1 Member-checking

Member-checking is a strategy which is used to check the accuracy of the record of the captured data. According to Gay, *et al.* (2006), it is used to test the overall report with the study’s participants before sharing it in final form. Member-checking can also be done within an interview as topics are rephrased and probed to obtain more complete and subtle meanings (McMillan & Schumacher 2006). In member-checking, I returned the interview transcript to the people whom he interviewed to confirm the data. I also contacted them telephonically whenever there was something that needed to be clarified or confirmed.

3.7.2 Prolonged stay at the site

According to Gay, *et al.* (2006) staying long at the site helps to overcome distortions which may be produced by the presence of researchers; and to provide the researcher with the opportunity to test biases and perceptions. I also stayed for a longer period at the site so that he could gather as much information as possible.

3.8 ETHICAL ISSUES

The following ethical issues/measures were taken into consideration when I entered the site, namely

3.8.1 Gaining entry into the field

It is standard procedure that one needs to make arrangements with the people one will be visiting so that you are not embarrassed when learning that they were not expecting you. I wrote a letter to the Senior District Manager to ask permission to interview the teachers who teach at the schools which are under his jurisdiction (see appendix 3). I also wrote letters to the principals of the two selected schools asking their permission to interview their teachers (see appendices 1 and
2). I also made arrangements with the teachers who were to be interviewed. In all these instances, I have received verbal permission to continue with the study at these two schools.

3.8.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

This is where I arranged for informed consent from the participants, where a consent form was signed by me and the participant. I designed a consent form (see appendix 4). The consent form assured the participants of confidentiality and anonymity. They were very happy to sign it, knowing that it would protect them from any victimisation that could follow after the study. It enabled the participants to gain confidence in the project and to participate freely.

The participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity in the sense that their names would not be used in the study; instead, all the names that are referred to in the study are pseudonyms. I also made it clear to the participants that they are at liberty to withdraw from the study project at any time they may wish to do so. The respondents gave their answers readily, as they did not suspect that their responses would be used for any purpose that could put them in danger.

3.8.3 Caring and fairness

I ensured that the participants would not suffer any physical harm. I interviewed them at their places of work, which means that they did not have to travel to the place where they would be interviewed. The respondents were not at any stage humiliated as I also made sure that there was no instance where gestures or language that may be seen to be derogatory, were used.

The next chapter outlines the two cases from which data were collected. As two teachers from two different schools were interviewed, there is an analysis of data that were collected. Data are classified and categorised for it to be meaningful.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY¹

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I present the data that were collected to answer the research question on the ideal type of parental involvement that the teachers expect. The data are presented in the form of two case studies. The two cases capture the reflections and responses of two teachers from two selected primary schools in the Mogalakwena District of Limpopo Province in the Republic of South Africa. The first case is that of Mr Ples, an experienced teacher from one of the primary schools that was visited and studied.

4.2 CASE STUDIES

4.2.1 Case study 1: Mr Ples

4.2.1.1 Background

Mr Ples has a vast amount of experience in teaching. He has had the opportunity to teach at both secondary and primary schools, and this makes him an important resource for the present study, given that his reflections would be able to cover interactions at both primary and secondary school levels. He has seen a lot, the pros and cons of the interaction between learners and parents with regard to schoolwork. He has also interacted with parents at both primary and secondary school levels. Mr Ples previously taught Biology and English at a secondary school, but has recently moved to Rose Primary School where he is responsible for Mathematics, Natural Sciences and English, grades 6 and 7.

¹The names used here for teachers and schools are not real names.
Emphatically Mr Ples mentioned that:

I am experienced as I have taught for 22 years. I taught both in the secondary schools and primary schools, and you see me now working at a primary school. The experience that I have helps me a lot when I come across challenges in my work, because I simply refer to how I once dealt with a situation that is more or less similar to the one I am faced with.

From the quotation above it is clear that Mr Ples finds his experiences very helpful, because he noted that in most cases he refers to the manner in which he had once overcome the challenges that came his way, especially if the situations are more or less similar. This makes him a reliable source because he has much experience of the interaction between parents and the learners.

Indeed, Mr Ples was very proud of his vast experience in teaching. He further described at length about how his experience cuts across various schools and grade levels. For purposes of this study, I was therefore interested in how this experience would reflect various kinds of interactions with different education stakeholders, especially the parents of the learners.

Mr Ples is a qualified teacher with higher education qualifications behind his name. This places him in an advantageous position when teaching learners at the primary school level, as his level of the mastery of content is relatively advanced. When asked about his qualifications, Mr Ples indicated as follows:

I think that my qualifications are fine because I don’t struggle to teach the learners. I have two degrees. I have completed BA and B Ed Honours-degrees from the University of Limpopo. This makes me work with ease as I have the necessary background knowledge.

As indicated, Mr Ples has a BA and a B Ed Honours-degree from one of the local universities. It is clear from the quotation above that Mr Ples was very proud of his educational qualifications. More importantly, though, he felt that his qualifications placed him in a good position to teach effectively. Learner success, however, requires much more than that the teacher is appropriately qualified. It also requires the ability to translate the subject content into classroom teaching that is suitable for the learners. Hearing the confidence with which Mr Ples talks about his teaching
ability and qualifications, I was interested in exploring the extent to which his teaching is found worthy by the learners and their parents. For him to be successful, he requires the support of all other stakeholders. Thus, the present study sought to explore the interactions between teachers and parents.

During our discussion, I asked Mr Ples specifically about the kind of learners in his classroom. Among the many challenges that he discussed, Mr Ples highlighted the problem of transition from Foundation to Intermediate Phase, which he views as most problematic for many of his learners. He noted, for instance, that the issues of the number of subject done and the language of learning and teaching became a problem for the learners entering the intermediate phase. In the Foundation Phase, the learners are taught by means of the mother tongue which is Sepedi; and suddenly the language of learning and teaching changes to English.

The teachers complain about the poor performance of learners in grade 4. This is probably because those learners start many subjects for the first time. They become confused by the many subjects that they do for the first time. The language of learning and teaching also poses a problem. They were taught in Sepedi in grade 3, and we teach them in English in grade 4. These learners struggle in grade 4, and only thereafter things change for the better.

Issues of this nature can be discussed with the parents so that they are made aware that their learners are not doing well with regard to certain aspects of their learning. It is possible that the parents may be able to find ways of helping their children to improve, for example by buying English storybooks so that the learners can read more and familiarize themselves with the language.

While Mr Ples’s qualifications are remarkable, I later found out that he was not the exception. The level of qualifications of the staff members at Mr Ples’s school says a lot about the commitment that these teachers show. Mr Ples maintained that his principal motivated them to improve their qualifications. When I asked him to give me an idea of how suitably qualified the teaching staff was, he said,
Ja, the teachers at our school are generally better qualified. I think the principal has done a good job here because she always encourages teachers to enrol with institutions in order to improve their qualifications. She says this in almost every formal staff meeting we have at our school. When the meeting is about to come to an end, she would say, “Good people, improve your qualifications. Remember that information has to flow from the top to bottom”. This has motivated us a lot. Out of sixteen teachers, we have three teachers who have completed their honours degrees; seven are working towards completing their first degrees while the remaining ones have just completed their higher diplomas in education.

With so many teachers who were actively seeking to improve their qualifications, indeed the school was remarkable and exemplary in many respects within this small rural community.

4.2.1.2 Mr Ples’s perception of parental involvement

Mr Ples was convinced of the importance of parental involvement. Like many teachers, he believes that if parents can play a role by helping their children with schoolwork at home, the learners would be able to improve their performances. He says that learners at his school do not do their homework, and as teachers, they suspect that not doing homework may be contributing to the learners’ poor performance. In response to the question how they as teachers think that they can solve the problem, he said,

We normally call the parents to come and help with developing new strategies that can help the learners to do well in the classroom. We know that they are the relevant people who have an interest because their children’s future is at stake. We understand that parents will listen and try to implement the strategies that we suggest, and which we feel that they can help their children to perform well in class

They call the parents to come and help to develop some strategies that can help the learners to do well in class. This is an indication that Mr Ples and his colleagues perceive the parents as
important stakeholders in the education of their children. He said that the teachers are surrogate parents, which means that the parents at home must not leave everything to the teachers. This shows how he values parental involvement.

Mr Ples regards parental involvement as important in the learning and teaching of children. He noted that if the child realizes that his/her teacher and his/her parent know each other, he/she will know that all his moves and activities will be discovered by either his/her parent or teacher in no time. Whatever wrong-doing he does at school will be known at home, or if it is done at home it will be known at school. The learner will then realize that the parent will report any wrong-doing to the teacher and the teacher will do the same to the parent.

Parents are very important in their children’s education. For instance, if a learner realizes that his/her teacher has been talking to his/her parent, that learner will become serious about his/her work. The learner will realize that whatever the teacher is telling him had been discussed between the teacher and the parent. Something else is that the learner realizes that his/her parent has contact with his/her teacher, and this will motivate the learner to do well. The learner will also feel comfortable in the presence of the educator after realizing that the teacher knows his/her parent. In other words, the teacher becomes part of the family, and normally learners learn well when they learn in the company of the people that they know well and are comfortable in their company.

The perception that Mr Ples has about parental involvement is that whenever a parent is involved the learners will definitely perform well. Sometimes one is tempted to believe that by parent Mr Ples refers to any responsible adult who can help to guide the learners. In one of the conversations the teachers expressed this sentiment about the need for parental involvement, even if it means that the learners have to work with adoptive parents who understand what is required at school and are willing to assist the learners. Teachers suggested that retired teachers be brought back by assigning learners to them for adoption. The retired teachers will be asked politely to voluntarily adopt the learners. In this respect the teachers believe that the retired educators will be in a good position to oversee the upbringing of the learner at home. As responsible adults they will see to it that the learners whom they have adopted do their
homework, attend school regularly, and they will also check the work that the learners have done at school on that day. This idea can work well for the teachers, provided they are able to find the retired teachers who are still able and willing to help. The collaboration between these retired teachers and the parents have the potential to work wonders if properly done.

Ja, you know the teachers are so desperate to let the parents realize the importance of the role that they can play in order to improve their children’s performance. One teacher once suggested that we rope in retired teachers so that they can help. He suggested that we request the retired teachers to adopt the learners. These retired teachers will be requested to adopt learners whose parents are either not there, or are so elderly that they can no longer help the learners. Even incidents where the parents are illiterate are also considered here. These retired teachers will be asked to collaborate with the parents of the identified learners, and will see to it that they do their homework.

It is clear from this discussion that Mr Ples thinks very highly of the need for parental involvement. He values the help that learners are supposed to get from home. He even suggested support for the parents if they are not able or present, so that learners can be helped with their schoolwork.

I was rather puzzled by the idea of engaging retired teachers to take on the parental role for the learners. I asked Mr Ples to tell me more about this idea to which he replied by saying,

Well, some teachers felt that we will be bothering the teachers who have gone home to rest, while some thought that those retired teachers may welcome it as it will be a fruitful pastime. We ended up agreeing that we give it a try. So we are still in the process of making arrangements with all who will be involved.

It is clear that Mr. Ples and his colleagues are convinced about the role of parents in the education of the children at their school. Yet, there is a reasonable challenge around some of the parents who may not be literate enough and/or familiar with school routines. Thus, the proposal to engage retired teachers.
4.2.1.3 The expectations the teachers have of parental involvement

First of all, Mr Ples’s expectation of parents is concerned with helping their children with their schoolwork. This is indicated by the fact that in an event where the parents have gone elsewhere in search of work in order to help the family, he still considers other means where sisters, brothers and other family members are roped in to help.

Most parents have gone to seek jobs elsewhere and their children are left with their grandparents and siblings. I can involve grandparents and other family members to try and help. For instance, brothers and sisters can be of much help.

He expects the parents to continue with assisting the learners at home when they struggle with their schoolwork. I asked him whether he was satisfied with how the learners did their homework and whether they did it and submitted it every time they have to. The idea was for me to understand the extent to which Mr Ples views parental involvement as a challenge, especially with respect to assisting the learners with homework. His response was important to describe how they would like the parents to be involved, namely

The homework is not done properly. Most learners do not do their homework, probably because they stay with their grandparents who do not understand the work given to them, and therefore are not able to help them. The learners do not do their homework because the mothers and fathers who could be helping them are not there. If I teach them something at school and it happens that they struggle at home with what has been taught, there is no help. They lack parental support.

Sometimes he even thinks of grouping the learners and ensuring that he groups learners whose parents are away with those learners whose parents are at home and available. This is to make sure that all the learners receive help from the parents.
Since in most cases it happens with kids who do not stay with their parents, we normally group learners to do their homework in groups. We find this helpful because if there are learners who stay with parents, in a particular group; all the learners in that group will benefit from the help offered by the parents, sisters and brothers. Although in a group, there will be learners who will benefit as they listen and participate well. There are, however, those who will not benefit because they only copy the work done by the other learners.

Mr Ples noted that the challenge that may be encountered is that some of the learners in the group do not take part in such a way that they will benefit from the activity. They only copy the work that is already completed from their fellow classmates who are in the same group as them. This situation does not differ very much from the situation where a parent does the homework on behalf of the child, instead of helping the child to do the homework.

Mr Ples believes that the ideal type of parent-involvement is where the parents give the learners work to do and then check if they are doing it correctly. They must not do the work for their children. They must engage them in doing the work by themselves while they monitor their progress and support them.

The parents need to keep on engaging their children in their schoolwork. They must ask the children to read for them. They may dictate a paragraph to the child to write.

He (Mr Ples) believes that if the learners have a hands-on experience, they will learn better. It is not the same as when parents do the work for them, because if you give them the same work to do in class when the parents are not there, they may not be able to get it right, as they never understood it from the word go.

Mr Ples highlighted the fact that as teachers they expect the parents to be involved in this way, where they are supposed to read whatever information is sent to them by the teachers. The teachers expect the parents to read this information sent to them and act accordingly. The information that is sent to the parents will usually address things such as problem areas faced by
their children. Each parent is expected to read this information and try to find a way of helping his/her child, depending on the nature of the problem.

When asked how he thinks the information sent to the parent can help to improve the child, Mr Ples’s response was,

The parents will be able to watch the learners’ progress even before us as teachers call him/her to discuss the learner’s work. Even before we call the parents to discuss the learner’s retention, the parent will already have seen that the child has problems. Then the parent is able to help the learner according to his/her weaknesses, even before we call him/her to have a look at the learner’s work.

The importance of parental involvement in the learner’s education cannot be overemphasized. In the above quotation Mr Ples hinted that the parents who are fully involved in their children’s schoolwork can act proactively. The importance of spotting the problems early is that they can be treated in time. If learners’ problems are treated early, they will give the learner the chance to progress well with his/her schoolwork. Clearly, one of the expectations here seems to be that the parents will be able to play a diagnostic role, where they can spot the learning problems even before the teachers invite them to school for discussions.

In the discussion Mr Ples indicated that up to 70% of the learners do their homework, while the other learners do not do homework at all. When asked what his feelings are regarding whether learners are doing enough schoolwork at home, his response was that often the learners stay with their elderly grandparents who are not able to help them with schoolwork. From this response it is evident that Mr Ples has a great expectation when he gives learners work to do at home. He expects that the parents will help them to do the work. It is only then that he understands that his expectations may not be realized, because the persons who are supposed to help the learners are elderly or unable to help them.

Most learners stay with their grandparents and these old people are not able to help them with schoolwork.
According to Mr Ples, the teachers expect the parents to do something in order to help their children to excel in their schoolwork. When asked what advice he can give the parents, he indicated that he would advise the parents who can to get tutors to teach their kids at home. This will improve the performance of the learners although it will only be in the case of a few learners whose parents can afford a tutor. Something else that Mr Ples suggested is this one of the parents buy extra storybooks which learners can use for extra reading. This has been suggested with the hope that when the learners read more they will no longer have reading problems.

The parents must have the interests of their children at heart. You may find that some can afford a tutor who may assist their children at home. The tutor will be very helpful because he will take over from where the teachers have left at school. Otherwise their children will be left struggling alone, while other parents could find someone who can come and help their children. The other thing is, the parents must buy their children storybooks so that they can develop a culture of reading. They must not just rely on the prescribed books that are given to the learners by the school. They must buy more books so that these kids can read more.

Mr Ples is adamant that the parents need to play a much bigger role in the learning of their children. His suggestion for the provision of tutors and additional reading material is based on his views about the larger role for the parents. It would seem that Mr Ples’s suggestions are for the home to play an even bigger role. For example, in some instances where the children are not performing well, the suggestion is for the school to arrange for extra tuition and support, and not place the onus on the parents.

In addition to playing a much larger role, Mr Ples also seems to expect the parents to create a supportive environment at home by making the home a place of safety and shelter. He argues that the parents must see to it that they try to provide for the basic needs, such as decent clothes, food, shelter, and such like. It must not always be the case that a particular child is outsmarted by his/her peers, because that will affect him/her negatively, and may even make him/her lose concentration.
There are many ways in which parents can help their children to do well in class. Amongst others, the parent must create for his/ her child an environment conducive to study. He (the parent) must provide in the basic needs of the child so that the child does not have anything to worry about and lose concentration. The basic needs such as light, food, shelter and clothes must be provided for.

Mr Ples elaborated further on these expectations by mentioning,

One other important thing that parents must do in order to maintain an environment conducive to study is to have a happy family. If parents keep on fighting, they spoil that environment that the learners need to focus on their studies. As teachers we expect the parents to maintain stable families if only just for the sake of the kids to have a happy environment for learning.

4.2.1.4 The teachers’ attitudes towards parental involvement

Mr.Ples says that the issue of learners not doing their homework is taken very seriously by the teachers. As it was realized that the learners are not faring well regarding the doing of their homework, the teachers discussed this matter even during their staff meetings. He responded by saying,

Yes. We discuss it in our meetings. This issue of learners not doing their homework is usually raised when we discuss the results at the beginning of the year.

The results are often a priority issue at most schools, especially at the beginning of a year. So, any aspect that is coupled with performance results in staff meetings must be very important. For this reason, Mr Ples and his colleagues view the doing of homework – which has an impact on the end-of year performance result, in a very serious light.
In a way, the doing of homework is often used as an indicator of parent involvement. This is to say that if a learner does his or her homework regularly, it is usually assumed that his or her parent is involved, and *vice versa*.

Mr Ples and his colleagues regard parental involvement highly. If they did not have a positive attitude towards parental involvement, they would not be concerned with those learners whose parents are not present at the home.

It is a socio-economic status problem. Most parents have gone to seek jobs elsewhere and their children are left with their grandparents and siblings. I can involve grandparents and other family members to try and help, for example, brothers and sisters can be of much help.

Clearly, the teachers are not demoralized, in spite of realizing that the use of a foreign language as a medium of instruction might be hampering the progress of the learners in his class. The teacher understands that these learners do well in Sepedi, as it is their home language, and this subject is taught in their mother tongue. In his response when asked about how other teachers feel about the learners’ level of performance in class he noted,

They (teachers) also experience problems. It depends on the nature of the subject. For instance, in Sepedi learners don’t experience so many problems. They are able to do their work on their own. Problems are usually encountered in other subjects where a language which is foreign may be seen as a barrier. But as teachers we feel that we soldier on in order to help these learners to realize their future.

The strong point at Mr Ples’s school is the positive attitude that the teachers show in most cases. Mr Ples indicated that it is not him alone who experiences problems in respect of the learners not doing their homework. Other teachers are also experiencing the same problems. When I enquired what they do as teachers given the situation, he responded that they go the extra mile by identifying the learners who do not do their homework in all the subjects. They realised that it
was almost the same learners, and that is when the teachers suspected that the parents may not be checking their children’s work:

It seems that this is a general problem. Almost all our teachers complain about the learners who do not do their homework. As teachers we have even identified the learners who have a problem of not doing homework in almost all the subjects. Initially I thought that these learners do not do their homework only in Mathematics and Science since these two subjects are a bit challenging to most learners. We realized that though it is a small percentage, there are learners who are just not doing their homework even in those subjects that are not so difficult for the learners. That is when we started to suspect that the parents are not checking their children’s work because they would have seen that their children had been given some work to do, and to urge them to do it. They would even help them to do the work.

4.2.1.5 Methods of communicating with parents regarding the learners’ work

An interesting challenge I wanted to understand was that of how the parents knew what the teachers’ expectations were regarding their involvement in their children’s’ education. Mr Ples highlighted several strategies that their school uses to achieve these goals. For example, the parents are normally called to school to be informed about their role as parents in order to help the learners perform well. The parents are called so that they can receive firsthand information on the progress of their children in respect of schoolwork. Mr. Ples hinted,

As teachers we normally call the parents to come to school to discuss ways in which learners can be supported so that they can perform better in class. We explain the problem we encounter to the parents.

Alternatively, the teachers inform the parents about what they are expected to do in order to improve learner performance by writing comments on the progress reports of the learners at the end of every quarter. Mr Ples indicated that the parents need to check the comments made by the teachers on the learners’ progress reports.
Those comments on the learners’ progress reports serve as guidelines on how to help their children improve their performance.

The parents must always check the comments on their learners’ progress reports as it is one way of communicating with the parents. It may even be the most effective method of communicating with the parents, because the teachers are quite sure that the parents will want to see the progress reports of their children. There is no risk here of having a problem where some parents do not come to school even if they are called by the teachers. All parents will hopefully access the information on the reports.

Mr Ples highlighted the fact that the teachers have tried a variety of methods with the hope that they can bring the parents on board. In most cases one finds that only a small percentage of the parents respond to some of these methods. Even though the teachers preferred the parents to come to school so that they can communicate directly with the parents, they are often disappointed by the poor response from the parents.

Out of eagerness, the teachers have gone the extra mile and visited the parents of learners whose homes are nearer to the school. This alternative does not address the problem fully because it means that those learners whose homes are very far from the school will not be visited. The other challenge regarding this alternative is time. It is just not clear when the teachers are supposed to do these home visits. Nonetheless, the enthusiasm of involving parents in their children’s education remains evident in the teachers. Mr Ples responded by saying this when he was asked for more information on the way in which they communicate the problems that learners have to their parents.

Yes, like I have indicated earlier, we write comments on the progress reports for the parents to read, and to do something. Initially we thought that calling parents to come to the school would help a lot, because it would be a face-to-face kind of situation. We sent them (parents) letters to show up at school in order to discuss their kids’ performance, but usually that did not work as the parents did not come. Some teachers even went so far as
to do home visits where possible. They would visit the learners’ home which are near the school. This also had its own challenges, because you may find that the parent is not home, and sometimes you only find an elderly grandparent. Time is also a challenge because the teachers will also be going home after school, and during the day they are supposed to be in the classroom.

4.2.1.6 The commitment that the teachers show in respect of parental involvement

Mr Ples mentioned that at their school they have a policy on the number of tasks to be given to the learners. They call this policy an assessment plan. The assessment plan helps them to be orderly and consistent when they are to assess their learners on the work that they have done. He described how this policy on assessment helps them to keep on track with the syllabus for the year. They have to cover a certain amount of work before the date of assessment because they are following the policy to the letter. It needs a teacher who is committed because when a date of assessment arrives there must be no excuses. Learners must just do a task, with the teacher having covered the prescribed work.

There is a policy on the number of tasks to be given to the learners. It is imperative at our school. In Languages there are at least one classwork and one homework task to be done per week. There are supposed to be two formal tasks per quarter in Languages. Usually in Mathematics I give them classwork to do every day. I give them three homework tasks every week. I see to it that they do their work every day because Mathematics requires a lot of practice. There are supposed to be three formal tasks per quarter.

From the above quotation one can deduce that the teachers here are committed, because really, one needs to be in order to keep pace with the demands of the work, as outlined by Mr Ples. This is so, because giving learners these many tasks in the given number of periods also includes marking, recording and giving feedback to the parents and the learners.

Mr Ples emphasised that calling parents to school is mostly seen as a way out when they have problems. Sometimes they do not even bother whether the parent who has been called sends
someone else to come and do parenting on his/her behalf. They still sit down with the person who has been sent by the actual parent to discuss the learners’ performance. If the teachers lacked commitment, they would simply dismiss the person who is sent and say that they want a parent, and nobody else.

Yes, it is discussed. Usually it is not discussed in staff meetings but during phase meetings. We call the parents of the concerned learners who did not perform well. Sometimes the parents are so elderly that they end up delegating a neighbour or another child from a neighbouring high school. You may even find that the high school child that has been sent is the one you have taught just a few years ago in our primary school. So the discussion between the parent and the teacher sometimes does no longer yield the results as expected because the ‘parent’ who is addressed is not the rightful one.

The teachers here do not mind that their discussion with the ‘parent’ may not yield the intended results. They seem so passionate about involving the parents that they end up being satisfied with the discussions they have with whatever sort of ‘parent’ who comes to school.

Mr Ples as an individual is also committed to involving parents in their children’s education. He noted that he is the leader of the Phase that he belongs to, and he influenced other educators in that Phase to involve the parents.

As I led the Phase meetings, I came up with this idea whereby learners can be grouped with those learners who receive some help at home so that they may also enjoy the benefit of being helped by the parents. The problem is that we do not write examinations. If it happens that a learner does not submit his/her work he/she ends up failing. As a teacher I must devise a means that this learner must have written tasks at the end of the day.
4.2.2 Case study 2: Mr Molefe

4.2.2.1 Background

Mr Molefe has been teaching since the mid-seventies, which is for about 37 years. He has always been teaching at a primary school:

I started teaching in 1975, which means that as we count from then till today, it is something like 37 years since I started teaching. And mind you, I have only taught in primary schools since then.

He is currently teaching grades 5 to 7. The learning areas that he teaches are Mathematics, Arts and Culture, Social Science and Sepedi. He indicated that the learners in those grades start off very slowly in the lower grades, especially at the beginning of the year, but pick the standard up as the year progresses.

They usually show signs of not coping at the beginning of the year. I have also discovered this tendency when these learners are in the lower grade, like grade 5. Learners who started very slowly have now increased their pace, especially in Mathematics. In Sepedi, the learners are not able to read. They can’t read in their mother tongue. This leads to poor writing.

Mr Molefe has a suitable qualification to teach at the level that he is teaching. Asked about his qualifications with regard to his current job, this is what he had to say:

My qualifications are very suitable for teaching these learners and that is the reason why I work well with the learners. Yes it is suitable. I have completed the Primary Teachers Certificate, which is a teachers’ course that is meant for teaching in primary school. I have also completed a diploma in education. So, my qualifications are OK. It is just that I have to go down to their level as they are operating at a lower level.
It is clear that the qualification that this teacher possesses is so relevant and suitable that really, we can think of other problems if the learners do not perform well in his classes. This teacher is in a good position to let the learners perform well. This qualification even boosts the confidence that the teacher has, which is vital in the interaction between the teacher and the learners. Sometimes, when a teacher does not have self-confidence, he may even let the learners perform poorly, because he will not be delivering the subject content in a proper manner. Seemingly that is not the case with Mr Molefe, since he oozes confidence.

Mr Molefe’s commitment to his work is satisfactory. Due to his high commitment to his work, he goes an extra mile to help the learners when they struggle with their schoolwork. This is indicated in one of his responses when he was asked about the amount of work he gives to his learners. He was asked whether they have a policy that stipulates the amount of work to be given to the learners in a particular period.

At the moment we don’t have a clear-cut policy. In the past we used to have it. I just give them as much classwork as possible, especially in Mathematics. They must be given homework in Mathematics every day so that they can work on it at home. I adopted this attitude when we were still at school, because our teacher would give us almost three tasks to do in Mathematics every day. Our notebooks would fill up in a month’s time.

Mr Molefe might as well give his learners less work because there is nothing prescribing the amount of work to be given to the learners. Over and above this, Mr Molefe and his colleagues show their commitment by remaining with the learners after school so that they can continue working with the learners.

The teachers think that they can solve the problem by giving learners extra work. We think that remaining after school with the learners can also work. We also think of encouraging the learners to do homework after school as they will be remaining with us at school since they don’t do them at home.
Lately many teachers do not stay at their places of work. Immediately, when the bell rings, they head straight home without even thinking of what happens to the learners who are still back in the schoolyard. This practice by Mr Molefe and his colleagues tells a lot about their character as teachers. They place the interest of others first and this is the way in which one needs to operate if you are to succeed as a teacher.

4.2.2.2 Mr Molefe’s perception of parental involvement

The story of Mr Molefe shows that he values the role that can be played by the parents in the improvement of performance. This is shown by the fact that when Mr Molefe and his colleagues experience problems in respect of the learners not doing their homework, they resort to calling the parents in order to make them aware that they need to help their children with their schoolwork. He says,

I think that we need to call the parents to tell them that when the teachers give the learners work to do at home, they (parents) must try by all means to help them. They must ask their children if they were not given homework. If they are given some, they must help them to do the homework.

This response clearly indicates that Mr Molefe is of the opinion that parents can and need to play an important role in their children’s education. Mr Molefe is aware of the fact that as teachers, they need to team up with the parents so that the parents may address one side of the children’s development, while teachers will be addressing the other side. This interaction between the teacher and the parent will make a child a complete being. Mr Molefe noted that the collaboration that he envisions between parents and teachers will help to mould the child in totality, as the teachers deal with children from a particular point of view, while the parents deal with the children from their point of view. The idea is that by the time that the children are fully grown-up, there must not be some or other aspects that were ignored. They must be responsible adults who are well-equipped with the skills that they learnt from both teachers and parents.
Mr Molefe believes that the parents need to create an environment conducive to learning by levelling the field with activities such as making sure that they (parents) demand to check their children’s books to see what they did at school that particular day. This will put the learners under pressure to perform because they will know that their parents are going to demand to see the work for the day.

Yes, absolutely. Parents must play their role by helping and urging their children to do schoolwork, while teachers play their role by teaching the children. Ultimately, as the learners realize that the parents are after them at home regarding schoolwork while the teachers do the same at school, they will definitely work. The parents must sometimes demand to see their children’s books in order to see what they did at school that day. This will make the learner to work even harder because he/she will know that his/her work has to be seen by a parent who may not be happy with the work that is of poor quality.

The perception that Mr Molefe has about parental involvement is that the parents must, indeed, create an environment that teachers will find easy to work in. From the quote above, it is evident that Mr Molefe sees the important role that parents can play in familiarizing their children with the atmosphere of learning which, amongst others, will require them to be committed, to work hard, and to meet certain standards. No doubt the parents will have a certain level which they expect their children to reach in their performance.

Mr Molefe highlighted the fact that not all parents understand the role that they should play in order to help their children to pass at the end of the year. He noted that some parents shift the whole responsibility to the teachers, and expect that the teachers struggle alone so that the children pass. If the children do not pass, the parents force the teachers to pass them despite their lack of ability.

It is not all the parents who fully understand their responsibility regarding helping their children progress well in their schoolwork. Some just want to
see their children progress at school without them making any effort in helping them to do well at school. Some go to the extent of forcing the teachers to push their children to the next grade even if they did not pass. One parent told me that I was going to push his child as he had been pushed throughout the lower grades. What they should be doing is accepting that their child is not ready to progress to the next grade and start to seek ways in which the child can be helped. This will make the child ready to progress to the next grade.

The idea that Mr Molefe has is namely that parents must not just sit and wait to see what teachers can do to help their children realize their dreams. The parents must take the lead in their children’s pursuit for a brighter future.

The parents must not leave everything to the teachers and take a back seat. After all, they are the ones who are very keen that their children become responsible adults, or have professions. So they must take the lead and show the teachers the way in which they would like their children to be educated. They must take full responsibility for their children’s education. They must see the teachers as people who only come to offer professional help, just because parents perhaps are not better qualified to help their children professionally. I am only supposed to do teaching and other related things, and the rest must be done by the parent. Parental involvement cannot be overlooked.

Mr Molefe takes parental involvement so seriously that he suggests that the school management should consult with the parents of the learners when they discuss issues such as subjects that will be taught at their school. This is because these issues will have a direct impact on the lives of the learners in future, for example, these subjects will determine the type of professions the learners will be able to pursue.
The parents can also contribute to the education of their children by deciding on the curriculum that is supposed to be taught at their school. It is not supposed to be an arrangement that is only discussed by the school management when, for example, the subjects that are to be taught are suggested. The parents of the learners must be given the chance to make suggestions on which subjects are supposed to be included. Anyway, the learners who will be taught those subjects belong to the parents and not to the teachers. The aspirations and dreams of these parents and their children will somehow be affected by the subjects that are taught at their school. So, they must take part in deciding which subjects are supposed to be taught.

4.2.2.3 The expectations the teachers have of parental involvement

Mr Molefe believes that parents must only guide their children in respect of how a particular piece of work needs to be done. They are not supposed to do the homework literally on behalf of their children. The parents must only give guidance and support, and leave the learners do the work on their own. He responded by saying,

The parents must guide the learners only when they get stuck. They must not do the work for the learners. They must only guide the learners and the learner must do the work on his/her own. If the parents do the homework for their children, these children will not be learning anything. They will only sit and wait for their parents to do the homework, which they know they will do correctly. The parents must let their kids do the homework on their own and only correct it.

It is clear from the quotation above that Mr Molefe believes that learning can take place when learners are hands-on in the process of learning. The teachers expect the children to be learning and not the parents. In other words, if the teachers give the learners some work to do at home and it happens that the parents do the work for them without ever involving their children, then it will be the parents who are learning, and not the children.

Mr Molefe expects the parents to help when the learners get the answers wrong, so that they can correct them. They must not just leave everything to the learners to see for themselves. He
responded in this way when he was asked how he can advise parents on helping their children to perform well in class.

They must not do the work for the kids, but they must guide them. They must let them (the learners) do the work and only help when the child needs to be corrected. And they must correct the child and not just leave him/her even if what he/she is doing is wrong. They must also find them some activities that are related to what the learners do at school and let them work on those activities. They must also correct them when they don’t do them well.

One can detect from the quotation that he expects the parents to go the extra mile in helping their children to do better in class. He expects the parents where possible to also look out for material that will help to drill their children on the schoolwork. Mr Molefe believes that if parents can, over and above the material that the learners use in class, find some more material, it will be of great help to the learners, because the learners will be doing activities on what they did in class, so they end up grasping the content of the subject. Mr Molefe expects the parents to look for information that will help their children to perform well in the classroom.

As a precaution, Mr Molefe expects the parents to treat their children with respect whenever they interact with them. This helps to create an environment conducive to learning for the learners, because showing your children respect means that you love them, and this boosts their confidence, which is good in their learning process. Disrespecting their children may cause them to consider themselves as useless, and they end up losing concentration.

Some parents shout at their kids. They even use words that are derogatory. This practice does not do their children any good. Shouting can only make matters worse. The parents need to stop shouting at their children and talk to them politely. They must teach their children to use time wisely. They must control their kids regarding television-watching. The children must be allowed to watch certain programmes, and not the whole day.
It is clear from the quotation above that Mr Molefe expects parental involvement to instil a sense of responsibility in the learners. He expects parental involvement, namely to teach the learners to divide their time among their activities, and not just devote all their time to one activity, which may not even be helping them excel in the classroom.

Mr Molefe expects the learners to perform well because they have parents, brothers or sisters at home who can help them with their work. Whenever he gives learners work to do at home he seems to be bearing in mind that there are people who can assist those learners to do the work, especially if the work gives learners some problems. That is why he is surprised when learners do not perform as expected.

They do their homework. It is just that there are those who do not take their homework seriously. They just do it for the sake of doing it. I always ask them why they get the answers wrong, because at home they have parents, sisters, brothers and others who can help them to do the work. There is no reason why they shouldn’t get the answers correct. They have all the time to ask someone to help them to do the homework again and again, as they will not be hurrying anywhere.

It is an expectation that Mr Molefe has from parents that they should help their children to perform well. He goes to the extent of mentioning other people, like brothers and sisters, who can help them to do well in their schoolwork. This clearly indicates that he expects that something be done at home so that learners do not stop learning.

Mr Molefe maintains that there should be collaboration between teachers and parents, because these two parties have a common goal, which is to see to it that the learners do well in the classroom. The risk, if they do not work together, is that they may cause confusion in the learners, because even if the learners realize that the teachers and parents have different approaches to helping them to develop, they, at least, are working towards a common goal.

The parents have to realize that they must work hand in glove with the teachers as they all have a common goal. As the teachers work with the learners at school, the parents
must also work with the children at home. Of course, some parents sometimes insist that the teachers are the ones who must shoulder all the responsibility of moulding the children, while they themselves don’t do anything to help. They are in a better position to help because they know their children better, since they live with them. We are only with them during school hours. They must teach them the basics such as respect, good manners, and cleanliness which are fundamental to a classroom situation. Then teachers will come with their expertise and impart knowledge that will make the learner a well-balanced adult in future.

From the quotation above it is clear that Mr Molefe expects the parents to take the responsibility and play their part in raising their child to become a complete being.

Sometimes the parents must make sure that they deal with almost all things that may disturb their children in their studies. Some small things may cause unnecessary tension if they go unchecked. Mr Molefe highlighted the fact that learners need to be happy and feel comfortable among their peers in order to perform well at school. He maintains that parents need to deal with small issues like clothing and money to buy lunch during break, because they may send some subtle messages that may harm the image of the learner when he/she realises that it is only him/her who is not able to buy the clothing or lunch during break.

Besides contributing, as by helping the child with homework and other related aspects, the parents must see to it that they create and maintain stability in the lives of their children. This they can do by namely, buying their children suitable clothing, so that they do not have the problem of peer pressure which may distract their attention in the classroom. They should also give him/her some money to buy something during lunch break. Look, if all the children in his street wear certain designer clothes and it is only he/she who does not, the others are obviously going to tease him/her. As he would not like that, it is likely that he may become a withdrawn person, and obviously this is going to affect his performance in class.
Mr Molefe clearly makes the parents aware that they must also be on the look-out for things that can derail the learners on their way, except those things that are directly related to the classroom. It is possible that a parent can help his child with homework and classwork, and forget to make his child look to be belonging to this era, and that child may continue to perform poorly.

From curiosity I asked Mr Molefe whether he thinks that parents should continue buying their children books. I simply wanted to check his attitude on the question of parents buying extra books and other material to be used by the learners in the classroom. He indicated that even if the government supplies schools with LTSM (Learning and Teaching Support Material), the parents should still provide for their children, where possible, in order to make all the necessary material available.

The parents must buy study material if they want their children to perform better. It is always the case that if you want to excel in something, you must go the extra mile in your preparations. The study material that I would advise parents to buy, over and above the ones supplied at school, will definitely help a lot, because they will supplement what the school has. I think the school provides the basics, and the parents must see to it that they provide some more if they really want their children to become stars.

Mr Molefe expects the parents to visit the school time and again in order for them to have a picture of how their children are performing. He is against the bad practice where parents are called to school very late in the year, just to give latitude to the teachers to retain their children. He indicated that the idea was not to help the child in this case, because the parents should have been called when the child started to show signs of poor performance. In this way the child could benefit.

The parents must get used to visiting the school, and communicate with the teachers of their children. By so doing they will be able to spot the problems early and work on them. It is another matter if the parent is called at the end of the year just to confirm that his child may be retained, as is the case sometimes. The poor child will not have received
any help. The problem must be spotted quite early so that several strategies can be applied in order to help the child to pass at the end of the year.

Mr Molefe noted that parents can be of great help in respect of matters such as organizing events for the learners. He highlighted that it should not always be the case that parents only come to school when their children are not doing well in class. There are those learners who perform well anyway. These learners need to be motivated so that they can do even better. He advises that parents can be helpful in activities such as award-giving ceremonies, and that parents can help by raising funds that will be used to support that special day.

I think that we need to also be mindful of the fact that even learners who perform well in class still need help from their parents. Of course, some learners perform very well. So we have to encourage them to do even better. Otherwise, if we don’t do that, their performance may go down because it is not recognized. The learner must be made to feel that he has done something extraordinary, and this will motivate him to hold on to the position of, maybe, top achiever in a particular learning area/subject. The parents must be used to doing things such as raising funds to make a wonderful day a success. Yes, the parents can play a vital role here, because you may find that they know many business people in the vicinity who can offer to sponsor an event. This practice may even help to create healthy competition among the learners.

It is clear from the quotation above that, indeed, the parents can really play an important role. If the award-giving ceremony is successful, the motivation that these learners receive may help them to go far in realizing their dreams. Other learners will also want to be awarded in the next award-giving ceremonies.

4.2.2.4 The teachers’ attitudes towards parental involvement

It is clear from the responses that Mr Molefe has a positive attitude towards parents being involved in their children’s education. The fact that the parents are called when the teachers
encounter problems in respect of their learners’ work indicates that he sees the importance of parental involvement. In one of his responses he says,

> Yes, absolutely. The parents must play a role by helping and urging them to do their schoolwork, while the teachers play a role by teaching the children. The learners are likely to take an interest in their schooling if they see that their parents are also interested in the school. It is always the case that children like to imitate their parents. So, I think by simply developing an interest in the school, a parent can influence his/her kid in the right direction.

He realizes that the teachers and the parents complement each other with regard to the learners’ performance. He says,

> Ultimately, as the learners realize that their parents are behind them at home regarding their schoolwork, while teachers do the same at school, they will definitely work.

This response shows, indeed, that Mr Molefe rates parental involvement highly. He realizes that the parents can help them with regard to instilling discipline in the learners, which the researcher thinks is fundamental in the learning process.

Mr Molefe ascribes most, if not whatever achievements, by the learners to parental involvement. He noted that their school had in the past received achievement awards because the parents were involved. He maintains that had it not been because the parents were helping their children to do their projects at home, they would not have won the awards. He was asked whether he really thinks that the parents can help the learners to perform well in class, and he responded by saying,

> Yes. The parents can help to improve learner performance. In the past we used to receive awards in school competitions because the parents were involved. If, for example, a teacher gives the learners a project to do at home or which will take some time to finish, it will be better if the parents helped their children so that they can come up with a presentable piece of work. As teachers we encouraged the parents to help their children to
do the projects. Some learners even received awards at competitions, and the other teachers became interested because of the improvement of the learners’ performance.

He pointed out that parental involvement is vital, because the learners must have someone at home who can monitor and encourage them to continue studying. He mentioned that they must provide the learner with all the necessary equipment so that he can study without unnecessary disturbances.

I value the help that parents can offer the school. In the first place, for learners to do well in the classroom, they must also continue to study at home. Now, that is where the parents come in and take over from the teachers since the teachers do not go home with the learners. So, the parents must see to it that their children do their schoolwork at home. Where possible, they must help them to do the work. The parents are also the ones who must see to it that their children have all the necessary material that they use at school. I sometimes find that a learner does not have a pen, and if you ask him since when, you realize that it is for more or less a week.

Mr Molefe regards parental involvement as a strategy that can be used to improve the performance of the learners. He thinks that it will be good to visit the parents at home whenever it is possible, and to interact with them. He noted that this interaction will, in a way, help to build trust between the parents and the teachers which is necessary for the discussions that may be held between these two parties. Mr Molefe deems it necessary for parents to be taught about their responsibilities, and then the advantage of the visits and the trust that is built between parents and teachers will be obvious.

I used to think how the parents can help to solve the problem of poor performance by the learners. I came up with this idea that as teachers we need to also visit these learners’ homes and interact with their parents. In this way we will be building trust between the parents and us as teachers. This will promote a spirit of togetherness, and the parents will open up and feel free to discuss their children’s performance. I think that as a teacher I
must take advantage of the situation and teach the parents how to become involved in their children’s education.

A suggestion was made that the parents be called to a meeting where they will be taught how to contribute towards the studies of their children. He highlighted the fact that some parents do not even realize that they have a role to play in order for their children to succeed in the classroom. They think that the teachers know what to do and they will do all what they are supposed to do. Mr Molefe suggested that the parents be called to a workshop where they will be shown their responsibilities and the danger of not taking those responsibilities.

At times I think that the parents can be called to a meeting where we will have a workshop on how they can help their children. This is because I realized that some parents don’t even know that there is a role that they must play in order to help their children with schoolwork. They think that the teachers will help their children to pass, since it is their duty. They forget that the teachers alone cannot succeed. Firstly, the learners must be prepared when they come to school, and if they come to school unprepared, they will experience many problems. For example, if they come to school hungry, they cannot concentrate.

Mr Molefe thinks that the parents must not hold their children ransom by letting the parents’ shortcoming, which is illiteracy, become a barrier in helping their children with schoolwork. They must take advantage of the programme that the government has made available for eradicating illiteracy, so that they may be able to help their children with their work. He maintains that, alternatively, the parents must ask for help in the event where they are not able to help their children.

The era of saying that the parents are illiterate and therefore cannot help their learners with schoolwork has passed. The government has introduced a programme for eradicating illiteracy, namely ABET (Adult Basic Education and Training). As teachers we would like all parents to enrol for this programme so that they may be in a position to help their children with their schoolwork. However, if a parent did not enrol for this
programme, he must see to it that he seeks help from other people who may be in a
position to help his/her child. Otherwise, he/she will delay the progress of his/her child,
which is not a good thing.

4.2.2.5 Methods of communicating with parents regarding the learners’ work

Mr Molefe noted that they communicate with the parents by means of the learners’ progress
report cards that are sent to them every three months. They hope that the parents will inspect the
report seriously for it to make sense to them. This is the way how parents can know what is
happening with their children at school in terms of academic achievement.

At the end of every term, which is every three months, we issue learners’ progress report
cards to the parents so that they may know how their children are doing at school. We do
this with the hope that the parents will study the progress reports given to them, as these
reports give some important messages to them.

Mr Molefe indicates that they communicate with the parents by calling them to school in order to
address issues such as the learners’ performance. After the teachers had discussed the learners’
performance during staff meetings at the beginning of the year, they call the parents to school to
make them aware of their role in the improvement of their children’s performance. He says,

I am of the opinion that after the staff had analysed the results at the beginning of the
year, it will be proper if we call the parents and make them aware of how their learners
have performed. The analysis will not bear fruit if we keep it to ourselves. We must make
it available to everyone who has an interest in the results, especially the parents, because
their children’s future is at stake here. I think we need to call the parents to tell them that
when teachers give learners work to do at home, they must try, by all means, to help
them. They must ask their children if they were given homework. I mean, it may have
emerged during the analysis of results that not doing homework might have been the
cause of the learner’s poor performance.
The above quotation indicates that when the teachers call the parents to school to talk about the learners’ performance, they include a variety of aspects that might be causing poor performance. It is possible that not doing their homework properly may have led to poor performance, since that homework may be in preparation for tests.

Mr Molefe indicated that other than communicating with parents by using the information on the learners’ progress report cards, they also organize special days where the parents are invited, so that they can discuss their children’s work with the educators. They spell out to them how their learners are doing in class, and thereafter discuss the strategies that they can use to help the child to perform better. They go to the extent of tasking each other with responsibilities in order to help the child.

Like I have indicated earlier, most of the times we communicate to the parents through the learners’ progress reports where we write important comments on how the parents can assist their children to perform better. At times, the parents may be invited to school on special days, some call these days, “special parents’ days”. This is where the parents are shown how their children perform in class. On these days, the parents and the teachers discuss how the learners, who are not doing well, can be helped to do better. Methods which can be applied to help the learner are discussed on these days. The teachers and the parents give each other responsibilities on how to help the child to perform better. If, for example, the child is poor at reading, the parent can be given the responsibility of buying extra storybooks, and seeing to it that his child practices to read at home.

4.2.2.6 The commitment that the teachers show in respect of parental involvement

Mr Molefe is so committed to the idea of involving the parents in the education of their children that he even thinks that whoever can play the role of a parent, will serve a purpose. He thinks that since the teachers are engaged with the learners at school, there must be someone at home who will continue their work. The spirit of learning and teaching must not end at school if the children are to succeed in their schoolwork. When he was asked how they can improve the poor
performance shown by some learners, he immediately brought the issue of parental involvement into picture. He highlighted that solving the problem of poor performance is difficult as most of the learners are left with the grandparents. However, older siblings can be used in the place of their parents.

It is not easy to solve the problem of the poor performance by the learners because many of the learners are left with their grandparents. Most of the parents in this village have gone to the bigger cities to search for work as there are no jobs locally. So we thought of the idea whereby we involve their brothers and sisters in order to assist with homework. Someone who is a bit older, a brother or a sister, can see to it that the learner makes time to do his/her homework, and help him/her to do the work where the learner needs help.

Mr Molefe noted that at the school where he is stationed, they are engaged in a Mathematics programme called Experico. He says that they do many Mathematics activities in this programme, and he prepares material for the learners to take home to their parents so that their parents can help them to do the activities. Mr Molefe knows very well that the parents will have ample time to work with their children, and this will, in a way, keep the spirit of the classroom alive.

At our school we have a programme called Experico. This is a programme from a non-governmental organization that has entered into a partnership with the Department of Education with the purpose of improving performance in Mathematics. They give us many activities that are related to Maths, to do with the learners. Now, as we are involved in a Mathematics programme, I thought of photocopying the material that I use and give it to the parents through their kids, so that they can work on them with their kids at home. I thought that this could be helpful, because at least, the learners will not have a break where they will entirely stop working on the activities of the programme.

Mr Molefe clearly indicates the importance of parental involvement. He views the parents as playing the role of a teacher at home. There is no time at which learners will not be taught if the parents are involved, which is good for the learners.
It has come to my realization that often the learners simply forget about school and all that is related to it when they knock off. Some even leave their books scattered in the classrooms, so excited they are about going home. Now, this shows very well that those who have been given work to do at home are likely to leave it at school, and when the teachers want the work the following day, they will find that it was not done as the books were left behind in the classroom. So parents must be there to demand to see the work that was done on that day, including the homework given to the learners.

It is clear from the quotation above that Mr Molefe finds that the parents are important in terms of ensuring that the learners continue to learn, even when they are away from school. Mr Molefe may have realized that usually learners tend to disregard their schoolwork whenever they are not at school, and this leads to them forgetting what they had been taught in their classrooms.

Mr Molefe was asked how he would advise parents to help their children to improve their performance in class, and this is what he said he would do:

I would advise parents to go all out to seek information from various sources. They may seek information from the teachers who stay in the same village, even if they don’t teach at the local school. It may be quite easy if another teacher explains a concept to a learner, because that teacher may explain the concept that was explained in class in a different way. So this learner will have the advantage of getting an explanation from two different sources. The learner may find an explanation from one of these sources more understandable.

Mr Molefe suggested that the parents can group themselves together in order to make the internet available to the children. He is of the opinion that if parents can agree to use a computer which belongs to one of them and collect money from each of them for the internet, it can be helpful because all the children will have access to the internet. He indicated that the internet can be very helpful to the learners if they know how to use it to seek information.
Doing homework is even easier for those who can afford the internet. On the internet there is a lot of information which can be helpful to the learners. The parents who can afford it should avail this facility to their children so that they can use it to seek information. The researcher reckoned the parents can group themselves together and work together to make the internet available to their children. They can make use of one parent’s computer, and all can contribute money for the internet. The use of computers by the learners is no longer a luxury but a necessity, so every learner should have access to a computer, and the parents have to make provision for it.

In the next chapter, which is the last, there is a discussion of major findings, conclusions, limitations of the study as well as the recommendations. I draw conclusions out of the situations presented by the findings. There is also a detailed presentation of recommendations that are informed by the findings from data analysis.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the findings and conclusions of the study will be presented. What is implied by the findings and conclusions of the study is discussed in relation to the literature on parental involvement in the learners’ education, and what the teachers expect from the parents.

The background to the research is that as the teachers expect the parents to be involved in their children’s education, how do they expect them to be involved? In other words, what do teachers want parents to do in order to help their children to improve their performance? The premise of this study is that teachers need to engage with the question of how they would like the parents to be involved in their children’s education for the sake of improving their performance. The study primarily aimed at exploring the perceptions of the teachers on parental involvement.

I specifically focused on what the teachers want the parents to do in order to help their children with their schoolwork.

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

- What are the teachers’ beliefs about the ideal type of parental involvement in aid of better learner performance and the improved facilitation of teaching in schools?
- What do the teachers expect the parents to do in order to facilitate learning by their children?
- How do the teachers inform the parents about their expectations?
- How can the teachers’ expectations of parental involvement be interpreted and understood?

I presented the stories and experiences of the two teachers who were interviewed in the form of case studies in chapter 4. Several themes emerged from the teachers’ stories. These themes will be discussed in this chapter. The implications of these findings will also be discussed, and
conclusions will be made. In closing, I will recommend the best form of parental involvement based on the perspective that the teachers depicted in their responses.

5.2 THE FINDINGS

I discussed five major findings that manifested themselves in the data presented in chapter 4. I will begin by discussing the guidance that is supposed to be given to the children by the parents. The encouragement that the parents give their learners, irrespective of whether they perform well or not, is discussed next. In the third instance, I will discuss the creation of an environment conducive to learning. Fourthly, the focus will be on the essence of the communication that is supposed to take place between teachers and parents. Lastly, I will discuss the point that every responsible adult can contribute in helping the learners to perform well in the classroom.

5.2.1 The guidance that parents need to give to their children

The teachers who were interviewed indicated that parental involvement can be helpful in the improvement of the learners’ performance. In essence, the parents must guide their children to do well in the classroom. The two teachers maintained that if the parents do the work for the learners instead of helping them by giving guidance, the learners will not benefit. One of the teachers who were interviewed said:

The parents must guide the learners only when they get stuck. They must not do the work for the learners. They must only guide the learners and the learner must do the work on his/her own. If the parents do the homework for their children, these children will not be learning anything. They will only sit and wait for their parents to do the homework, which they know they will do correctly. The parents must let their kids do the homework on their own and only correct it.
On the other hand, the teachers expect parents to help when the learners get the answers wrong, and correct them. The parents should not just leave everything to the learners to see for themselves. Teachers believe that with proper guidance the learners will be able to grasp what was taught at school.

They must not do the work for the kids, but they must guide them. They must let them (the learners) do the work and only help when the child needs to be corrected. And they must correct the child and not just leave him/her, even if what he/she is doing is wrong. They must also find them activities that are related to what the learners do at school, and let them work on those activities. They must also correct them when they don’t do them well.

It is expected from the parents to guide their children on matters relating to schooling. This was discussed in chapter 2, where DePlanty, et al. (2007) highlighted the fact that parent involvement is a valuable component of any student’s education. They argued that the researchers have found that parent-child discussions about the school help to improve academic achievement, and to reduce problematic behaviour. This finding strongly suggests that parent involvement is a valuable component of any learner’s education. DePlanty, et al. (2007), insist that the parents are their children’s first and most important teachers, and for students to succeed in school, the parents must participate actively in their children’s academic lives.

The teachers in this study hinted that when the parents help their children, they tend to perform better. This was indicated by the winning of awards by learners whose parents helped them to do projects which the teachers gave them.

Yes, the parents can help to improve the learners’ performance. In the past we used to receive awards in schools’ competitions because parents were involved. If, for example, a teacher gives the learners a project to do at home or which will take time to finish, it will be better if the parents helped their children so that they can come up with a presentable piece of work. As teachers we encouraged the parents to help their children to do the
projects. Some learners even received awards at the competition, and other teachers became interested because of the improvement of the learners’ performance.

The parents are supposed to equip themselves with the necessary skills that will enable them to give proper guidance to their children, which will ultimately influence the way in which learners perform. Some researchers emphasized the fact that the performance of learners in the classroom, to some extent, depends on the level of competence of the parents. In the literature review Hannon (2000), in his search for the relationship between the parents’ literacy levels and the child’s level of achievement, found objective evidence of the link between parents’ competence in basic skills and the competence of their children, and it indicated a very strong correlation between the low basic skills of the parents and the low academic attainment of their children. He further indicated that there was a clear association between children’s reading test scores and the parents’ reported reading competency.

This idea that parents are supposed to give guidance to their children was also highlighted by Lawson (2003) where he differentiated between two types of parental involvement, namely school-based parent involvement and home-based parent involvement. He stated that the teachers believed that the children’s valuation of education is directly linked to the expectations and values of their parents; home-based parental involvement was perceived as the primary means of stressing educational importance. He maintained that teachers view parental involvement as very important, because it is with the parents that the children receive most of their values and belief systems. If the parents believe that school is important, then the child tends to also believe that school is important. This helps to create a positive attitude toward school activities among children, and will eventually lead to improved learner performance. This implies that parents are expected to take a lead in placing education on the top of their priority list, and their children will follow suit. Children usually imitate their parents, thus it means that the parents must be orderly, so that they can provide proper guidance.
5.2.2 The encouragement of the learners by the parents

It was stated by the teachers who were interviewed that parental involvement has to be looked at with a critical eye. It should not always be the case that parents have to come to school only when the learners experience problems. Some learners are really doing well in class. Nonetheless, those learners still need parental involvement to keep them going. It is not surprising to find that the performance of such learners deteriorate as a result of the lack of the attention that they expected from the parents. If these learners do not receive any attention from their parents, they may feel neglected, and do not see any sense in the efforts that they put in. They have to be made to enjoy the privilege of performing better than other learners. This will definitely boost their self-esteem and make them happy learners. The parents must be involved in the form of encouraging the learners to do even better.

The learners who perform well can be encouraged by means of incentives such as awards. This is where the parents come in, because it is suggested that they help to organize award-giving ceremonies. The parents are in a better position to play an important role in this respect because they are the ones who are familiar with the local business people who may be willing to sponsor such events.

I think that we need to also be mindful of the fact that even learners who perform well in class still need help from their parents. Of course some learners perform very well. So, we have to encourage them to do even better. Otherwise, if we don’t do that, their performance may go down because it is not recognized. The learner must be made to feel that he has done something extraordinary, and this will motivate him to hold on to the position of perhaps top achiever in a particular learning area/subject. This can be done by means of activities such as giving awards to learners who perform well. The parents must be used to do things such as raising funds to make such a wonderful day a success. Yes, the parents can play a vital role here because you may find that they know many business people in the vicinity who can offer to sponsor an event. This practice may even help to create healthy competition among the learners.
The learners may ultimately develop a sense of competition among themselves in their class to see who the award-winner will be in that year. This competition will be healthy for them because it encourages them to pull up their socks in order to maintain the position of a top-achiever. It may also encourage the others who are not good achievers to want to surprise those who normally obtain the top positions in their respective classes.

Some learners need a little push from behind as a form of encouragement. They must be in the know that their parents expect them to perform well. One teacher indicated that if the parents demand to see the work done on that day, this will motivate their children to work harder, because they cannot afford to keep on disappointing their parents with a poor performance. They will make it a point that they do not always do badly, because someone is watching them. It is not the same as where the learners obtain low scores and get away with it, as there is no one who seems to be caring.

Yes, absolutely. The parents must play their role by helping and urging their children to do their schoolwork while teachers play their role by teaching the children. Ultimately, as the learners realise that their parents are behind them at home in respect of their schoolwork, while teachers do the same at school, they will definitely work. The parents must sometimes demand to see their children’s books in order to see what they did at school that day. This will make the learner to work even harder, because he/she will know that his/her work will be seen by a parent who may not be happy about work that is always of poor quality.

The learners need always to be encouraged so that they can succeed at the end. Some may not see the importance of making an effort with their schoolwork at that moment. The parents must be there knowing that they have to encourage their children, and to showing them that making an effort with schoolwork may help them a lot in the future. Ferrara and Ferrara (2005) argue that parent involvement promotes better student attendance, increased graduation rates and less grade retention, higher parent and student satisfaction with school, less discipline reports, and higher achievement scores in reading and math. These researchers believe that the parents can play a role in their children’s education by encouraging them to be obedient, and to perform well.
The parents have a responsibility to see to it that their children develop the will and passion to go to school. They need to do that by teaching and encouraging their children to know the basics such as simple counting; that will help them to have a better start at school. In chapter two, Lareau (2000) defines *parent involvement* as preparing children for school. She maintains that this includes activities such as, for example, teaching children the alphabet, talking and reading to children to promote language development, attending school events (for example, parent-teacher conferences), and fulfilling any requests the teachers make of parents (for example, to play word games with their children at home). This preparedness can eradicate the anxiety that the learners have about schooling.

5.2.3 The creation of an environment that is conducive to learning

Learners do learn well under conditions that are favourable for learning. It is the responsibility of the parents to create such an environment so that their children can learn without difficulty. There are several ways in which parents can create an environment which will be conducive to learning. The teachers who were interviewed indicated that the learners need to have an environment in which they will feel comfortable in order for them to do well in the classroom. They maintained that comfort is essential for their concentration, and the lack of it may result in problems such as poor attentiveness which will obviously lead to poor performance. It is therefore the responsibility of the parents to create an environment that is conducive for learning so that their children do not come across unnecessary challenges in their pursuit of a better future through learning.

Some parents shout at their kids. They even use words that are derogatory. This practice does not do their children any good. Shouting can only make matters worse. The parents need to stop shouting at their children and talk to them politely. They must teach their children to use time wisely. They must control their kids regarding television-watching. The children must be allowed to watch certain programmes, and not the whole day.
Parents who shout at their kids make them angry or frightened, and these feelings may be carried into the classroom where the learners are expected to spend the day learning. It will really be difficult for those who are frightened or angry before they come to school to learn. They will definitely not do as well as those who came to school being happy.

The two teachers also indicated that it is important that learners must feel comfortable in the company of their peers. This will reduce the possibility of them being subjected to peer pressure which is not always good for the learners. It is so painful for a learner if he or she is teased by his/her peers because of something he/she is not able to correct himself/herself. It may be so painful that such a learner may perform poorly because he/she keeps on thinking about his/her inability to address his/her problem, and no longer concentrates in the classroom. This pain will affect him so badly that he or she may decide to leave school. This situation may even cause that the learner be bullied because the other learners find a reason to bully him/her. The simple things that can either destroy or make the child are such things like clothing and not having enough money to buy something during lunch break. One of the teachers interviewed noted that,

Besides contributing, as by helping the child with homework and other related aspects, the parents must see to it that they create and maintain stability in the lives of their children. This they can do by namely, buying their children suitable clothing, so that they do not have the problem of peer pressure which may distract their attention in the classroom. They should also give him/her some money to buy something during lunch break. Look, if all the children in his street wear certain designer clothes and it is only he/she who does not, the others are obviously going to tease him/her. As he would not like that, it is likely that he may become a withdrawn person, and obviously this is going to affect his performance in class.

The parents also have an obligation of preparing their children for the classroom situation. Parents must teach their children the basics such as attentiveness, listening and discipline. The teachers who found that the learners have been prepared for the classroom situation do not have to waste time by familiarizing their learners with the basics like discipline, attentiveness,
cleanliness, and orderliness. It is the responsibility of the parents to teach their children these basics so that an environment conducive to learning may be created.

The parents have to realize that they must work hand in glove with the teachers as they all have a common goal. As the teachers work with the learners at school, the parents must also work with the children at home. Of course, some parents sometimes insist that the teachers are the ones who must shoulder all the responsibility of moulding the children, while they themselves don’t do anything to help. They are in a better position to help because they know their children better, since they live with them. We are only with them during school hours. They must teach them the basics such as respect, good manners, and cleanliness which are fundamental to a classroom situation. Then teachers will come with their expertise and impart knowledge that will make the learner a well-balanced adult in future.

The learners will be well tuned on how to conduct themselves in the classroom and this will make things easy for the teachers to teach.

The parents must provide the children’s basic needs so that the children do not have anything to worry about at school. This will help them to concentrate fully in class as they will not be thinking about other things that may be disturbing their peace.

There are many ways in which parents can help their children to do well in class. Amongst others, the parent must create for his/her child an environment conducive to study. He (the parent) must provide the basic needs of the child so that the child does not have anything to worry about and lose concentration. The basic needs such as light, food, shelter and clothes must be provided for.

It is also important that there must be peace in the family. Parents who are always fighting cause psychological damage to their children. Usually such learners do not perform well at school. It is important that peace prevails in the family because that will create an environment which is
conducive to learning. The learners will then be able to concentrate on their schoolwork and not serious other things which are beyond their comprehension.

One other important thing that parents must do in order to maintain an environment conducive to study is to have a happy family. If parents keep on fighting, they spoil that environment that the learners need to focus on their studies. As teachers we expect the parents to maintain stable families if only just for the sake of the kids to have a happy environment for learning.

This point was also raised in a study conducted by Bennet and Hay (2007). They studied the family characteristics that can enhance the performance of learners with disabilities who attend mainstream schools. It was found that peaceful and stable families are the ones whose children tend to do better in the classroom.

Learners will normally do well when they receive assistance from a family that functions in harmony because they do not experience the stress of seeing their family disintegrating. Bennet and Hay (2007) confirmed this when they wanted to identify the family characteristics that promote the development of social skills in children with disabilities. Parents and teachers completed a range of questionnaires in an Australia-wide study of 212 parents of children with disabilities who attend mainstream schools. The results of the study indicated the importance of sound family characteristics for the development of social skills in children with physical disabilities. A strong link was found between aspects of healthy family relationships, especially high levels of parental involvement with highly cohesive, idealized, and democratic family styles. These healthy family relationships strongly influence children’s social skills by providing a safe and sound foundation for children to explore their social environment.

It is necessary that the parents provide an environment conducive to studying. This is reiterated by Lawson (2003). He stated that when parents do not provide stable and nurturing home environments, the students come to school ill-prepared, and the teachers’ jobs are made more difficult. He goes on to say that, without a stable home environment, children tend to require additional teacher attention, and behavioural and disciplinary problems ensue.
It is important that a workshop of some kind be held where parents can be made aware of their responsibilities. They must know that they have a role to play and how to make it easy for the teachers to teach their children.

At times I think that the parents can be called to a meeting where we will have a workshop on how they can help their children. This is because I realized that some parents don’t even know that there is a role that they must play in order to help their children with schoolwork. They think that the teachers will help their children to pass, since it is their duty. They forget that the teachers alone cannot succeed. Firstly, the learners must be prepared when they come to school, and if they come to school unprepared, they will experience many problems. For example, if they come to school hungry, they cannot concentrate.

This idea of organising a workshop for parents where they will be educated about their responsibilities in their children’s education was reflected earlier in DePlanty, et al.’s study (2007). According to them (DePlanty et al 2007), the goal of the school should be to persuade parents to participate in the activities of the school. The school can realize its goal through: (a) organising workshops that focus on the benefits of parent involvement and those parent behaviours that are most important, (b) brochures or pamphlets sent home informing parents about parent involvement, (c) talking with parents about involvement during parent-teacher conferences.

The parents must make a point of it that they provide their children with all the paraphernalia that learners need at school. It sometimes happens that learners come to school without material such as a pen, a rubber, a pencil, and so on. I regard these tools as very fundamental in the children’s learning. The parents must definitely provide for them without fail. A learner who has to borrow from others is already demoralized even before his/her knowledge is tested.
The parents are also the ones who must see to it that their children have all the necessary material that they use at school. I sometimes find that a learner does not have a pen, and if you ask him since when, you realise that it has been for more or less a week.

It is necessary that parents realise that they are supposed to supplement the study material that is provided by the schools if they really want their children to do well. The use of several sources of information has always been advantageous because a learner is able to conceptualize what is being taught if he/she studies it from various approaches. Extra study material will also help the learner with an opportunity to practise, for example, a learner may ultimately master reading if he/she is exposed to several story books:

The parents must buy study material if they want their children to perform better. It is always the case that if you want to excel in something, you must go the extra mile in your preparations. The study material that I would advise parents to buy, over and above the ones supplied at school, will definitely help a lot, because they will supplement what the school has. I think the school provides the basics, and the parents must see to it that they provide some more if they really want their children to become stars.

5.2.4 The essence of communication between parents and teachers

The teachers and parents have a common goal which is to see to it that learners perform well in their day to day activities in the classroom. One can safely say that they are partners in the process of preparing the youth for the future. It therefore means that they must be in constant communication in their adventure of preparing responsible adults. The teachers must make time to brief the parents about the progress made by their children in the classroom. Likewise, the parents need to make the effort to seek to know the progress made by their children in the classroom. It is not supposed to be a matter of who must first approach whom between the two partners. Whoever sees the necessity of communicating first must make a move so that time is not wasted before the learners are helped. The communication must sometimes include finding strategies which can be applied to help the learners. The teachers must not hesitate to initiate a move by visiting the homes of their learners in order to discuss the learners’ progress with their
parents where possible. One of the teachers indicated that it is important to visit the homes of the
learners so that a relationship of trust can develop between the parents and the teachers, since
they are all pursuing the same aim.

Yes, like I have indicated earlier, we write comments on the progress reports for the
parents to read, and to do something. Initially we thought that calling parents to come to
the school would help a lot, because it would be a face-to-face kind of situation. We sent
them (parents) letters to show up at school in order to discuss their kids’ performance, but
usually that did not work as the parents did not come. Some teachers even went so far as
to do home visits where possible. They would visit the learners’ home which are near the
school. This also had its own challenges, because you may find that the parent is not
home, and sometimes you only find an elderly grandparent. Time is also a challenge
because the teachers will also be going home after school, and during the day they are
supposed to be in the classroom.

The importance of communication between parents and teachers in respect of the learners cannot
be overemphasised. It is advisable, because the problems may be spotted early, and the means of
overcoming the challenges be devised:

The parents must get used to visiting the school, and communicate with the teachers of
their children. By so doing they will be able to spot the problems early and work on them.
It is another matter if the parent is called at the end of the year just to confirm that his
child may be retained, as is the case sometimes. The poor child will not have received
any help. The problem must be spotted quite early so that several strategies can be
applied in order to help the child to pass at the end of the year.

It is of great importance that the teachers keep communicating with the parents especially on the
role that they should play. The parents will not know what teachers expect from them without the
teachers telling them. Ultimately it may seem as though the parents do not want to take their
responsibilities, whereas they actually do not know them. The teachers need to school these
parents on how to help their children to do well in the classroom.
It is not all the parents who fully understand their responsibility regarding helping their children progress well in their schoolwork. Some just want to see their children progress at school without them making any effort in helping them to do well at school. Some go to the extent of forcing the teachers to push their children to the next grade even if they did not pass. One parent told me that I was going to push his child as he had been pushed throughout the lower grades. What they should be doing is accepting that their child is not ready to progress to the next grade and start to seek ways in which the child can be helped. This will make the child ready to progress to the next grade.

Sound interaction between teachers and parents will help to bring them closer to each other, and this will improve communication.

I used to think how the parents can help to solve the problem of poor performance by the learners. I came up with this idea that as teachers we need to also visit these learners’ homes and interact with their parents. In this way we will be building trust between the parents and us as teachers. This will promote a spirit of togetherness, and the parents will open up and feel free to discuss their children’s performance. I think that as a teacher I must take advantage of the situation and teach the parents how to become involved in their children’s education.

Lundeen (2005) hinted that it is no secret that students whose families are involved in their children’s education significantly benefit in respect of achievement, attitudes, and application. She maintains that academic and anecdotal research clearly indicates that parent involvement is a critical predictor of children’s school success. She asserts that the greatest barrier to parental involvement is the lack of knowledge of the schools and families on how to effectively work and plan together. This is an implication that teachers and parents must keep on communicating in order to clear the confusion that may be brought about by the lack of understanding on the part of the parents.
The importance of communication between teachers and parents was stressed by Izzo et al. (1999). They maintained that when parents communicate constructively with teachers and participate in school activities, they gain a clearer understanding of what is expected of their children at school, and they may learn from the teachers how to work at home to enhance their children’s education. The advantage brought about by communication between these partners, namely the parents and the teachers, is that parental involvement will be informed. The parents will no longer have to guess what the proper way of getting involved in their children’s education is, because they will have received the information from the teachers. These researchers (Izzo et al. 1999) indicated that other researchers emphasise the importance of parental actions that children experience directly, such as efforts to facilitate the children’s academic or social development at home. Izzo et al. (1999) further indicated that such activities not only signal to the children the value of education, but provide them with additional support, and also create continuity between their two primary spheres of influence, namely the home and the school.

5.2.5 Every responsible adult can play a role as a parent in assisting the learners to do well at school.

Parent involvement can take many shapes at different times and includes any parent of any child, irrespective of whether they are the child’s biological parents. There are learners whose parents may not be in a position to help their children due to their level of literacy. Those children would still need parental involvement like any other child if they are to do well in their classrooms. Some learners stay with their grandparents who cannot read or write. For these learners to receive the help that other learners who have literate parents receive, the teachers decided to group learners together. Learners who stay with illiterate grandparents are grouped with those who stay with literate parents, so that they may all benefit from parental assistance when they are given work which will need the help of the parents.

Since in most cases it happens with kids who do not stay with their parents, we normally group learners to do their homework in groups. We find this helpful because if there are learners who stay with parents, in a particular group; all the learners in that group will
benefit from the help offered by the parents, sisters and brothers. Although in a group, there will be learners who will benefit as they listen and participate well. There are, however, those who will not benefit because they only copy the work done by the other learners.

Some learners are left alone at their homes due to a variety of reasons, for example, it may be because their parents have gone to seek jobs elsewhere. One of the teachers felt that such children may be helped by retired teachers being asked to adopt them. These retired teachers can help them by monitoring their attendance at school, seeing to it that they do their homework and simply by checking whether these learners do the work at school like all their classmates.

Ja, you know the teachers are so desperate to let the parents realize the importance of the role that they can play in order to improve their children’s performance. One teacher once suggested that we rope in retired teachers so that they can help. He suggested that we request the retired teachers to adopt the learners. These retired teachers will be requested to adopt learners whose parents are either not there, or are so elderly that they can no longer help the learners. Even incidents where the parents are illiterate are also considered here. These retired teachers will be asked to collaborate with the parents of the identified learners, and will see to it that they do their homework.

The teachers who were interviewed emphasised that it must be the responsibility of every adult to be engaged in the process of helping the children to become responsible future citizens. It should not be the work of the teachers alone to shape their future. Everyone must play his/her role. The parents are expected to play a leading role, since they are the ones who are expected to have the best interests of their children at heart.

The parents must not leave everything to the teachers and take a back seat. After all, they are the ones who are very keen that their children become responsible adults, or have professions. So they must take the lead and show the teachers the way in which they would like their children to be educated. They must take full responsibility for their children’s education. They must
see the teachers as people who only come to offer professional help, just because parents perhaps are not better qualified to help their children professionally. I am only supposed to do teaching and other related things, and the rest must be done by the parent. Parental involvement cannot be overlooked.

Various aspects are supposed to be developed in order for a child to grow into a complete being. People must apply their specific knowledge to nurture the children into responsible adults. The parents have to collaborate with the teachers so that aspects that are supposed to be developed by the teachers receive attention, while those aspects that are supposed to be developed by the parents also receive attention.

The parents have to realize that they must work hand in glove with the teachers as they all have a common goal. As the teachers work with the learners at school, the parents must also work with the children at home. Of course, some parents sometimes insist that the teachers are the ones who must shoulder all the responsibility of moulding the children, while they themselves don’t do anything to help. They are in a better position to help because they know their children better, since they live with them. We are only with them during school hours. They must teach them the basics such as respect, good manners, and cleanliness which are fundamental to a classroom situation. Then teachers will come with their expertise and impart knowledge that will make the learner a well-balanced adult in future.

Even if it seems apparent that all the responsible adults can perform the duties of rearing every child, some researchers do not think of any replacement for parental involvement. Rivera (2010) maintains that no matter how good the programmes may be, they do not make up for the role that the parents must play in preparing their children for success. The researcher hinted that closing the gap cannot just be about teachers working harder, it is also about parents taking time with their children from an early age to have interactive, meaningful conversations with them.
5.3 CONCLUSIONS

It is important that parents become involved in their children’s education. There are various ways in which parents can be involved, and this depends on the situation. Learners do not experience the same conditions in their pursuit for a brighter future. Some need to be shown how to do things in order for them to perform well in the classroom, while others only need to be shown that as a parent you appreciate what they are doing. The first group of learners need to be nurtured in terms of the mastery of the learning content. However, it will not do these learners any good if the parents, instead of helping their children to know how to solve a problem; simply solve the problem for them.

The latter group of learners, which are the ones who cope, do not struggle with grasping the subject content, but they still need parents to cheer them up for the good work that they do in the classroom. In a nutshell, the learners who are not struggling need to be motivated nonetheless, especially by their parents. This can make them work even harder, because they will know that they please their parents by so doing. This is done so that the bright learner may not be wanting not to do well seeing that he or she does not see any sense in doing well, as their good work is not appreciated.

The teachers expect the parents to play several roles in helping their children to perform better in the classroom. They expect the parents to provide a space at home that is suitable for use as a learning environment. The homes where these learners live are supposed to be peaceful places where they have enough time to meditate about their schoolwork without any disturbances. Whenever the parents are faced with a situation where arguments arise, these arguments should not be in the presence of the children. The parents are expected to prepare their children to be ready for the classroom situation so that the teachers are able to do their job well. This preparation can be done in the form of teaching the children the basic requirements that a learner is expected to meet while he/she is at school. The teachers expect the parents to instil some form of discipline in their children so that they will know how to behave themselves in a school situation.
Over and above all, the parents must see to it that they equip their children with the necessary material to be used at school. They must even supplement these materials so that their children can perform to the best of their abilities. However, it may not be possible for someone who has no resources to perform wonders. The parents need to buy extra storybooks, or ask other teachers to help their children where possible. The parents must develop a positive attitude towards school, because this will encourage the learners to do the same.

Older people should volunteer to assist the learners with their schoolwork, irrespective of whether they are their children or not. People must develop a sense of wanting to contribute in preparing the children to become responsible adults. The teachers expect from all the adults who are able to help the learners with their schoolwork, be it retired teachers, literate parents or even older siblings. This could be very helpful because even those learners, who do not have access to a sound parental involvement due to various reasons such as unavailability of literate parents, can be helped.

Communication between teachers and parents is of prime importance, because it enables the teachers to tell the parents what they are supposed to do in order to help their children to do well at school. It also helps to build an element of trust between the two partners, namely the teachers and the parents, who are expected to collaborate in the process of educating the learners. The parents and teachers have a common aim, which is to see to it that the learners succeed in their schoolwork. Hence they must be in a constant communication. The teachers and the parents need to communicate time and again so that the parents do not miss out on the type of assistance they are supposed to provide.
5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

I acknowledge that, although the aspect of the teachers’ expectations on parental involvement has been dealt with in depth, the research is, however, localized. That is to say, it focuses on a particular region in the Limpopo Province in South Africa. The possibility is that in other regions of the country the teachers may respond differently, as they may have different expectations from parent involvement. This is a limitation which warrants that further investigations be done in other regions of the country.

This study is limited to the situation in a rural area where the teachers were interviewed. I therefore recommend that other studies concentrate on urban areas, since the kind of parental involvement that is shown by parents in rural areas may be different to that of parents in urban areas. This difference may be brought about by various factors such as that the level of illiteracy among parents in the rural areas may be relatively higher than that of parents in the urban areas.

This study is furthermore limited to one population group in South Africa, namely Black African teachers, parents and learners. Perhaps the teachers in other population groups may have different expectations and perceptions regarding parental involvement. It is possible that what these Black African teachers expect from the parents in order to help their children do well at school, is what other population groups have been practising all along. In that case, it means that other studies may come up with totally different expectations from the teachers. This then necessitates further research to be conducted on this matter, where other population groups can be included in the investigations. However, I believe that the findings from this investigation will offer a considerable contribution to helping learners achieve academically and to succeed at school. The parents will then know the actual role they are supposed to play in order to help their children.

This study is furthermore limited to the primary school teachers only. Other studies may reveal different expectations from secondary school teachers. This is so, because usually learners in the secondary schools do not interact with their teachers in the same way as learners in the primary schools do. In the light thereof, teachers in the secondary schools may expect the parents to
become involved in a particular manner which is different from the way parents in the primary schools are supposed to be involved. Hence, a study that probes what teachers in the secondary schools expect from parental involvement is recommended.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The ideal way that teachers expect the parents to be involved in their children’s education is by providing guidance when the learners do their schoolwork. The findings indicated that the parents are not supposed to do the work for their children. The parents are also expected to encourage their children to do well at school. The teachers expect the parents to provide an environment conducive to learning and all the necessary materials, for their children to learn without difficulty.

I would like to see, where possible, all responsible adults taking part in helping the learners to do well in the classroom.

I suggest that there be constant communication between the teachers and the parents for parental involvement to have the desired effect. There are several ways in which teachers can communicate with parents, but the findings revealed that mostly teachers like to talk to the parents face-to-face. This they can do in workshops, and during home-visits, where they can teach the parents about their responsibilities and how best they can get involved in their children’s education. This is where the teachers’ expectations can be interpreted and understood, as teachers will be explaining them. I therefore suggest that this is the best way that parents can be involved in their children’s education, because it is based on the findings in my study.

I recommend that the Department of Education makes it policy that schools be given the responsibility of making parents aware of their responsibilities in equipping their children with skills that will see them through their adult life-worlds. Sometimes parents do not do what they are supposed to do not because they are ignorant; mostly it is because they do not know their responsibilities. Hence they shift their responsibilities to other people. The Department of Education can also make provision for the availability of information which clearly states the
responsibilities of parents regarding their children’s education. This information can be disseminated to parents by making it available at the schools.

I also recommend that the programme of eradicating illiteracy in South Africa, ABET (Adult Basic Education and Training), be propagated so that every adult who is illiterate may have access to it. This will place the parents in a better position to help their children with their schoolwork. The parents who have done this programme will be able to help their children to do their homework. At the moment this programme is run in such a way that its importance may not be realised. There are no institutions specialising in this programme and no full-time teachers who can focus on teaching the students this programme. It is a good means to eradicate illiteracy among the people as it is always advocated by the authorities in government. This can be regarded as a burning issue because it also affects the youth who will be the future leaders and professionals in various fields. If we succeed in having a literate society, it means all the learners, especially in the early learning stages, will have access to a sound parental involvement which will give them a good start.

I recommend that the Department of Education makes it policy that schools should have special days where they award learners who performed well, so that these learners can be motivated. That will be recognition of excellence. Learners will compete for the top positions so that they may be rewarded, and that in a way will urge them to work harder. It used to be a matter of policy that when the results of the learners in a grade are presented, they are supposed to be in merit order. Lately, this is no longer the case, especially in the lower grades, namely grades 11 down to grade R. This practice demoralizes the brighter learners, because no matter how hard they work, their work will still be regarded as more or less the same as that of the learners who did not put much effort in their work. They are passed in the same way, so they no longer see the necessity of working hard. Excellence is not recognised; it is regarded as the same as the pass of an average performer.
REFERENCES


Savacool, JL. (2011). Barriers to Parental Involvement in the Pre-Kindergarten Classroom.


APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Letter to the principal of the first school

Enq. : Makgopa M

The Principal
Q Primary School
Dear Sir

Re: Application for permission to conduct research at your school

I hereby apply for your permission to conduct a research project at your school. The aim of the study is to explore the teachers’ expectations on parent involvement. The study will target only one teacher from your school. I hope that the study will make a meaningful contribution to the literature on the interaction between parents and teachers. The results will be shared with the school.

I intend to engage your school in the following manner:

Interview with the teacher.

1. The teacher to be interviewed is: ________________________________
2. Time: 14h00
3. Date: 06 – 12 – 2011
4. Venue: Q Primary School

I also would like to assure you that the normal school programme will not be interrupted. I will not let the teacher leave his/her classes in order to focus on my project. I will only interview the teacher in his/her spare time.

I am looking forward to a positive response.
Kind regards.

----------------------------------------
Makgopa Masiye Ephraim
M. Ed. student (University of South Africa)
APPENDIX 2

Letter to the principal of the second school

Enq.: Makgopa M E

2011 – 12 – 05

The Principal
H Primary School

Dear Sir

Re: Application for permission to conduct research at your school

I hereby apply for your permission to conduct a research project at your school. The aim of the study is to explore the teachers’ expectations on parent involvement. The study will target only one teacher from your school. I hope that the study will make a meaningful contribution to the literature on the interaction between parents and teachers. The results will be shared with the school.

I intend to engage your school in the following manner:

Interview with the teacher.

1. The teacher to be interviewed is _______________________
2. Time: 14h00
3. Date: 2011 – 12 – 07
4. Venue: H Primary School

I also would like to assure you that the normal school programme will not be interrupted. I will not let the teacher leave his/her classes in order to focus on my project. I will only interview him/her in his/her spare time.

I am looking forward to a positive response.
Kind regards.

________________________________________

Makgopa Masiye Ephraim
M. Ed. student (University of South Africa)
APPENDIX 3

Letter to the Senior District Manager

Enq : Makgopa M E

2011 – 12 – 05

The Senior District Manager
Mogalakwena District
Limpopo Department of Education
MAHWELERENG
0626

Dear Sir

Re: Application for permission to conduct research in the Mogalakwena District

I hereby apply for permission to conduct a research project in Mogalakwena District. The aim of the study is to investigate the teachers’ expectations on parent involvement. The study will target only two schools in the District. Those schools will be from Bakenberg North Circuit and Mapela Circuit. Hopefully the study will make a positive contribution to the literature on the interaction between parents and teachers. The results will be shared with the Department.

I intend to engage your District in the following manner:

1. Interview with the teachers.
2. Only two teachers from the two selected schools in Bakenberg North Circuit and Mapela Circuit (it will only be one teacher from each school).

I would like to assure you that the normal school programme will not be interrupted. I will not let the teachers leave their classes in order to focus on my project. I will only interview them in their spare time.

Thanking you in advance. I am looking forward to a positive response.
Kind regards.

__________________________________________

Makgopa Masiye Ephraim
M.Ed. student (University of South Africa)
APPENDIX 4

Consent form

Dear Participant.

Thank you for affording me the opportunity to interact with you. I am engaged in M Ed. research project of which the title is: Teacher expectations of parent involvement: a case study of two primary schools, at the University of South Africa (UNISA). This research project intends to explore the expectations that teachers have of parents’ involvement in their children’s education. The aim is to understand your expectations on the parents’ involvement.

I assure you that the information you provide will be treated with the strictest confidentiality and the researcher (I) will not share the information with any third parties. Your name or any other identifying information will not appear on the study report. You will remain anonymous.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary and you can withdraw from this study at any time. I thank you for your cooperation and the time you have put aside to help me in this important project. You are free to contact me (Makgopa Masiye) at 0827519773 or my study supervisor Dr. ML Mokhele at (012) 4294542, if you have any questions or suggestions.

Your kind cooperation is highly appreciated. The interview will not take more than one and half hours of your time.

Participant’s signature ______________________ Date __________________
APPENDIX 5

Interview protocol

**Questions that seek to probe the background of the interviewee**

1. Tell me about your teaching background: what grade(s) are you teaching, which subjects, and your highest qualification.
2. Tell me about how you feel when teaching the learners?
3. Let’s talk about the work of the learners, are there any policies on the number of tasks given to the learners? Please elaborate.
4. Roughly, how much homework do you give your learners to do per week?
5. How do you feel about the rate in which the learners do their homework?
6. Do you discuss the problem of learners who do not write their homework, in your staff meetings?
7. How do you discuss the problem of learners who don’t write their homework as an item on its own or only in passing while you are discussing other items?
8. How do you (as a teacher) usually solve such problems?

**Questions that seek to ascertain what the teachers expect from the parents**

9. How do you expect the parents to be engaged in order to address the problem about the learners?
10. How do you think parents can be of help in solving this problem of learners who don’t well?
11. What kind of help do you expect teachers to offer the school?
12. How could the parents be of help for their children to do well in class?
13. Can you elaborate more on how parents could help their children to do well in class?
14. Tell me about how you advice parents on how to get involved in their children’s education
15. What do you normally advice parents to do in order to help the child to do well in class? Is there anything else you want to talk about on parental involvement that we did not talk about?